

Oakland A's get first win for manager Bob Melvin, snap 10-game skid

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

CHICAGO -- The A's were following a familiar script Friday, only this time they wrote a happy ending.

Down to their last strike and trailing by two runs in the ninth inning, the A's gave new manager Bob Melvin a first victory to remember.

Scott Sizemore cleared the bases with a two-out, three-run double to highlight a four-run rally as the A's beat the Chicago White Sox 7-5 to snap a 10-game losing streak that was their longest since 2008.

"It's a bit of a relief," closer Andrew Bailey said. "Bob Melvin said the past is the past, and we're going to play for today. But somewhere in the back of your head, you know we've lost 10 straight. It's nice to get off that skid and hopefully start a 10-game winning streak."

No one was more keyed up than Melvin, who evened his record at 1-1 since replacing Bob Geren on Thursday. Melvin clapped his hands emphatically when right fielder Conor Jackson caught a game-ending fly ball from Carlos Quentin and headed out to the field to congratulate his players.

"Did you see everybody up on the railing (in the ninth)?" Melvin said. "They did that on their own. At the beginning of the inning, everybody that was on the back of the bench came up on the top rail because everybody had a good feeling about the way we were playing tonight."

But the game included some snapshots of what's haunted the A's for much of this season. They had runners on second and third with no outs in the seventh and parlayed it into just one run.

Sizemore's throwing error from third base in the fifth let Alexei Ramirez score in Chicago's three-run fifth.

But the A's sprung to life after White Sox closer Sergio Santos got the first two outs of the ninth. Josh Willingham walked and advanced to second on defensive indifference.

The count was 1-2 on Hideki Matsui when he singled to center to cut the deficit to 5-4. Daric Barton walked, and Santos hit Kurt Suzuki with a 2-2 pitch to load the bases. Then Sizemore, recalled from Triple-A Sacramento on Monday, drove a 1-0 pitch from Santos to the gap in left-center to give the A's a 7-5 lead.

"Santos throws so hard, if you're not ready for the fastball, he's gonna blow you away," Sizemore said. "I got a good pitch to hit and didn't miss it."

A's starting pitcher Graham Godfrey, who allowed five runs in 4 1/3 innings in his major league debut, was watching on television from the clubhouse as the rally unfolded.

"It was awesome," he said. "I could hear guys screaming about five seconds before the tape delay."

There was still important work left for Bailey, who last Saturday against Boston had blown his only save opportunity since coming off the disabled list.

He delivered a 1-2-3 bottom of the ninth.

"We were coming home with that one," Bailey said.

Melvin talked before the game about his plans to give switch-hitting shortstop Cliff Pennington a long look hitting second. He's mainly batted ninth.

Pennington responded with a 3-for-5 game and two doubles as the No. 2 hitter.

Melvin also commented on the lack of a prototypical No. 3 hitter. He started Ryan Sweeney, hitting .282 but with no homers and six RBIs in right field and batted him third.

"For a guy that's not playing every day to all of a sudden be in the '3' spot, it's a little against the grain," Melvin said.

A's update: Geren speaks out, has no animosity toward team

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

CHICAGO — Bob Geren spoke out for the first time Friday since being fired as the A's manager and expressed no ill will toward the organization.

"You can't manage a team for five years and not win and expect to still be the manager," Geren told the Associated Press. "I completely understand the game. I knew that five years ago. It's not a shock. I'm level-headed and understand how the game works. I'm grateful for the opportunity."

Geren was relieved of his duties Thursday and replaced by Bob Melvin after going 334-376 in four-plus seasons guiding the A's. The A's rallied against the Chicago White Sox to snap their 10-game losing streak Friday.

Despite receiving criticism from players for a lack of communication over his final weeks on the job, he said he was satisfied with the way he went about things.

"I look at it that I gave 100 percent every single day that I worked for this organization, and I'm completely comfortable with how I treated everybody," Geren said. "You can never manage as many teams as I have and keep everybody happy."

Geren, who managed five minor-league teams before getting the A's job, said he planned to help coach his two sons in the Hawaiian Collegiate Baseball League this summer. He's unsure if he will manage again.

"I have no idea. It's possible," Geren said. "There are only 30 (major league) jobs. It's not a really easy opportunity to get. Right now I'm not thinking about that at all."

Left-hander Brett Anderson will have his left elbow examined Monday by Dr. James Andrews in Pensacola, Fla.

Rich Harden (side muscle injury) faced hitters for the first time since going on the disabled list before the season. He mixed in changeups with his fastball and said he felt great. Melvin also said Harden looked sharp.

Harden said the tentative plan is for him to throw a simulated game Wednesday, which would indicate a rehab assignment wouldn't be far off if he continues progressing.

To make room for Friday's starter, Graham Godfrey, on the 25-man roster, reliever Bobby Cramer was optioned to Triple-A Sacramento. Kevin Kouzmanoff was outrighted to clear a spot on the 40-man roster. Kouzmanoff remains with Sacramento.

Right-hander David Mota and shortstop Wilfrido Sosa, both members of the A's short-season Single-A Vermont Lake Monsters, were suspended 25 games for violating the Minor League Drug Prevention and Treatment Program.

Chin Music: A's rediscover the win column with 7-5 victory over White Sox

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune 6/10/2011 10:22pm

Since I didn't get a chance to blog before the game, here's a link to the [A's notebook](#) that will appear in Saturday's paper. The pregame update will return Saturday ...

It was a lively A's clubhouse after a four-run rally in the ninth provided a 7-5 victory over the White Sox that snapped a 10-game losing streak.

A few snippets of what was said:

From new manager Bob Melvin, who got his first win with Oakland:

"Did you see everybody up on the railing (in the ninth)? They did that on their own. At the beginning of the inning, everybody that was on the back of the bench came up on the top rail because everybody had a good feeling about the way we were playing tonight."

From Scott Sizemore, the hero with a three-run double in the ninth:

"These guys have been through a rough stretch, and I've only been here five days now. To get a win, it's just a great feeling."

From closer Andrew Bailey, who notched his first save of the season:

"It's a bit of a relief. Bob Melvin said the past is the past and we're going to play for today. But somewhere in the back of your head, you know we've lost 10 straight. It's nice to get off that skid and hopefully start a 10-game winning streak."

Cam Inman: Bad A's team is Billy Beane's handiwork

By Cam Inman, Oakland Tribune

A's general manager Billy Beane made Bob Geren the best man for his wedding, his manager for four-plus seasons and, lastly, his fall guy for an inept franchise.

But rather than disparage Geren after firing him Thursday, Beane at least found a way to implicate himself in the last-place A's travails.

"The bottom line is it's our responsibility to try to give (the manager and staff) players they can win with," Beane said during a conference call. "If we fail, it makes it very difficult on the manager when it's all said and done."

Failure runs rampant throughout the A's, from daffy ownership down to a deficient farm system.

Personal and managerial flaws aside, Geren ultimately was doomed by a lousy, injury-riddled roster. That's been the case year after boring year since taking over a reigning division champion in 2007.

Beane has to take at least partial ownership of this mess because, well, he's a minority owner and the franchise's point-man and personnel czar.

He did not deliver enough talent, not from the minor leagues nor from a free-agent market that abhors the decrepit Coliseum. The A's have zero offensive punch, and that's unacceptable in the American League's designated-hitter world.

The A's are more unattractive than ever -- for fans abstaining from buying tickets, for players expecting to flee elsewhere in a year or two and for a manager coping with subpar talent as well as owner Lew Wolff's obnoxious quest to move to San Jose.

Their anorexic lineup now will be scribbled by interim manager Bob Melvin, a former Cal and Giants catcher who previously managed the Seattle Mariners and Arizona Diamondbacks.

Yep, the A's replace a 49-year-old, former catcher named Bob with another 49-year-old, former catcher named Bob. Call it the A's ultimate Bob-blehead day.

"Bob Melvin will inherit some of the challenges that Bob (Geren) had," Beane said. "Bob lost four starting pitchers in the space of three weeks. That's a very tough body blow for the team."

Indeed. But the A's led the American League with a 3.23 ERA through Wednesday, even after enduring their ninth consecutive defeat. That contradicts a popular theory that Geren failed to communicate with his relievers to the point that it wreaked havoc.

Injuries in the rotation have revolved around their Nos. 4 and 5 starters -- Dallas Braden, Tyson Ross and Brandon McCarthy. Yes, the more-heralded Brett Anderson has hurt his elbow again, and that is alarming, but the A's were stinking up the joint before he headed to the disabled list this week.

The A's batters -- young and old, homegrown and imported -- have bottomed out with a 3.54 runs-per-game clip and seven shutouts. First baseman Daric Barton has no home runs in 212 at-bats. Designated "hitter" Hideki Matsui has four home runs and a .215 batting average. Kevin Kouzmanoff, last year's home run leader, has been demoted to Triple-A Sacramento.

But injuries have nothing to do with lack of production from those guys, or Coco Crisp, David DeJesus and Josh Willingham, who entered Thursday with 10 home runs and a .239 batting average.

Beane wasn't willing to pan his players, not publicly. He picked them, and he's delayed taking accountability for another failed attempt at a playoff-contending roster.

Asked if he's compiled the talent a manager needs to succeed, Beane replied: "We've yet to know that because we've once again (been) struck with a number of injuries. We've never really seen that full team on the field this year."

The A's have used the disabled list a staggering 96 times since Geren took over for Ken Macha in 2007. That includes 23 times last season and a franchise-record 25 in 2008.

"We've had a terrible run of injuries over the five years, and I think that's through no fault of his own," Beane said of Geren.

Their friendship might have handicapped Geren's chances at success. He's Billy's boy, so he's safe, right? That was the public perception, and perhaps that undermined the players' respect for Geren, no matter how often Beane hailed his manager's ability.

Beane didn't blast Geren for a 27-36 record this year, the mediocrity of four previous seasons or any managerial gaffes. He instead pinned Thursday's pink slip on how Geren's lame-duck job security seized the "daily focus."

But there's a flaw in that logic: Since when has anyone paid attention to the A's? The media didn't waste many breaths on a manager so clearly symptomatic of everything wrong with a crumbling franchise.

Now what? The A's can untarp the Coliseum's upper deck and hope fans flood in to watch Beane's inferior, unproductive players.

Oakland A's snap 10-game skid with four-run ninth

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

His first night in charge of the A's, Bob Melvin admitted, he sometimes had to wait until players had walked all the way past him in order to identify them by the backs of their uniforms.

On his second night, Friday at U.S. Cellular Field, Melvin had his personnel down, and his team responded with a stirring two-out rally in the ninth inning to beat the White Sox 7-5. That snapped a season-high 10-game losing streak that featured the sudden managerial change from Bob Geren to Melvin.

"If we were going down, we were going down fighting," Melvin said after his first victory in an Oakland uniform. "We consistently had pressure on the whole game. I'm really proud - losing as many in a row as this team did, and they still had that fight. They weren't going to go down easy."

The A's were down two runs in the ninth when Sergio Santos walked Josh Willingham with two outs and Willingham took second on indifference. Hideki Matsui, apparently rejuvenated by finding himself a regular again, singled on a 1-2 pitch to send in Willingham.

"He's been through the wars before," Melvin said of Matsui coming through with two strikes.

Then Santos walked Daric Barton, hit Kurt Suzuki, and new A's infielder Scott Sizemore smacked a three-run double to left-center on a 1-0 pitch.

"Santos throws hard," said Sizemore, who had three hits on the night. "If you're not looking fastball, he's going to blow you away. I got a good pitch to hit and I didn't miss it."

The A's are the first team since 1900 to end a losing streak of at least 10 games with a last at-bat victory in which they trailed by more than a run with two outs and nobody on.

Closer Andrew Bailey worked the ninth and retired all three men he faced to record his first save of the season after missing the first two months with a forearm strain.

"We were coming home with that one," Bailey said. "It's nice to get Bob Melvin his first win here and start a little winning streak."

Bailey had blown his only other save opportunity since coming off the disabled list, but, Melvin said, Bailey "had the eye of the tiger."

Cliff Pennington has batted second both nights Melvin has managed. He had three hits Friday, including two doubles, scored a run and drove in another.

"I've always thought of myself as a top- or middle-of-the-order hitter," Pennington said. "I don't think anything really changes, but I'll run with it right now."

Matsui had two more hits in the Melvin regime, giving him four in two nights. Melvin plans to use him as a regular, and before Friday's game, he'd expressed surprise that Matsui hadn't been starting against left-handers the past month.

Melvin will have a say in personnel decisions, and there might be a difficult one looming soon. Rookie Jemile Weeks is off to a hot start, with seven hits and a walk in the past three games. He also made a terrific play in the second inning Friday, racing into the infield grass to get a slow roller and throw out Carlos Quentin at first to end the inning, leaving a man at third.

"I like what I see so far," Melvin said of Weeks' play the past two nights.

Weeks is filling in for injured second baseman Mark Ellis, who, in his 10th season, is the team's longest-tenured player and unofficial captain.

Graham Godfrey makes major-league debut for A's

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Chicago -- The A's had a new starter Friday to go along with their fresh-from-the-box manager.

Right-hander **Graham Godfrey**, 26, wasn't even in the A's camp this spring, but he was 7-1 at Triple-A Sacramento with a Pacific Coast League-best 2.50 ERA. He came up to take the spot left open when **Brett Anderson** went on the disabled list earlier in the week.

Godfrey walked **Carlos Quentin** with two outs in the first, then gave up a first-pitch home run to **Paul Konerko**. He allowed three more runs in the fifth. In his 4 1/3 innings, he gave up nine hits and two walks, striking out two.

Godfrey and new manager **Bob Melvin** felt good about the way he pitched in-between those innings, though, and when asked if Godfrey would start the next time through the rotation, Melvin said, "I don't see why not, sitting here right now."

Godfrey had seven or eight family members on hand, and he said he did have some nerves in the first inning before composing himself. He saved the ball he used for his first pitch, along with the ball he used for his first big-league strikeout, also in the first inning.

Anderson update: Anderson will visit Dr. **James Andrews** in Pensacola, Fla., on Monday for a second opinion on his left elbow. Anderson, the A's No. 2 starter, saw a team orthopedist Tuesday, but the A's have not announced any diagnosis.

Harden fares well: Rich Harden threw 20 pitches of live batting practice, throwing only fastballs and changeups, and no balls were hit out of the batting cage.

Adam Rosales, who hit against Harden, said his fastball looked good, with a lot of late life. Harden is likely to throw to hitters once more before a rehab assignment.

Briefly: To make room for Godfrey on the 40-man roster, third baseman **Kevin Kouzmanoff** was outrighted to Sacramento after clearing waivers. Kouzmanoff homered in his first game with the River Cats. ... Short-season Class A players **Wilfrido Sosa**, an infielder, and **David Mota**, a right-handed reliever, were suspended 25 games each for violating the minor-league baseball drug policy.

Leading off

Proud friend: Cliff Pennington was on his phone a lot before batting practice because he'd learned his former Texas A&M teammate and roommate, right-hander Kevin Whelan, had been called up. "That's great, especially with a team like the Yankees," Pennington said.

Drum Beat: Brett Anderson to see Dr. Andrews on Monday; Rich Harden's good day

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at U.S. Cellular Field 6/10/2011, 4:17pm

The top news items from here: Brett Anderson gets his second opinion on Monday, when he'll see Dr. James Andrews in Pensacola, Fla. The fear: Tommy John surgery. The other possibility, and not to be discounted: The same thing he had this time last year, elbow inflammation.

Oakland has five starters on the DL, and the one who is starting to appear as if he might be an option first is Rich Harden. I look forward to the usual comments below pooh-poohing this notion, but Harden felt good, he had good late life on his fastball according to Adam Rosales and Bob Melvin, and he also was using his changeup for the first time as he comes back from that pesky muscle strain under his right arm. Harden first strained that muscle on reporting day, so it's been almost four months.

Yes, he's been fragile throughout his career, but when healthy, even just using fastball/change, Harden can be very effective, and the A's need starters. Mock all you like, he might be a plus for Oakland in another few weeks or so.

This is Melvin's second day on the job, and he is trying to get a look at all his position players - the only man not to get into the first two games is backup catcher Landon Powell, and Melvin said he'll start on Sunday. Melvin has displayed decisiveness right off the bat, and he isn't afraid to explain his decisions. He has indicated, for instance, that Hideki Matsui will be in the lineup every night, and today he said he finally got a chance to look at all the numbers - and Melvin was surprised to see that Matsui, who hadn't started against a left-hander in more than a month until Melvin had him in Thursday, is hitting left-handers better than right-handers. "He's never had trouble with left-handers in his career," Melvin said. He quickly added that he meant no disrespect to Bob Geren, saying he understood that Geren was trying to get a struggling offense going.

Melvin also appears as if he'll use Daric Barton differently. Recognizing that Barton appeared comfortable down the order (he was 6-for-12 batting sixth last weekend), he has Barton hitting sixth tonight, and Cliff Pennington is back in the second spot. Melvin said he likes Pennington there because he handles the bat well, he's a switch hitter (making late-innings matchups more difficult for opponents), he can move runners over and he runs well.

Melvin noted that one thing that didn't help Geren was the team's lack of a prototypical No. 3 hitter. It sounds as if Ryan Sweeney and Conor Jackson might be in almost a platoon there.

Of course, Melvin is still getting a gauge on everything. He's talking to his coaches, to the players, and he will adjust as needed.

Here's lineup No. 2 from Melvin, with Graham Godfrey on the mound and making his big-league debut: Crisp cf, Pennington ss, Sweeney rf, Willingham lf, Matsui dh, Barton 1b, Suzuki c, Sizemore 3b, Weeks 2b

Bobby Cramer, as expected, was sent out to make room for Godfrey (and Cramer has repeatedly turned in some nice work when needed for the A's), and to get Godfrey onto the 40-man roster, Kevin Kouzmanoff was outrighted to Triple-A Sacramento. He already was there, but he has cleared waivers and he is no longer on the 40-man. He also homered in his first game with Sacramento.

3-Dot Lounge

Selig, like A's, is no quick study

Bruce Jenkins, San Francisco Chronicle

This is Day 803 of the Let Them Rot campaign, **Bud Selig's** concerted effort to match the A's neglect with a rancid brand of his own. The A's owners don't care about Oakland, and the commissioner doesn't care about the A's. Let them rot.

Perhaps Selig's dream is that the A's will simply die of natural causes.

The firing of **Bob Geren** made big news this week, and for the first time ever, I felt sorry for the man. Make no mistake, this was one of the weakest, most uninspiring managerial hires of modern times, but general manager **Billy Beane** always defended his friend by claiming, correctly, that Geren had yet to be given a really competitive (and healthy) team.

That turned out to be the case again this year. Geren was handed the same, tired menu: a terrible lineup and a big pile of injuries. I doubt if **Billy Martin** could have done much with this group. If **Bob Melvin** has only two-thirds of a season to prove his worth, he'll need to pull some minor miracles along the way.

And, yes, you read it right: It's been 803 days since Selig commissioned a study of ballpark options for this dead-in-the-water franchise. It speaks to the same rambling incompetence from Oakland politicians, and the familiar Selig anxiety over removing the Giants' territorial rights to San Jose. Next stop on the Oblivion Express: Day 1,388, when we thrill to the news that Selig is "seriously looking into this."

I love **John Fisher's** role in all this, by the way; total disappearing act. **Lew Wolff** might be the prince of neglect, but the Fisher family holds by far the biggest financial stake in the A's. Thanks to Fisher money, according to Forbes magazine, the A's ownership is the fourth richest in baseball — wealthier than the Angels' or Red Sox's powerhouse owners.

Not that the fans would have any inkling of such riches. The way this A's season is unfolding, you get the feeling they're owned by Ed's Tires. Until Fisher speaks up, or at least shows his face, we have to assume he's only in baseball so he can drop a few clever lines at cocktail parties.

No takers

It won't be long before the A's think about unloading players, but good luck with that. One scout told ESPN.com that **Josh Willingham** is the only Oakland player (aside from starting pitchers) he'd recommend to his club ... The way the Giants are hiding from the media after games these days, you'd think they were in a full-blown crisis.

That is hardly the case; they're in first place and probably will win the division. But it was disturbing to learn that some 40 minutes after Thursday's 3-0 loss to the Reds, **Miguel Tejada** (who hurriedly dressed and left) was the only offensive player at his locker. They should take a tip from **Jeff Kent**, who for all his interpersonal deficiencies, made himself available in good times and bad, even if his teammates stayed out of sight ... At the ballpark Thursday night, I tried to make a case for the Giants' lineup — hey, it's not that bad — to a team insider. His answer: "Who scares you" if you're the opposition? Good question ... **Buster Posey** was getting peppered by minor injuries before his season-ending collision, so the Giants hardly "overreacted," as one draft expert claimed, by spending their third pick on Oregon State's **Andrew Susac**, considered the best defensive catcher in the draft and a hitter with power potential ... Different organization, vastly different circumstances, but the Nationals moved the best prospect in baseball — **Bryce Harper**, who is tearing up the minor leagues — from catcher (his natural position) to the outfield last August ... **Jose Pagan** passed away this week, recalling a special time in the Giants' history.

When Pagan reported to camp in 1960, he had six Latin American teammates — **Juan Marichal**, **Orlando Cepeda**, **Felipe Alou**, **Matty Alou**, **Andre Rodgers** (Bahamas) and **Ramon Monzant** (Venezuela) at a time when several teams had none at all. When Dodger Stadium opened in 1962 in Chavez Ravine, with a huge Latino fan base in the immediate area, the Dodgers' only Latin American player was little-used pitcher **Phil Ortega**, who was born and raised in Arizona ... New Warriors coach **Mark Jackson** was so close to getting the Knicks' job three years ago, he was actually assembling a staff when GM **Donnie Walsh** changed his mind and chose the more established **Mike D'Antoni** ... Jackson on ABC during the NBA Finals: "People think I'm crazy, but I think **Dwyane Wade** is the third-best shooting guard in history, behind **Michael Jordan** and **Kobe Bryant**." He might need a reminder that one of his new bosses, **Jerry West**, was the greatest pure shooter in the history of the game, unstoppable off the dribble and infinitely more reliable than Bryant in the clutch (as well as a tremendous defensive player). If you saw West in person, there isn't a doubt in your mind.

Ninth-inning rally ends A's losing streak

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

CHICAGO -- Play for the minute.

A's interim manager Bob Melvin has been around for all of two days, but he's already made it known that he very much believes in that simple approach.

His players, entering Friday's contest against the White Sox riding a season-high 10-game losing streak, decided to quickly put the four-word sermon to use, and, in turn, extensively expand their minutes by rallying for a two-out, four-run comeback in the ninth inning for a 7-5 victory.

It marked the first win of Melvin's tenure as manager. Moreover, it brought back a dose of much-needed passion and momentum that had long been missing during the club's miserable stretch that paved the way for Bob Geren's departure and a last-place standing in the American League West.

At the end of the day, it was just one win, and the club still stands an eight-game distance from first place. But it could ultimately represent much more should the A's utilize it as the beginning of a rebirth under Melvin.

"We were talking in the bullpen yesterday, saying how we have 99 games going into yesterday, and let's be the best team in the AL West in those 99 games and see where we're at at the end of the year," Andrew Bailey said. "That's our mentality as a bullpen, and, I think, from a team perspective."

Bailey did his part on Friday, capping off the thrilling night by pitching a perfect ninth inning for his first save of the season. Never would he have had that chance, though, had his teammates not pushed through in the top half of the frame.

Entering the inning down, 5-3, the A's appeared well on their way to their 11th straight loss. But a Josh Willingham walk -- following an 0-2 count -- and an ensuing RBI single from Hideki Matsui with two strikes and two outs against White Sox closer Sergio Santos jump-started a memorable scene for Melvin.

After walking Daric Barton and hitting Kurt Suzuki with a pitch, Santos fired a 1-0 fastball toward Scott Sizemore, who proceeded to clear the bases with a go-ahead three-run double and set off the cheering squad nearby in the visitors' dugout.

"Did you see everybody up on the railing?" Melvin asked. "They did that on their own. Beginning of the inning, everyone on the back of the bench came to the top rail because everyone had a good feeling about the way we were playing tonight.

"I know we came down to one pitch and were one pitch from losing, but everybody was encouraging their teammates, and that's important, because you can feel that as a guy that's out there on the field."

Like Melvin, Sizemore is also a newcomer. Brought in to improve inconsistencies at third base just five days earlier, he wasn't around for the entire length of the losing streak. That doesn't mean he didn't find just as much joy in seeing it come to an end, though.

"These guys have been through a rough stretch," he said. "I've only been here five days now, so it's just a great feeling to contribute.

"Santos throws so hard. If you're not ready for the fastball, he's going to blow you away. I was looking to get a strike from the fastball and adjust from there. I got a good pitch to hit and didn't miss it."

The comeback voided a loss for rookie hurler Graham Godfrey, who took to a big league mound for the first time in the injured Brett Anderson's stead. The 26-year-old right-hander looked polished in a handful of frames, but he also surrendered five runs. Normally, that would make for a mixed bag of emotions, but Godfrey couldn't keep away a smile after watching the ninth-inning dramatics.

"I could hear the guys in the dugout yelling and screaming about five seconds ahead of the tape delay," he said. "Just an awesome feeling. I'm excited to be a part of this."

So is Melvin, who has used his new role to bring about a handful of lineup changes, several of which were on display Friday. One particularly stood out, as Cliff Pennington -- finding a groove in his new No. 2 home -- went 3-for-5 with two doubles and an RBI.

Pennington got things going early in the first, as the A's jumped on the board quickly when he doubled and, after advancing on a Ryan Sweeney groundout, scored courtesy of an RBI single off the bat of Willingham.

Oakland's 1-0 lead lasted all of a few minutes, though, as the White Sox tagged Godfrey for two runs in the bottom half of the frame thanks to Paul Konerko's two-out, two-run homer to left-center field. Godfrey, with several family members in the stands, proceeded to find more trouble by loading the bases, but struck out Gordon Beckham to end the threat.

Pennington knotted the game in the third with a run-scoring single that plated Jemile Weeks, who led off the frame with a triple. The speedy Weeks, who has played in just four Major League games while filling in for Mark Ellis (hamstring), already has two three-baggers and has also impressed with his defense.

Godfrey, meanwhile, compiled three clean frames before Chicago posted a three-spot in the fifth. He left with five earned runs, nine hits, two walks and two strikeouts attached to his name in 4 1/3 innings of work.

Oakland narrowed Chicago's three-run lead to two in the seventh on an RBI groundout from pinch-hitter Conor Jackson, whose bouncer to second base scored Coco Crisp.

However, the play-by-play of every inning but the ninth was of no interest to an A's team that savored every ounce of that frame.

"We were coming home with that one," Bailey said.

Anderson to get second opinion on elbow

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

CHICAGO -- A's lefty Brett Anderson is scheduled to see noted orthopedic surgeon Dr. James Andrews in Florida on Monday for a second opinion on his sore left elbow.

Anderson, placed on the 15-day disabled list on Tuesday, initially underwent an MRI on his elbow with the team orthopedist earlier in the week and, according to a source, had expressed concern even before that visit that Tommy John surgery would be a likely option if his ulnar collateral ligament is torn.

That would be the worst-case scenario for the A's, who would be without Anderson for about a year's time should he need to undergo the operation.

Anderson endured two stints on the disabled list last season because of elbow problems and was subsequently limited to 19 starts. Upon his return, though, he compiled a 2.98 ERA.

The A's southpaw struggled in his last two starts, surrendering a combined 14 earned runs against the Yankees and Red Sox, along with four homers and five walks, in just 10 1/3 innings. Following a loss in Boston on Sunday, he noted that his slider -- normally his best pitch -- has not been as sharp as normal and he has not pitched with his usual velocity.

The A's have already lost three starters to injury within the first two months of the season, and that's not even including Rich Harden, who has yet to pitch in a game. Lefty Dallas Braden is out for the year after undergoing shoulder surgery, and right-handers Brandon McCarthy (shoulder) and Tyson Ross (oblique) are expected to be sidelined for at least another month.

Pennington to get a look in the No. 2 slot

CHICAGO -- Until recently, it was always an easy decision for former A's manager Bob Geren to insert Daric Barton in the second spot of the lineup.

For interim manager Bob Melvin, who replaced the departed Geren on Thursday, it was just as obvious of a choice to do the same with Cliff Pennington.

"He can handle the bat, he's a switch-hitter, so you're always going to have a matchup; he can bunt and we can use him to hit and run," Melvin said of Pennington, previously a No. 9-hole regular. "So, for me, it was kind of a natural fit.

"I know Barton is a consideration there because of the on-base percentage, but it just seems, recently, he's a little more comfortable down in the lineup and he can drive in some runs down there. It was actually an easy decision to make and one I'm probably going to stick with for a while."

Barton, meanwhile, was handed his first start under Melvin in the sixth spot, where he hit three times with Geren at the helm following lengthy struggles at the plate. The A's first baseman entered Friday 7-for-13 with four walks in that slot for a 1.262 OPS. Those numbers, obviously, come from a small sample size, but Melvin appears eager to expand it.

Pennington, then, will receive a long look hitting behind Coco Crisp. He entered Friday's contest against the White Sox batting .312 over his past 27 games after hitting just .217 in his first 35.

Melvin's decision proved fruitful from the start, as Pennington notched a first-inning double against Chicago righty Edwin Jackson and scored on Josh Willingham's single.

Matsui to be A's regular designated hitter

CHICAGO -- After staring down the splits, new A's interim manager Bob Melvin faces no qualms in making veteran slugger Hideki Matsui the club's everyday designated hitter, no matter the opposing arm on the mound.

Melvin is well aware that wasn't the case when his predecessor was running the show. Bob Geren handed Matsui just nine starts against left-handed hurlers, compared to 37 when the team was up against a righty.

But the numbers tell their own story. Entering Friday, Matsui was hitting .210 with a .267 slugging percentage against right-handers and .233 with a .465 slugging percentage against southpaws. Overall, his career splits are overwhelmingly similar - .287 average with a right-hander on the mound, and a .285 mark against lefties.

"I look at stats, and Hideki Matsui is hitting better against left-handers than he is right-handers," Melvin said. "He's never had a problem against left-handed pitching, so just to see he wasn't playing against lefties ... I understand when you're in Bob Geren's situation, you're trying to do some things to shake it up, but when I looked, it kind of surprised me because I just assumed he had been struggling against left-handed pitching.

"That's nothing against Bob Geren. Trust me. He was doing everything he could and is very well respected, trying to get someone in there and be productive. I get that, but for me, I feel like Hideki Matsui needs to be in there, and we need his bat in the middle of the lineup for him to be productive."

Much like Geren often expressed, Melvin fully believes that Matsui will turn around a slow start that has brought about a lowly .215 average with just four home runs and 22 RBIs through the first two-plus months of the season. Age, he maintains, is not a factor.

"He's not as old as me," the 49-year-old Melvin joked when asked about Matsui, who turns 37 on Sunday. "I think the fact that he's DH'ing and not playing in the field, he can still swing the bat. He prepares very well and is very diligent. Guys who understand themselves and how to prepare, as they get further along in their career, can bridge that gap to where you get a little bit older but you get a little wiser as well. I see him to be that type of guy."

Whether Matsui sees as many at-bats during Interleague Play beginning next week is unknown, but Melvin said he is at least willing to entertain the idea of giving him outfield time -- a decision he will ultimately make based on a forthcoming conversation with Matsui.

Harden looks good in BP session

CHICAGO -- Good news from a depleted A's pitching staff has been rare, making righty Rich Harden's successful live batting-practice session in Chicago on Friday all the more encouraging.

Harden, nursing a sore lat muscle back to health, threw 20 pitches in the session and fielded nothing but good reports from his spectators, including a new one from interim skipper Bob Melvin.

"He looked good to me," Melvin said. "I know he had a little setback, but it was good to see him out there feeling good about himself."

"The Rich Harden that I know is that guy who sneaks the ball by the hitters and it's got that little wrist pop for the last 15 or 20 feet, where the ball explodes. You were certainly seeing that today, with some of the swings the hitters were taking. That was encouraging to see."

The A's will of course continue to be cautious with Harden, who has yet to pitch in a game this season and has a long history of injuries, evidenced by his 10 career stints on the disabled list. But as long as there continue to be no more setbacks with the proven right-hander, the A's will seek his help down the line as they try to offset numerous injuries to their starting staff.

"Here's a pitching club that relies on its pitching, so that dynamic plays into what's going on here," Melvin said. "You see someone who's getting close, someone who could have an impact, I think everybody feels good about that."

Cramer optioned, Kouzmanoff outrighted

CHICAGO -- In making the move to bring up pitcher Graham Godfrey from the Minors, the A's optioned left-hander Bobby Cramer to Triple-A Sacramento and, to clear a spot on the 40-man roster, outrighted Kevin Kouzmanoff to Sacramento after he cleared waivers.

Godfrey, who made his Major League debut against the White Sox on Friday, had combined for a 7-1 record and 2.32 ERA in 10 starts between Double-A Midland and Sacramento. The 26-year-old righty leads the Pacific Coast League in ERA and also boasts the lowest opponents' batting average (.222).

Cramer was in the midst of his third stint with the A's this year, having been shuffled in and out of the big leagues because of myriad injuries and bullpen shuffling. The lefty, who pitched 3 2/3 scoreless innings in relief of Trevor Cahill in Chicago on Thursday, did not allow a run in two outings.

Kouzmanoff, meanwhile, is now not on the 40-man roster. Optioned to Sacramento on Monday, the 29-year-old third baseman hit a home run in his first game with the River Cats on Thursday night.

Worth noting

- A's interim manager Bob Melvin acknowledged before Friday's game that the club is missing a true No. 3 hitter. Conor Jackson has received the most starts (28) there this season, and David DeJesus isn't too far behind with 22. Ryan Sweeney (8) and Josh Willingham (7) are the only other players to start in the coveted slot. Melvin noted he particularly likes what Jackson and Sweeney bring to the No. 3 slot. Neither, though, is considered an everyday player.

"They're guys that work the count, have good, natural swings," he said. "For guys that aren't playing every day, to put them in the three spot is a little against the grain of what you normally do. Looking at it from afar, I was always thinking, why are those guys hitting third if they're not playing every day?"

"But Bob Geren did the right thing there. These guys are pure hitters and, without a prototypical No. 3 guy, it made some sense and it made sense in my lineup as well."

- Melvin is understandably still finding familiarity with his new team. Speaking on Friday of his Thursday debut in the pilot's seat, he said, "At the beginning of the game yesterday, there were times I had to wait for a player to cross by me so I could look at the back of his uniform to know who he was."

- A's outfielder Coco Crisp entered Friday just three hits shy of 1,000 career hits.

Oakland, Chicago's Danks battle to keep positive vibes

By Tyler Jett / MLB.com | 6/11/2011 1:38 AM ET

If John Danks wins on Saturday, he can call it a streak. Of course, A's starter Gio Gonzalez might have something to say about that.

Danks earned his first win of the season against the Mariners on Monday -- in his 12th start of the season. Danks has been solid but has been plagued by a lack of run support. That was pretty much the case again against Seattle, but the White Sox managed to get three runs across the plate, which was more than enough.

Danks allowed one unearned run on seven hits and one walk in 7 1/3 innings to pick up his inaugural win of 2011. For manager Ozzie Guillen, and surely other members of the team, the victory provided a relief.

"When Danks was pitching, my heart's like, 'Come on, we've got to win this game for him,'" Guillen said. "'I should take him out right now. If I take him out and we blow this game for him ... ' Those things go through my mind, just for my players. Maybe they don't think about it."

Gonzalez, meanwhile, is coming off a loss to the Orioles. Gonzalez got off to a rough start, allowing four runs in the first two innings. He recovered and pitched five scoreless innings before getting pulled, but he received little run support and took the loss.

That has been a theme for the A's lately, who before Friday's dramatic comeback win had lost 10 straight games.

"You have to try to separate and get away from it," said new interim manager Bob Melvin, who replaced Bob Geren on Thursday. "The best way to do that is put yesterday away and not be concerned about tomorrow. Play for the day and play for the minute, for the at-bat. As a pitcher, play for the pitch. It's a difficult proposition when you're in a losing streak, and there are a lot of things going on and changes and so forth. It gets you out of your routine."

A's: Coco close to milestone

- Center fielder Coco Crisp is two hits away from career knock No. 1,000. He went 1-for-6 on Friday.
- Melvin indicated that Hideki Matsui will be the A's regular designated hitter against righties and lefties.
- As part of Melvin's initial lineup changes, Cliff Pennington moved up to the No. 2 slot in the lineup on Friday and went 3-for-5 with an RBI.

White Sox: Rios, Dunn looking to get back on track

- Outfielder Alex Rios is slowly raising his average after a horrid April, when he hit .163. He is hitting .300 this month, including multi-hit games on Thursday and Friday, when he went 2-for-4 with a double.
- Designated hitter Adam Dunn, meanwhile, continues to struggle. He is just 4-for-26 this month, including a 1-for-3 effort on Friday against the A's.

"I just play him," Guillen said, referring to how he deals with every player who struggles. "I say, 'Look at me: I played 16 years without getting hits.' People have to believe who they are. ... If you are a .250 hitter, you will be hitting .250 or .260 in September or October. You will find a way to even up with your numbers. Things even up."

Worth noting

- White Sox starting pitchers rank third in the American League with a 3.46 ERA at home this season.

- Chicago catcher A.J. Pierzynski has caught the most innings in the AL this year. Baltimore's Matt Wieters has caught the second most -- two-thirds of an inning less than Pierzynski.
- Oakland's last losing streak that spanned 11 games or more in a single season came 17 years ago, when the A's dropped 12 in a row from April 19-30 in 1994. They also lost 12 straight between Sept. 22, 1995 and April 4, 1996.

Gutierrez: New faces in new places pace A's epic win

Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com

And now, playing the role of Fantasy Island's Mr. Roarke, new A's interim manager Bob Melvin.

Smiles, everyone. Smiles.

Or did you not catch the shot of the A's congratulating themselves after their most satisfying victory of the season? Smiles, indeed..

And a huge sigh of relief. Are you ready for this nugget, courtesy of A's historian David Feldman? The A's became the first team since 1900 to snap a losing streak of 10 or more games by winning a game after trailing by two-or-more runs with two out and no one on base in their last at-bat.

Facing an 0-and-2 count with two out in the ninth inning, the A's entire team deserves credit for the spirit-lifting comeback victory. The spotlight, though, deserves to shine on three of the new guys, and an older guy batting in a new spot in the lineup.

- "Moonlight" Graham Godfrey was shaky at first, giving up a two-out, two-run home run to Paul Konerko before loading the bases and escaping further damage. He was charged with three more runs in the fifth inning and only went 4 1/3 innings, but the rookie right-hander, making his major league debut, kept things from spiraling totally out of control. He battled after his 36-pitch first inning.

- Jemile Weeks showed every dimension of his exciting game. His defense was showcased on a bare-handed pick-up of a grounder up the middle and cross-body throw out of Carlos Quentin in the second. The pop in his bat was exhibited in his third-inning triple. And his wheels were on display when he beat out an infield single in the fourth.

- Scott Sizemore had the game-winning hit, meeting White Sox closer Sergio Santos' 95-mph heater on 1-and-0 head on and driving it to the left-center wall for a bases-clearing double. It was Sizemore's third hit of the night.

- Cliff Pennington looks a lot more comfortable in the No. 2 hole than he ever did hitting ninth. All he did was go three for five with a pair of doubles and two runs scored. To be fair, the fired Bob Geren toyed with the idea of moving Pennington here, but it was Melvin who pulled the trigger.

Big ninth-inning rally carries A's to streak-breaking win over ChiSox

Sam McPherson, examiner.com

Phew.

With a slew of injuries and a lot of bad luck, it looked as though the Oakland Athletics could have lost 20 games in a row.

But thanks to a four-run rally in the ninth inning tonight in Chicago against the White Sox, the A's are winners for the first time in 11 games -- the 7-5 win snapped a ten-game losing streak that buried Oakland in the American League West division standings.

New manager Bob Melvin also got his first win with the team after losing his debut on Thursday.

And it was the new blood that delivered the victory: new third baseman Scott Sizemore's bases-loaded, three-run double in the top of the ninth gave the A's the lead, and All-Star closer Andrew Bailey got his first save of the year after spending two months on the disabled list.

Now that the monkey is off everyone's back, Oakland can focus on trying to salvage its season in the next seven weeks or so before the trade deadline: will they be buyers in the weak AL West or will they be sellers?

The A's currently stand eight games out in the division, and if they can cut that to four games by the All-Star break (July 11-13), the team might consider itself contenders.

Of course, a lot has to go right between now and then for that to happen -- and little has gone right for the A's this year.

Having lost four starting pitchers off the majors' best staff in the last three weeks means Oakland is starting a lot of green kids in the rotation right now: tonight, it was Graham Godfrey making his major-league debut.

The kid was rocked for nine hits and five runs in only 4 1/3 innings, with two walks and two strikeouts. Thanks to Sizemore's heroics, Godfrey didn't lose his debut -- but he has a long way to go to be an effective MLB starter for the A's.

In the end, though, Oakland will only go as far as its offense takes it -- as was the case last year. The pitching is sound enough to overcome some injuries, assuming some of the starters get back to the majors eventually in good health.

Sizemore's three-hit effort tonight is a nice bonus for the A's third-base hole in 2011 -- and Jemile Weeks is hitting .400 early in his MLB career after his call-up earlier this week to replace the injured Mark Ellis at second base.

If some of the other veterans can start hitting normally, maybe Oakland has a chance to get back in this.

And what a story that would be.

One win doesn't fix the problems, but it sure is nice to consider the what-ifs now.

Geren earned firing; Beane deserves blame

By LOWELL COHN, PRESS DEMOCRAT COLUMNIST

Here are criticisms of Bob Geren, fired Thursday morning as manager of the Oakland A's. These criticisms point directly at Billy Beane. More on Beane below.

In a conference call with reporters, Beane said he fired Geren because it's no good when the focus is on the manager instead of the team. Call this a clever diversion from the truth.

Beane fired Geren because he is not a smart manager -- he may not be a smart man. He famously got confused in interleague play in Chicago and forgot to double switch, or didn't know how, and was stuck with reliever Andrew Bailey leading off the ninth. He had to remove Bailey for a pinch hitter and lost the game 3-2.

When Ken Macha was A's manager, he developed a serious bloody nose and had to leave a game. It was his job to appoint someone to manage. Geren was Macha's bench coach but Macha appointed Rene Lachemann because he saw early what Geren was or was not. Geren has been outed all over the major leagues as a substandard manager and now he has been outed by his own team.

He lost his team this season. Reliever Brian Fuentes said publicly he had "zero" communication with Geren. What does it mean for a good manager to communicate with his players? It means he makes clear what their jobs are and what he expects of them.

Geren did not know the roles and could not communicate them, and that made Fuentes anxious. Players did not trust Geren to do what managers do. He lost the team and could not get it back, and Beane had to fire him. It is unusual to fire a manager in early June. But no one defended Geren. Not one A's player defended him. No one from other organizations defended him. No one.

With the media, Geren was humorless and bland and afraid to take a stand or say anything of consequence. He lacked self-assurance and his briefings were useless. This was a leader?

All of these criticisms of Geren are an indictment of Beane. It is difficult for me to write this. I go way back with Beane and like him very much -- he is overwhelmingly charming, great company, warm, thoughtful. He would be disappointed in me if I were not to tell the truth as I understand it.

Beane said it's bad when the focus is on the manager. Yes, but the focus should be on Beane -- a spotlight. He hired Geren in 2007 when he could have hired Ron Washington, the superior baseball man, a great teacher who had been the A's infield coach. Washington took Texas to the World Series last year.

Hiring Geren over Washington partly defines Beane -- Beane is a complex person and one definition can't come close. He gave the job to an inferior manager and it made you wonder. Did Beane want someone he could manipulate? Was Beane so afraid of a bright, talented, assertive man?

People are defined by their friends -- partly. You see Beane, so dashing, and then you see Geren, unimpressive, pedestrian, ordinary. And you ask, "This is Billy's best friend? Does this tell us who Billy really is?"

Does it?

Beane assembled the A's. Remember that. He is in charge. It was the usual deal -- great young pitching and nothing else. The infielders can't hit or catch the ball. The A's infield is a major-league disgrace. Beane let it happen, made it happen, just as he let Geren happen. Beane must be accountable for this continuing disappointment, for this dreary team.

Managing partner Lew Wolff must be accountable, too. Reporters call Wolff "Clarence" because he looks like George Bailey's guardian angel in "It's a Wonderful Life." You expect to see Wolff show up at the ballpark in his long johns looking to earn his wings.

He never will earn them at this rate. He is a complainer. He is cheap. He is waiting for a park in San Jose, which may never happen. Until then, he allows -- insists? -- Beane put some sort of product on the field, some sort of team. Just enough to be sort of respectable, never enough to win big. What a shame.

He gladly sticks out his hand and takes the revenue sharing that rich teams give him. He is a beggar even though the A's owners are fabulously wealthy, one of the fattest, richest ownership groups around. He is a taker, always taking. He never gives.

He and Beane and whoever the manager is -- Bob Melvin, nice guy, on an interim basis -- try to fool us that the A's mean business, actually want to contend. Until further notice, that is not true. Call it the big lie.

Near the end of Thursday's conference call, one reporter asked if the A's still can win the division.

"I'm going to get Bob (Melvin) up to speed," Beane replied. "We're going to get through the day. As far as making predictions, it's not the right time to even consider that."

That's quite a call to arms for the fan base. The A's may as well wave the white flag. They always do.

Former A's manager Geren ready to help coach sons

By JANIE McCAULEY, AP Baseball Writer

Bob Geren will be back on the baseball diamond in a matter of weeks.

The former Oakland Athletics manager, fired Thursday with his club mired in a nine-game losing streak, is set to help coach his two sons in the Hawaiian Collegiate Baseball League this summer on the island of Oahu. Geren spoke to The Associated Press on Friday in his first public comments since being dismissed.

Geren returned to the Bay Area late Thursday from the team's road trip. He was set to attend the high school graduation of youngest son, Brett, on Friday night.

Oakland general manager Billy Beane made the tough choice to fire his longtime friend, saying a change was needed after Geren's four-plus seasons.

Pair of A's minor leaguers get drug suspensions

Associated Press, Friday, June 10, 2011

Two players in the Oakland A's organization have been given 25-game suspensions for violating the minor league drug and treatment program.

The commissioner's office announced Friday that right-handed pitcher David Mota and shortstop Wilfrido Sosa have been penalized.

Both players are on the roster of Class A Vermont. The suspensions will take effect when the New York-Penn League season begins.

Bob Geren discusses his firing as A's manager

Janie McCauley, Associated Press

Bob Geren realized full well that without regular wins this year his tenure managing the A's would be over.

"You can't manage a team for five years and not win and expect to still be the manager," Geren said Friday, speaking to the Associated Press in his first public comments since being fired a day earlier. "I completely understand the game. I knew that five years ago. It's not a shock. I'm levelheaded and understand how the game works. I'm grateful for the opportunity."

Oakland general manager Billy Beane made the tough choice to fire his longtime friend, saying a change was needed after Geren's four-plus seasons in the dugout. Geren posted a 334-376 record, including 27-36 this year after the A's began 2011 with hopes of winning the AL West with an upgraded offense. Instead, it's been more of the same: a rash of injuries and lack of runs.

The A's have dealt with much of their talented young rotation being hurt, too.

"I feel great," Geren said of his frame of mind. "I am the most thankful person to the organization for giving me a chance."

Geren had extensive managerial experience in the minors and winter ball before Beane gave him a shot.

It's the first time the franchise has let a manager go during the season in a quarter century. Former Arizona and Seattle skipper Bob Melvin was named interim manager for the rest of the season. The A's lost to the White Sox at Chicago on Thursday in Melvin's debut.

The 49-year-old Geren, let go in the final year of his contract and with his club mired in a nine-game losing streak, was criticized recently for a lack of communication by reliever Brian Fuentes. Former A's closer Huston Street also publicly spoke out against him.

"I look at it that I gave 100 percent every single day that I worked for this organization and I'm completely comfortable with how I treated everybody," Geren said. "You can never manage as many teams as I have and keep everybody happy. It's impossible to do that. You're never going to keep everybody completely satisfied. The effort I gave and how I conducted myself on and off the field, I'm happy about that."

When Geren got the job after the 2006 season - promoted from bench coach to replace the fired Ken Macha - he said he considered his communication skills one of his strengths. Several players had expressed their frustrations with Macha's ways after the '06 AL West champions ended with a four-game sweep by the Detroit Tigers in the ALCS.

Geren will be back on the baseball diamond in a matter of weeks. He is set to help coach his two sons in the Hawaiian Collegiate Baseball League this summer on the island of Oahu.

Geren said he will coach on a part-time basis, spending two stints in Hawaii to cover at least half of the summer season.

"First and foremost I love baseball," Geren said. "When you get a chance to work with kids and their only agenda is to get better, work hard and enjoy themselves, it will be a fun opportunity."

Geren returned to the Bay Area late Thursday from Oakland's road trip. He was set to attend the high school graduation of youngest son, Brett, on Friday night. The A's drafted the catcher from San Ramon Valley High in the 42nd round this week.

Brett will attend Princeton and play baseball alongside older brother Bobby.

For now, Geren is going to cherish this rare family time he has never had in the middle of a pressure-packed 162-game season. He and wife, Pam, have been married 27 years and he has never had a summer off.

Will the former catcher manage again?

"I have no idea. It's possible," Geren said. "There are only 30 jobs. It's not a really easy opportunity to get. Right now I'm not thinking about that at all."

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Sacramento drops third game in a row

By Max Lush / Sacramento River Cats

Friday night's game against the Tacoma Rainiers started exactly the way the River Cats had hoped. Starting pitcher Travis Banwart pitched a scoreless first inning, allowing only one base runner. Then shortstop Eric Sogard led off the home half of the inning with a triple to deep right-center field, and scored two batters later on Kevin Kouzmanoff's ground out to shortstop.

After the first inning, however, Rainiers pitcher Luke French held the River Cats bats in check, allowing only one more run. The left-hander allowed only eight base runners in 6.0 innings of work.

Banwart had trouble closing innings, allowing a single and a home run with two outs in the third inning. In the fourth he allowed a two-out single that scored two runs for Tacoma. Sacramento Manager Darren Bush took out Banwart in the fifth after he allowed two lead off singles. One run would score after Jerry Blevins came in relief, making the score 5-1 Tacoma.

"When you get the two outs, you have to get that third out," pitching coach Scott Emerson said. "When you don't get that third out it's not a lot of fun."

Banwart allowed eight hits and three walks while striking out five in four-plus innings of work. The right-hander has allowed 17 earned runs over his last three starts (14.0 innings).

The 5-1 deficit proved too much for the River Cats, who scored a run in the fifth inning on Kouzmanoff's RBI single to score Shane Peterson. The loss is the River Cats' fifth of the season and second at home when scoring first.

The bullpen did its best to keep Sacramento in the game with Blevins, Trystan Magnuson, and Willie Eyre combining to pitch 5.0 scoreless innings, allowing two base runners while striking out seven.

"The bullpen, all season, has been great," Emerson said. "We just need out starters to get out of the gate and get us to the seventh inning."

The River Cats threatened in the bottom of the ninth, loading the bases with one out on two singles and a walk before Sogard flied out to right and catcher Josh Donaldson struck out swinging to end the game.

Peterson, Kouzmanoff and Sogard were the bright spots for the River Cats' offense, going 6-for-13 with Sogard and Peterson each scoring runs, while Kouzmanoff drove them both in.

Tacoma appears to have the River Cats' number at Raley Field, winning six of the past eight games here dating back to last season's first-round playoff series. Tacoma won games 1 and 2 of that series at Raley Field before winning the series 3-games-to-2. The River Cats are 18-9 at Raley Field against all other opponents this season. Only one other team in the Pacific Coast League has a winning record in Sacramento this season (Las Vegas, 3-1).

On Saturday night, River Cats right-hander Yadel Marti (3-1, 4.91) will face Rainiers right-hander Charlie Haegar (1-0, 7.20).

Hooks shut out 'Hounds

Jordan Mason, Midland Reporter-Telegram

The Midland RockHounds were hoping to string together consecutive wins for the first time in June after an invigorating come-from-behind win against Corpus Christi on Thursday that knotted up the RockHounds' home series.

Instead, Midland was the victim in a dominant one-hit performance by Hooks pitcher Dallas Keuchel as Corpus Christi grabbed control of the series in a 4-0 win at Citibank Ballpark Friday.

Keuchel frustrated the RockHounds for seven innings, retiring the first nine batters he faced and striking out eight batters on the evening.

The only hit he gave up came on a sharp Tyler Ladendorf single that went off the glove of third baseman Jimmy Paredes and into left.

"He was hitting spots," said RockHounds manager Steve Scarsone. "He wasn't giving us much to hit early in the count and still throwing strikes. You tip your hat to that. He made it tough on us."

Meanwhile, RockHounds pitcher Shawn Haviland was not as fortunate, as the Hooks made him pay for every mistake.

Jimmy Van Ostrand blasted a solo home run to left with a full count and two men down in the second while Jose Altuve smacked an RBI double to left in the first and beat a Grant Green throw to first for an RBI single in the fifth to power the Hooks offense.

"Seemed like every time he got the ball up they put the barrel on it," Scarsone said.

Haviland didn't help his cause with two wild pitches in the fifth, one that moved Paredes to third, allowing him to score on Altuve's infield single, and one that scored Van Ostrand.

Scarsone, however, put the onus on the RockHounds struggling offense.

"I thought he pitched pretty well," he said of Haviland. "Had we had any offense going he probably would have been in a position to get a win."

Midland must now look to salvage a series tie with the Hooks in the finale tonight at Citibank Ballpark before it begins a four-game series with Frisco on Sunday.

And despite the frustration of being unable to build any momentum Scarsone said his team will continue to fight.

"Sometimes you're going to get frustrated or you can go out the next day and try to get back on track, " he said. "That's what we'll try to do with our guys -- get them mentally ready to go out for tomorrow night's game."

'HOUND BITES: One night after his 14-game hitting streak was snapped, RockHounds center fielder Jermaine Mitchell saw his 31-game on-base streak, a Texas League season high, end Friday. ... Midland will look to get a series tie in the final tonight at 7 p.m. The last-place Hooks can move to within one game of the RockHounds in the Texas League South

standings with a win. ... The RockHounds wore special lavender uniforms with purple sleeves and purple caps Friday to promote cancer awareness. ... Postgame fireworks are scheduled for today's series finale against Corpus Christi, which starts at 7 p.m.

TODAY'S PROBABLES: RockHounds left hander Polin Trinidad (1-1, 11.32) is expected to return from the disabled list today while the Hooks are expected to start Erick Abreu (2-0, 3.06)

Late Miscues Cost Ports In 8-7 Loss

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. - On a night where Stockton Ports' offense finally appeared to be in high gear, it was the defense that went missing. After a lengthy battle and ninth-inning comeback, the Ports committed errors in each of the last two innings that led to a pair of unearned runs and ultimately an 8-7 loss to the Bakersfield Blaze.

Stockton struck first and scored a run in each of the first four innings of the game. With two outs in the 1st, Michael Choice doubled and eventually scored on an error committed by Blaze shortstop Didi Gregorius that put the Ports up 1-0. The Ports made it 2-0 in the 2nd on an RBI single from Conner Crumbliss, one of three straight hits that opened the inning off Blaze starter Mark Serrano.

Bakersfield got their first runs across in the last of the 2nd. With one on and two out, Chris Richburg homered to left to put the Blaze on the board and tie the score at 2-2. Two batters later, Ports starter Dan Straily gave up a double to Gregorius and then an RBI single to Brodie Greene that put the Blaze in front 3-2.

The Ports tied it at 3-3 in the 3rd on an RBI single from Ryan Ortiz. Serrano would finish the inning but go no further in the game. He allowed three runs on seven hits while striking out five.

In the 4th, the Ports took the lead back on a two-out RBI single from Chris Carter off Blaze reliever Tyree Hayes to make it 4-3. It was the only run allowed by Hayes in two innings of work.

The Blaze took the lead back and knocked Straily from the game in the bottom of the inning. Alex Buchholz doubled to start the inning and came home on an ensuing RBI single from Gregorius to tie the score at 4-4. Three batters later with two down, Yasmani Grandal doubled down the right field line to score Gregorius and give the Blaze a 5-4 lead, knocking Straily from the contest.

Straily went 3.2 innings and allowed five runs on seven hits while striking out five and walking two.

A.J. Huttenlocker took over for Straily and finished the 4th inning. After tossing a scoreless 5th, Huttenlocker was tagged for a run in the 6th. With two down, Josh Fellhauer and Grandal hit back-to-back doubles to extend the Blaze lead to 6-4. It was the only run allowed by Huttenlocker in 2.1 innings of relief.

With two down in the 8th, the Ports offense came back to life. Blaze reliever Mace Thurman walked Ortiz, and after Ortiz took second on a passed ball, Jason Christian drove him in with a single to right to cut the deficit to 6-5. Scott Gaffney (2-3) was then summoned from the pen and, after a wild pitch advanced Christian to second, allowed a game-tying single to Rashun Dixon that evened the score at 6-6.

In the 8th, the defensive miscues started becoming costly for the Ports. After tossing a scoreless 7th, Andrew Carignan was back on the hill for the 8th. With one out, Carignan walked Gregorius, and then got Green to hit a comebacker to the mound. In trying to start the 1-6-3 double-play that would've ended the inning, Carignan's throw was a bit off the mark to shortstop Michael Gilmartin at the bag. Gilmartin was charged with an error, and the next batter-Fellhauer-made the Ports pay with an RBI single to center to put the Blaze up 7-6. It was the only run allowed by Carignan in two innings of work and it was unearned.

The Ports, however, were not done. Myrio Richard led off the 9th by hitting his fourth home run of the season, this one to right-center off Gaffney to tie the game at 7-7. It was the only run allowed by Gaffney in 1.1 innings of relief. Gaffney would be credited with the win despite blowing the save and the lead in the top of the 9th.

More mistakes, however, would cost the Ports in the last of the 9th. With Josh Lansford (2-3) on the hill and one out, Mark Fleury hit a comebacker to the mound that Lansford knocked down. With plenty of time to throw to first, Lasnford hurried his throw and threw the ball into foul territory, allowing Fleury to get to second. After Fleury reached third on a wild pitch,

there was a scary moment where Lansford, on a 1-2 pitch, hit Richburg in the head with a fastball. Richburg would leave the field under his own power. Buchholz would come up next and drive a game-winning sac-fly to right to score Fleury and give the Blaze an 8-7 walk-off win.

Lansford would take the loss after allowing the unearned run in the 9th.

Carter, in his fourth game on rehab with Stockton, went 2-for-4 with two singles, two walks and an RBI.

With each team having won a game in the series, the Ports and Blaze will play Game 3 of their four-game set on Saturday night at Sam Lynn Ballpark. Murphy Smith (2-5, 4.42 ERA) will toe the rubber for Stockton, opposed by Bakersfield right-hander Curtis Partch (3-6, 6.06 ERA). First pitch is set for approximately 7:35 p.m. PDT.

Three-Run Eighth Inning Propels Whitecaps

By Jon Versteeg, Burlington Bees

BURLINGTON, IA- 3B Nick Castellanos (2-4) hit a three-run home run over the center field wall to give the West Michigan Whitecaps (28-33) a 5-4 win over the Burlington Bees (41-21) before 1,094 fans at Community Field on Friday night.

The Bees scored two runs in the second inning against West Michigan RHP Josue Carreno (4-6). SS Yordy Cabrera (2-3) walked and 1B A.J. Kirby-Jones (2-4) hit a two-run home run over the left field wall for a 2-0 lead.

Burlington scored another run in the third inning. CF Tyreace House (3-5) singled and went to second base on a groundout by LF Douglas Landaeta (1-5). A wild pitch moved House to third base and he scored on a single by Cabrera for a 3-0 lead.

West Michigan scored a single run in the fifth inning and got within one run in the sixth inning when 1B James Robbins (2-4) hit an RBI single before the three-run eighth inning against Burlington RHP Nate Long (4-1).

RHP Blake Hassebrock pitched seven innings and allowed two runs, (one earned), on five hits. He walked one and struck out four.

The Bees scored a single run in the ninth inning. PH Josh Whitaker (1-1) hit a double and went to third base on a single by House. 2B Ryan Pineda (0-1) grounded into a double play to score Whitaker and make the score 5-4.

The Bees and West Michigan Whitecaps continue their three-game series on Saturday at 6:30 p.m. Its "Friends and Family Night" with everyone running the bases after the game. It's also the 2011 Team Photo Giveaway. The first 500 fans will receive a free photo of the 2011 team sponsored by Burlington Trailways. It's also "American Cancer Society Night." The Bees will wear special jerseys to be auctioned off after the game with all proceeds benefiting cancer research. It's also "Mt. Pleasant Community Weekend." If you show your Mt. Pleasant area I.D, you can receive discounted general admission tickets. RHP Kevin Eichhorn (3-3, 4.02) gets the start for West Michigan against RHP Josh Bowman (5-1, 2.75) for Burlington.