

Oakland A's end losing trip with 5-4 defeat to Chicago White Sox

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

CHICAGO -- The A's final game of a brutal three-city trip ended Sunday with manager Bob Melvin arguing with first-base umpire Brian O'Nora.

Melvin was ticked at the final play of a 5-4 loss to the Chicago White Sox, where it appeared Coco Crisp might have beaten a throw to first on his ground ball with two runners aboard.

The scoreboard results in Melvin's first weekend on the job weren't pretty. The A's lost three of four at U.S. Cellular Field to conclude a 1-9 trip through Boston, Baltimore and Chicago.

But Melvin viewed his first four games as a step in the right direction.

"The effort in these four games was great," Melvin said. "It's not like I feel like flushing these four games out, because our guys played hard, and I feel like we're building something."

Melvin used the Chicago series to gain some clarity regarding his roster. He has plenty to consider as the A's begin a six-game homestand Tuesday against Kansas City.

Offensively, he must try to squeeze all the production he can out of a lineup that's lacking in impact hitters. The A's combined for just 10 hits over the final two games against the White Sox, though they rallied in the ninth Sunday before falling short.

The rotation, struggling to recapture its early-season form, is showing a tendency for giving up the big hit.

Guillermo Moscoso put together a very good 6 1/3 innings Sunday save for a curveball he hung to Adam Dunn, who smacked a three-run home run in the fourth that put the A's in a 3-1 hole.

"You make a (bad) pitch in this game, and you're going to pay for it," Moscoso said.

A's starters have gone 0-10 with a 7.24 ERA over the past 13 games.

For the second day in a row, the A's allowed the go-ahead run to score on a throwing error. After third baseman Scott Sizemore tied the score with a solo homer in the top of the seventh, he threw errantly to second on Carlos Quentin's fielder's-choice grounder in the bottom half, allowing Mark Teahen to score and break a 3-3 tie.

Paul Konerko followed with an RBI single off Grant Balfour that made it 5-3.

The A's 51 errors are one behind Texas for the most in the American League.

Before the game, Melvin had the team take infield practice, a rarity in the majors during the regular season. Melvin said he was a believer in taking infield while managing Arizona and would like the A's to do it on days they don't hold batting practice on the field.

"I don't want the first ball of the day that you see being the first ball (hit in a game)," Melvin said. "You work all spring long on team defense. It's a priority. Then you get into the season, and you never do it."

Crisp notched his 1,000th career hit in the first inning. The A's trailed 5-4 in the ninth and had runners on first and second with two outs when he came to bat again.

Crisp bounced a ball to third, and O'Nora called him out on a close play, ending the game.

"It looked to us like he was safe," Melvin said.

A's right fielder David DeJesus said he looks forward to returning home.

"We get a day off and get back in a (ballpark) where we're comfortable and have won some games," he said.

A's update: Ziegler sounds off on realignment discussion

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

CHICAGO -- The idea of league realignment has support in the A's clubhouse.

ESPN.com's Buster Olney reported over the weekend that talks are taking place between Major League Baseball and the players' association about possibly going to two 15-league teams, which would require a National League team to switch into the American League.

One possible plan, according to Olney, would split each league into three five-team divisions, with three division winners and two wild-card teams making up the postseason bracket.

A more outside-the-box proposal would do away with divisions altogether and let 15 teams in each league duke it out for the five playoff spots.

"With interleague play, you've got six teams in the N.L. Central and four in the A.L. West, it's not competitively fair," said reliever Brad Ziegler, the A's player representative. "If there's a way to tweak it and try something for five years, we should always look to (improve) things."

Ziegler takes part in a weekly conference call in which player reps are updated on negotiations toward a new collective bargaining agreement between players and owners.

The topic of realignment gets brought up during those calls, but Ziegler said specifics haven't been discussed.

The players would have to approve any realignment proposal.

"I'm in favor of making it more balanced and getting rid of the six- and four-(team divisions)," A's closer Andrew Bailey said.

After Adam Rosales started at third base Thursday, Scott Sizemore has started the past three games. Sizemore delivered a go-ahead three-run double in Friday's win and tied Sunday's game with a homer in the seventh. But he also committed errors in each of those games.

"His position is second, and Rosie moves around a little bit everywhere," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "We don't have a true third baseman right now, but we're not going to use that as an excuse. We're going to continue to work on our defense."

With no game Monday, Melvin altered his rotation so Trevor Cahill, Josh Outman and Gio Gonzalez will pitch Tuesday through Thursday against the Royals. Graham Godfrey gets his turn skipped, and Cahill and Gonzalez stay on turn.

Chin Music: A long and eventful road trip draws to a close

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 6/12/2011 10:53am

The A's will fly back to Oakland tonight after wrapping up a 10-game road trip. Think back to how different things will be from the last time they took the field at the Coliseum. A new manager in the dugout ... Cliff Pennington batting second ... Hideki Matsui batting third (though not today). It's been an interesting trip to say the least ...

—We just took in a pretty rare sight at U.S. Cellular Field. The A's took a full infield practice, which is common before spring training games but unusual for major league teams during the regular season. Manager Bob Melvin said he'd like to have the team take infield on days there's no batting practice on the field. "I've always been a proponent of infield, especially on days you hit in the cage," Melvin said. "I don't want the first ball of the day that you see being the first hit ball (in a game). You work all spring long on team defense, work as a unit on team defense, every day. It's a priority. Then you get into season and you never do it."

—A day after saying Matsui will be his regular No. 3 hitter, Melvin is batting Matsui fourth. That's because Josh Willingham's left Achilles tendon is acting up again, so the regular cleanup man is out of the lineup. Melvin expects to go back to the 3-4 combo of Matsui and Willingham for Tuesday's homestand opener against Kansas City.

—The starting rotation is being tweaked with Monday's day off. Trevor Cahill, Josh Outman and Gio Gonzalez will pitch Tuesday-Thursday in the Royals series, which keeps Cahill and Gonzalez on their regular rest. Graham Godfrey is being

skipped, but Melvin said he'll slot in somewhere in the next series against the Giants. Guillermo Moscoso, today's starter, would set up to pitch Friday's Bay Bridge series opener if he stays on his regular turn.

The lineups:

A's – Crisp CF, Pennington SS, Sweeney LF, Matsui DH, DeJesus RF, Barton 1B, Sizemore 3B, Powell C, Weeks 2B; Moscoso RHP.

White Sox – Pierre LF, Ramirez SS, Quentin RF, Konerko DH, Pierzynski C, Rios CF, Dunn 1B, Vizquel 2B, Teahen 3B; Humber RHP.

A's nipped by White Sox, umpire in 5-4 loss

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Monday, June 13, 2011

CHICAGO -- Changing managers doesn't necessarily help a team that can't field or throw strikes consistently. And Sunday, in something of a replay from the night before, poor defense and walks cost the A's at U.S. Cellular Field.

But in the end, only a real replay might have helped Oakland: The A's fought back to cut Chicago's lead to one in the ninth, but with the tying run at third, Coco Crisp was called out at first base to end the game. The White Sox sneaked off with a 5-4 victory as Oakland manager Bob Melvin hollered at first-base umpire Brian O'Nora.

CSN California replays seemed to show that Crisp, who'd knocked a grounder to third, beat the throw.

"It looked to us like he was safe," Melvin said.

After making three errors Saturday night, Oakland made one Sunday, but coming as it did after two seventh-inning walks by starter Guillermo Moscoso, it helped push Chicago ahead.

Moscoso, not altogether pleased with pitches called balls that he thought had been called strikes earlier in the game, left with two on and one out. Grant Balfour entered the game and, just like Brad Ziegler the evening before, got Carlos Quentin to hit what looked as if it might be an inning-ending double-play grounder to third.

Scott Sizemore, usually a second baseman until being traded to the A's organization last month, picked up the bouncer and threw it wide right of second baseman Jemile Weeks and into center.

Melvin noted Sizemore's lack of time at third and mentioned that the team does not have a true third baseman on the roster. Sizemore wouldn't use his inexperience as an excuse, saying he overran the ball a bit and then didn't get a good grip on it.

"I just threw it away," he said. "It's frustrating; Guillermo had pitched a great game to set us up to win it in the eighth or ninth, and I couldn't bail him out."

Sizemore did tie the game in the seventh inning with his first home run for Oakland.

He also contributed to the ninth-inning threat. Pinch-hitter Conor Jackson singled against Sergio Santos, and with one out, Sizemore walked. With two outs, Weeks banded a 1-2 pitch to center to send in Jackson and bring up Crisp.

Moscoso allowed five hits and four walks and struck out two while giving up five runs, four earned - three when Adam Dunn homered on a 1-2 curveball in the fourth.

Melvin, who hadn't seen Moscoso pitch before Sunday, liked his starter's stuff and said, "He's terrific. I'm really impressed."

In something of a plot twist, the A's had Chicago's starter, Phil Humber, briefly during the offseason after acquiring him on waivers from the Royals. Oakland cut Humber loose, however, after a trade with Texas ... for Moscoso.

Moscoso has been one of the A's more reliable starters since he came up, going 2-3 with a 3.91 ERA, but Humber has been even better for the White Sox: 6-3 with a 2.80 ERA as a starter.

A day after Melvin said that Hideki Matsui would be his No. 3 hitter, Matsui was batting cleanup, but Melvin said that was because Josh Willingham was out with a sore left Achilles tendon. Willingham will be back in the cleanup spot Tuesday and Matsui will bat third. Matsui drove in the A's first run Sunday with a sacrifice fly.

A's Bob Melvin calls for more infield practice

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Monday, June 13, 2011

CHICAGO -- - Oakland made three errors Saturday night, but that's not why the A's found themselves taking infield before Sunday's game.

Manager **Bob Melvin** had informed the team when he took the job Thursday that he'd have the A's take infield before some day games, so Sunday's work was not punishment for sloppiness the night before, he said. That's one of the reasons he was proactive about telling the players beforehand, so it wouldn't be misinterpreted.

Melvin said he also had pregame infield when he was at Arizona. His reasoning is that when the team hits inside in the cage before day games, he doesn't want the first ball hit to an infielder in a game to be the first one he has fielded that day.

The A's hadn't taken pregame infield for many years, and it's become increasingly unusual around baseball.

Rotation shuffle: With today's off day, Melvin is tweaking the rotation a bit, moving **Trevor Cahill** ahead of **Josh Outman** to start Tuesday against the Royals.

Outman will go Wednesday and **Gio Gonzalez**, working on a regular four days' rest, will start Thursday. **Graham Godfrey**, who made his big-league debut Friday, will get another start, but Melvin has not decided if Godfrey will go Friday or Saturday.

By moving Cahill up a day, he will go in the series against the Giants this weekend at the Coliseum.

Crisp update: **Coco Crisp** recorded his 1,000th career hit on a first-inning single. He added No. 1,001 in the sixth on a double. Crisp scored two runs.

A's leading off

Takes the cake: Hideki Matsui turned 37 and Japanese reporters bought him a big, elaborate birthday cake. Matsui, ever accommodating, blew out the candles not once but twice so all the reporters could get photos and video.

Drumbeat: Josh Willingham gets day off for sore Achilles; A's tweak rotation

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at U.S. Cellular Field 6/12/2011 9:59am

Manager Bob Melvin laughed when I asked about Hideki Matsui already being back out of the No. 3 spot that Melvin had said he was putting the DH in regularly.

"I should have come out here with a shoe in my mouth," Melvin said with a smile.

Matsui is batting cleanup today, on his 37th birthday, because Josh Willingham is out with a sore Achilles tendon, the same one that bothered him earlier in the trip. He'll have tomorrow's offday to rest it to and will be back batting cleanup on Tuesday, with Matsui returning to the No. 3 spot. Melvin said Willingham could pinch hit today.

With tomorrow's day off, Melvin is shuffling the rotation a bit, moving Trevor Cahill ahead of Josh Outman. Cahill will go Tuesday against Kansas City, Outman on Wednesday and Gio Gonzalez on Thursday. Graham Godfrey will get another start this week, but the day hasn't been decided. I presume he's getting in a little extra work with A's pitching coach Ron Romanick, which should be valuable since Godfrey wasn't in big-league camp this spring.

The A's are doing something today I haven't seen them do for eons - they're taking infield before the game. Melvin was clear that he'd already planned it and had mentioned it to the team Thursday; it's not punishment for last night's three errors.

Melvin's feeling: When the team hits in the indoor cage before the game rather than on the field, as is often the case with day games after night games, he doesn't want the first ball hit to an infielder to come in the game. He wants them to have taken some grounders already.

So this will be a semi-regular thing. You almost never see it anymore, though it used to be the norm. I know Ron Washington has the Rangers take infield some days, and the Japanese reporters say it's a daily thing in Japan.

The Japanese reporters presented Matsui with a big, beautiful cake this morning. I'll be tweeting (@susanslusser) photos of Matsui blowing out the candles later when the Japanese media gives me the OK - they don't want me scooping them before they can get their own photos published in Japan - because of the time difference, none of their photos would be put up on their own websites for quite a while.

They bought the cake, and it's now in the press box and it's delicious, so I'll honor the request. Happy birthday, Godzilla!

Posted By: Susan Slusser (Email, Twitter) | June 12 2011 at 09:59 AM

Error, close play put final stamp on A's trip

By Jane Lee / MLB.com | 6/12/2011 7:10 PM ET

CHICAGO -- Hardly anything went right for a scuffling A's team during a 10-game road trip that fortunately came to an end on Sunday.

Blown leads prevailed as the theme in Boston. Injuries highlighted a steamy Baltimore trip. And errors filled up the box score in a chilly Chicago scene. Nine losses and one new manager later, the A's are finally headed back to Oakland, hoping to wipe away the most recent burn that came from Sunday's 5-4 defeat to the White Sox.

Recently acquired infielder Scott Sizemore was a hero for all of a few minutes, notching his first homer as a member of the green and gold with a seventh-inning, game-tying shot before making a throwing error -- the club's 51st miscue of the season -- that put Chicago back on top.

The nonstop swing of momentum nearly turned again in the ninth, when Jemile Weeks singled home a run and Coco Crisp appeared to load the bases with two outs in a one-run game by beating out a grounder to third. Replays confirmed Crisp beat the throw, but first-base umpire Brian O'Nora thought otherwise, thus ending the game.

But not before new manager Bob Melvin exchanged a handful of words with him.

"It looked to us like he was safe," a calmed Melvin said.

Regardless of the outcome, Oakland's new head honcho is rather proud of what he's seen from his squad and wasn't about to deem his first series a failure.

"I wasn't at the beginning of the trip, but the effort for me in these four games here was great," Melvin said. "I do look forward to getting home, but it's not like I feel like I have to flush these four games out, because these guys played hard, and I think they're building on something. I think these four games actually ended up being a good thing."

He credited the team's effort level, tenacity and opportunistic ways. And, after learning his personnel within a quick span of four days, he's ready to see what that group can build on hereafter, never mind the eight-game deficit it faces in the American League West.

"Obviously, we would have liked to play better defense in this series, but it didn't affect us after [the errors]," Melvin said. "We didn't hang our heads. We put ourselves in a position where we felt like we could have won the game."

"Any time a team stays in it and doesn't give up at any point in the game, you know you always have a chance and you're going to be in the game until the last out," Sizemore said. "We were again today, just came up a little short."

Sizemore has endured an eventful seven days since joining the club upon third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff's demotion to Triple-A Sacramento. His Sunday shenanigans came just two days after he cleared the bases with a double in a four-run, ninth-inning comeback victory.

The bottom of the seventh inning began with starter Guillermo Moscoso putting runners on first and second via walks with one out, paving the way for his departure and righty Grant Balfour's entrance. The A's reliever induced a ground ball from Carlos Quentin to third, where Sizemore made a wide throw to second on a double-play attempt, allowing a run to score. Paul Konerko followed up with an RBI single to add insurance to Chicago's lead.

"More or less, I kind of overran the ball a little bit, so I caught it on my far right," Sizemore said. "So I don't know if it was a combination of me overrunning it and just maybe a slight kick to the right, but I didn't have a good grip on it and threw it. By that time, I had my mind made up, just threw it away."

An eerily similar scene came out of Saturday's loss, when reliever Brad Ziegler got just what he needed in a double-play ball, only to throw it away to the outfield and allow the White Sox to take a lead they never lost.

"As a team, you try not to give teams extra outs," Konerko said, "but on the flip side, it's great when you do get extra outs because, usually, it leads to runs and we're just thankful for that."

To Sizemore's credit, Melvin noted, he's not a natural third baseman. In fact, the A's don't have one, as Adam Rosales simply bounces around the infield. But Sizemore didn't offer any excuses, and neither did his manager.

"We don't have a true third baseman right now, but we're not going to use that as an excuse," Melvin said. "We're going to get better, and we're going to continue to work on our defense."

Oakland had jumped on the board early thanks to Crisp, who tallied career hit No. 1,000 with a leadoff single against White Sox right-hander Philip Humber in the first. The A's outfielder stole second base and, after advancing to third on Cliff Pennington's line-drive single to right, scored on a sacrifice fly from Hideki Matsui.

Meanwhile, Moscoso kept the White Sox in check through the first three innings, facing just two over the minimum. But the right-hander ran into trouble in the fourth, when he offered up a three-run homer to Adam Dunn to make it 3-1.

An RBI single by Ryan Sweeney in the sixth narrowed Chicago's lead to one before Sizemore's homer and ensuing fateful error tilted the scoreboard.

"You have to move on from that," Melvin said. "Everybody was grinding and playing hard. That's what we talked about the first day I got here, playing hard until the last out. Certainly the effort is definitely there."

Willingham out of A's Sunday lineup

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

CHICAGO -- A nagging left Achilles tendon strain kept A's outfielder Josh Willingham out of Sunday's lineup against the White Sox, putting designated hitter Hideki Matsui into the cleanup spot with left fielder Ryan Sweeney batting third.

Willingham didn't play a week ago because of the same soreness, and interim manager Bob Melvin noted, "I don't think it's gotten any worse, but he still feels it."

"With [Monday's] off-day and the long season, it should do him good," he said. "He's been run out there pretty hard, and we need him."

Melvin said he wouldn't rule out using Willingham as a pinch-hitter, and, in fact, sent him in to hit for Landon Powell in the ninth inning as the A's attempted a late rally in the 5-4 loss. Willingham, who flew out to right for the second out of the inning with two runners on base, has been the team's biggest run producer this season, with a team-high 10 home runs and 41 RBIs, despite a .235 batting average.

The lineup shift came less than 24 hours after Melvin had deemed Matsui the club's new No. 3 hitter.

"I should have come out here with the shoe in my mouth," he joked.

As long as Willingham is good to go for Tuesday's series opener against the Royals, Melvin will resume his plan of having Matsui bat third.

Melvin to employ pregame infield drills

CHICAGO -- A rare scene unfolded on Sunday morning, as Oakland's position players took to the field for pregame infield practice -- an oddity for the A's on days when they hit in the indoor cages.

However, it's not so unusual for interim manager Bob Melvin, who utilized the same practice regularly while managing in Arizona.

"I've always been a proponent of infield, especially on days when you hit in the cage," said Melvin. "A day game after a night game, it makes sense to hit in the cage, but I don't want the first ball of the day that you see being the first hit ball. I want you to break a little sweat."

The infield session followed Saturday's three-error performance -- tying the A's for the most miscues (50) in the American League -- but Melvin insisted it wasn't punishment. In fact, he notified his squad of his preference for such practice on his first day at the helm.

"You work all spring long working as a unit on team defense," he said. "Every day, it's a priority. And then you get into the season, and you never do it. There are just things that I think are conducive to good defensive play, if you do it as a unit. This team has to win as a unit, and that's why I like to do it."

Ironically, third baseman Scott Sizemore's errant throw in the seventh inning on Sunday allowed the go-ahead run to score in an eventual 5-4 loss.

Powell to get more opportunities under Melvin

CHICAGO -- A's interim manager Bob Melvin plans to take full advantage of backup catcher Landon Powell, utilizing him not just when regular Kurt Suzuki is in need of a day off but when he can "get him in there where he can have success."

"I want to try to profile what kind of hitter he is, who he's had success against, and try to get him in those games," Melvin said.

Powell received his first start behind the plate under Melvin on Sunday in the club's 5-4 loss, playing battery mate to right-hander Guillermo Moscoso. It marked his first start since June 4 against the Red Sox and just his 13th this year. Suzuki, meanwhile, had seen time in 27 over the last 29 days.

Melvin knows first-hand the demands of a big league catcher, having spent 10 Major League seasons behind the plate with seven teams.

"Kurt wants to play every day," he said. "He's able to do it, but you also want to keep him fresh. I think, even as a regular behind the plate when you're playing that much, you don't even understand the toll it takes on you.

"I want everyone to be part of it. We need to get [Powell] involved. He does a nice job behind the plate."

The 29-year-old Powell entered Sunday hitting .204 in just 49 at-bats this season and had tossed out three of eight basestealers. Powell struck out twice and walked once to lower his average to .196. Josh Willingham pinch-hit for him in ninth inning with two runners on base.

Worth noting

- Interim manager Bob Melvin announced his rotation for the A's three-game home set against Kansas City beginning on Tuesday. Righty Trevor Cahill will get the nod for the opener, and lefties Josh Outman and Gio Gonzalez will follow.

Despite Monday's off-day, Melvin said he's tentatively planning on keeping rookie Graham Godfrey, who made his Major League debut on Friday, in the rotation, meaning the right-hander will likely get a start against the Giants in Oakland next weekend.

- Daric Barton played his 420th career game at first base on Sunday, tying Scott Hatteberg for third most in Oakland history. Mark McGwire leads the pack by a long shot with 1,251 starts at first base, with Jason Giambi in second at 728.

- Entering Sunday, A's starting pitchers were winless over their previous 12 games, going 0-9 with a 7.39 ERA and a .322 opponents' batting average.

- Members of the Japanese media honored Hideki Matsui's 37th birthday on Sunday by presenting the A's designated hitter with a large cake. It's a tradition that has spanned 19 years.

Duffy, Cahill kick things off in Melvin's home debut

By Anthony Fenech / MLB.com | 6/12/2011 8:58 PM ET

From his time managing the Mariners, Bob Melvin is no stranger to the Oakland Coliseum.

"I've been in that other dugout," the interim skipper said. "I have not been in that first base dugout before. I've been down the clubhouse steps, just never taken that turn to the left."

On Tuesday, Melvin, who grew up attending games as a fan in the Bay Area, will get his first chance to manage from the home dugout as the A's host the Royals.

"It'll be neat," Melvin said.

But after being hired on Thursday in the midst of a nine-game losing streak and breaking it on Friday, Melvin's next order of business is to clean up the mess of a tumultuous road trip -- one in which the team lost nine games and a handful of players to injuries.

The A's recently dropped three of four to the White Sox.

On Sunday, Melvin announced staff ace Trevor Cahill as Tuesday's starter in an attempt to get the six-game home stand started on the right foot.

After exploding out of the gate, Cahill has lost his past four decisions and was roughed up by the White Sox on Thursday, allowing six earned runs on eight hits in 2 2/3 innings pitched, the shortest outing of his season.

Cahill has allowed three or more earned runs in each of his past four starts.

Opposing Cahill, and possibly pitching for his continued spot in the rotation, is lefty rookie Danny Duffy.

In six starts since being called up on May 18, Duffy is 0-2 with a 5.55 ERA and has been battling command issues.

The 22-year-old has averaged 96 pitches in just under five innings per start. He's walked 17 and struck out 18 in 24 1/3 innings and opponents are hitting .309 off him.

The Royals are embarking on a six-game road trip and make their first of three trips to the West Coast beginning on Tuesday.

Kansas City took two of three against the A's in early May.

Royals: Rotation changes looming

- Duffy took the rotation spot of Kyle Davies, who is likely to return along with starting pitcher Bruce Chen after their final rehab outings scheduled for Monday night with Triple-A Omaha.

The additions of Davies and Chen puts Duffy and Vin Mazzaro on the spot to perform well enough to secure a rotation spot. Mazzaro and Duffy are still listed as probable pitchers for the team's Saturday and Sunday games against the Cardinals, respectively.

A's: Willingham to return

- Outfielder Josh Willingham (left Achilles tendon) is expected to return to the lineup on Tuesday.
- Oakland is 1-10 in June, the lowest winning percentage in the American League.

Error, ump's game-ending call prove costly to A's

ASSOCIATED PRESS

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CHICAGO — Coco Crisp and the Oakland A's just can't catch a break.

A day after being robbed of a go-ahead two-run homer, Crisp was called out on a play he appeared to be safe on to seal a 5-4 victory for the Chicago White Sox over the A's on Sunday.

Down to their last out with runners on first and second, Crisp hit a grounder to third. Brent Morel fielded it and chose to throw to first instead of stepping on third.

First baseman Mark Teahen stretched to his left to catch Morel's throw as Crisp crossed the bag. First-base umpire Brian O'Nora signaled that Crisp was out, leaving him in disbelief.

"It looked to us like he was safe" said A's interim manager Bob Melvin.

Did he see the replay?

"Yeah."

And?

"I can't go there."

Replays seemed to show that Crisp beat the throw from Morel, which nearly brought Teahen off of first base. There were runners on first and second at the time, which meant Morel might have opted for the force play at third.

"I didn't see the replay, but I thought he had a better chance at third base, to tag the base, rather than throw across," White Sox manager Ozzie Guillen said. "As soon as he threw the ball to first, I said, 'That's a problem.'"

Crisp, whose 1,000th hit bid was stolen by a leaping Brent Lillibridge Saturday night, reached the milestone leading off the first inning.

Crisp was unavailable to talk after Sunday's game. Oakland dropped three of the four games in Chicago and has lost 12 of 13.

A's throwing error led to an unearned run that proved to be the difference.

The White Sox broke a 3-3 tie with two runs in the seventh, the first scoring on Carlos Quentin's grounder that could have been a double play. Playing third base, Scott Sizemore fielded and threw wide to second baseman Jemile Weeks. Teahen scored on the play and Alexei Ramirez later came around on Paul Konerko's RBI single.

"It was a combination of me overrunning it and a slight kick to the right," Sizemore said. "I didn't have a good grip on it and threw it. By that time, I had my mind made up. I just threw it away."

Oakland committed six errors in the four-game series and the A's have 51 errors in 67 games. The Texas Rangers are the only American League team that has committed more.

"We don't have a true third baseman right now, but we're not going to use that as an excuse," Melvin said. "We're going to continue to work on our defense and it's going to get better."

Adam Dunn hit a three-run homer off of A's starter Guillermo Moscoso in the fourth to back seven strong innings by Phil Humber.

"You can't lose concentration after that," Moscoso said. "I kept my focus and pitched two more innings and we tied the game."

Moscoso (2-3) allowed baserunners in every inning except the first, but lasted one out into the seventh. He gave up six hits, five runs — four earned — four walks and struck out two.

"He keeps the ball down, locates, throws breaking balls behind in the count, throws changeups to right-handers as well," Melvin said. "I was extremely pleased."

Humber (6-3) pitched at least seven innings for the fifth straight start, allowing three runs, four hits, two walks and a homer. He struck out a career-high seven. Humber is 5-1 with a 2.53 ERA over his last nine starts.

The Athletics scored a run off Chicago closer Sergio Santos in the ninth, but Santos was able to nail down his 12th save on the Crisp groundout.

Sizemore's solo homer off Humber in the seventh tied it at 3. Three of Sizemore's four career homers have come as a visiting player at U.S. Cellular Field.

Crisp had two hits, two runs and a stolen base for Oakland.

The White Sox finished 6-4 on their 10-game homestand and wrapped up just their second season series victory against Oakland since 2001. The Athletics have lost 12 of 13 and their starting pitchers are 0-10 over their past 13 games.

NOTES: A's LHP Brett Anderson is scheduled to meet with orthopedist Dr. James Andrews on Monday to get a second opinion on his ailing left elbow. ... Humber was a member of the Oakland organization for about a month during the offseason, before being waived to make room for free-agent signee Grant Balfour. ... Dunn struck out against Oakland reliever Brian Fuentes in the eighth. Dunn is hitting .031 (1 for 47) against left-handed pitching this season.

A's give up another unearned run, lose 5-4 to Chicago to finish road misery

Sam McPherson, examiner.com

Amidst all the other issues, the Oakland Athletics defense has been terrible in 2011.

Forget the endless parade of injuries. Forget the bottom-of-the-league offense.

The defense has been a tragic comedy of errors, and the latest act occurred today in Chicago as the A's dropped their 12th in the last 13 games with a 5-4 loss to the White Sox.

Thanks to an error by third baseman Scott Sizemore -- yes, he clearly fits right in with his new teammates, as it was his fifth official miscue of the season -- the White Sox scored an unearned run in the seventh inning of a tie game to secure the victory and subdue the A's again.

Oakland scored a run in the ninth inning, but they couldn't replicate their comeback win from Friday night. This loss was their 15th this year by one run, so between the bad offense and the bad glove work, it's clear the A's could have been a lot better this year with a slight improvement in either area.

Throw in the great pitching staff, and you see how the equation has been such a highwire balancing act that the team simply just fell off in the last two weeks.

The A's have now made 51 errors on the year, trailing only Texas (52) in the American League. The Rangers compensate with a good offense, however, and solid pitching. Oakland doesn't have the offensive support to overcome their defensive lapses, as everyone knows.

But errors themselves can also be meaningless if the team recovers from them.

Oakland doesn't.

The A's have given up 36 unearned runs this year, runs that the other team scored because of the defensive errors Oakland has made. And that's the highest number of free runs any team in the AL has surrendered in 2011.

So while everyone focuses on the offensive deficiencies this team displays regularly, an equally-large disaster has occurred when the team is fielding the ball.

It truly makes no sense to put together a great pitching staff while neglecting the defensive support behind those pitchers.

But who said anything the A's do these days makes sense?

So Oakland finishes its tough, U2-mandated roadtrip with a 1-9 record, and they head home, wounded and weary, with a 28-39 record -- eight games out of first place with only one win this month.

They get a day off before Monday playing three games against the Kansas City Royals.

Let's see if new manager Bob Melvin finds a cure for the defense.

Gutierrez: Crisp was safe, Melvin shows fire

Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com

A few notes and observations from the A's 5-4 loss to the Chicago White Sox at U.S. Cellular Field on Sunday...

- Coco Crisp was safe. Yup, the CSN California feed of the game showed a shot from center field that had Crisp dragging his foot across first base a split-second before Brent Morel's throw from third base arrived into Mark Teahen's glove. First-base umpire Brian O'Nara had relatively the same view. So why did he delay the call? Keep in mind, Crisp being called safe would have only loaded the bases for Cliff Pennington with two out in the ninth.

- Good to see some fire from Bob Melvin. The A's interim manager jumped O'Nara when he made the ill-fated call. And if you can read lips, you know he wasn't exactly inviting out for tea and crumpets. Players have to know their skipper has their back, and four games into his tenure, Melvin showed them exactly that with his going after O'Nara. Even if everyone knew it was all for nothing.

- First, the lack of offense hurt the A's. Then, their starting pitching began to falter. Sunday, it was the defense. Scott Sizemore's throwing error in the seventh inning, when he tried to make a spectacular, inning-ending double play but instead threw the ball into right field, was Oakland's American League-leading 50th error of the season. Which leads to...

- Absolutely digging the A's taking infield practice before the game. If not to merely get a feel for the field, but to get a feel for each other. The A's have so many new faces of late, it can only help. And yes, former manager Bob Geren was a proponent of infield practice. He just didn't employ it all that much.

- And this from A's historian David Feldman: Oakland going 1-9 in Boston, Baltimore and Chicago equals its worst-ever 10-game roadie, which the A's did in 1981 and 2008. Plus, in dropping 12 of their last 13, the A's are on their worst stretch since going 1-14 in 2008.

The Rickey Henderson Chronicles - Part 1 - The Early Years

by Mark Needham, Sacramento Press, 6/5/2011

*"It wasn't until I saw Rickey, that I understood what baseball was all about."
- Mitchell Page, former A's teammate and should have been ROY in 1977*

In any sport, this is the highest compliment a fellow competitor can pay you. Words like that tell you that you've reached the pinnacle in your chosen field.

These days, Rickey Henderson gets to live the high life - traveling around to the various farm teams in the Oakland A's system. As a roving instructor, he's seen working with players on everything from being more aggressive at the plate to getting a more advantageous lead from first base to helping guys field better in the outfield.

Last time Henderson stopped off at Raley Field to work with the Sacramento River Cats, I was able to catch up with him - and trust me - I had to get a great jump.

In this first segment of a three part story, Henderson talks about childhood - being born in the back of a car, his time in the minors, his style of play and making it in the major leagues. I have also included some comments from several River Cats players, demonstrating how special it was to have Rickey come to town and work with them. Throughout the piece, I'll call them Cats Comments.

Cats Comments:

*"It's just awesome. Besides the fact that he's a Hall of Famer, it's just the way he goes about his game."
- Adrian Cardenas*

Out of the Gate

Rickey's known for getting a great jump, and it started on the day he was born.

You see, Rickey couldn't even wait until his mom got into a hospital bed.

From what his mother told him about that day, his dad was probably out gambling or something like that, and was late coming back home. She tried and tried to get in touch with him, to no avail. With less than moments to spare, Rickey's father showed up and hustled his mom to the hospital in the family Oldsmobile.

"Once she got to the hospital," said Henderson, "he jumped out and was going to get a doctor or nurse and she said, 'Don't worry about it, you're already too late, he's already out!' So I was out in the backseat!"

Would you expect anything less from the greatest base stealer of all time?

Born Rickey Nelson Henley, after singer-actor Ricky Nelson, he moved to Oakland when he was two, after his pop left home. His dad would pass away 10 years later. His mother, Bobbie Henley, married again when Rickey was a junior in high school. His new stepfather's name was Paul Henderson, and the family changed its last name to reflect the new union.

Rickey's first love was football. He played for Oakland Technical High School and was a two-time All-American and had two 1,000 yard rushing seasons. After receiving over a dozen football scholarship offers, he turned them down on the advice of his mother. She was adamant about not letting his smaller frame get beat up on a football field every Sunday.

"I still, to this day, would have chosen football over baseball," said a smiling Henderson.

"At that time, I was so involved with football that I wanted to play football. When I got drafted, my mom got talking about how she wanted me to play baseball and that's how I got to sign with the Oakland A's."

The Rickey Henderson Chronicles - Part 2 - The Oakland A's

by **Mark Needham**, Sacramento Press, 6/12/2011

It's one thing to gaze from afar and laud your personal heroes from your seat in the stadium. But to get a chance to not only speak with but spend 45 minutes alone with the greatest base-stealer of all-time was one of the highlights of my writing career.

The Oakland A's were my favorite baseball team when i was a kid. My first sports idol was Reggie Jackson. My second was Rickey Henderson.

For part one of this story, [click here](#).

In this second segment of a three part story, Henderson talks about playing for the his hometown Oakland A's, the 1989 earthquake-interrupted World Series, his 1990 MVP season and playing with Mark McGwire and Jose Canseco. I have also included some comments from several River Cats players, demonstrating how special it was to have Rickey come to town and work with them. Throughout the piece, I'll call them Cats Comments.

CC: "It's amazing just to have him around. I listen to him and take whatever he has to say and take what I can get from him while he's here." – Eric Sogard

Mr. October

Growing up, my childhood idols were Evel Knievel, Roman Gabriel and Reggie Jackson.

Ever since I saw my first ballgame in 1968 — Jackson's first full year — I was hooked: his mighty swing that made it appear he was screwing himself into the ground, the towering shots that gracefully made their way over the right field wall. Early on, he even had a great arm that few would test.

Even eventual superstars have their heroes when they're young. It was then I found out that mine was the same as Henderson's.

However, Henderson went to greater lengths to meet his idol than I ever did.

"We would sneak into the ballpark and take a look at the guys, and Reggie Jackson was such a hot commodity that he made me excited about the game," Henderson said.

I played Little League for seven years. I was left-handed like Reggie. I used to practice my swings to imitate him. I yearned to be Reggie.

And so did Henderson.

"I wanted to be Reggie Jackson," he said. "I wanted to play like Reggie Jackson. I wanted to swing like Reggie Jackson. He was my idol. The only things that changed me was when I got in A-Ball. I was swinging like Reggie and striking out a lot, so I had to tell myself that I can't hit like Reggie because I'm striking out too much. So I developed my own style and my own stance, and I got in the habit of knowing that I was a leadoff hitter and not the fourth hitter. I wasn't going to be hitting all the home runs like he was."

As a kid, Henderson tried, like most hardcore sports fans, to get his idol's signature on something he could worship for years to come. The constant pursuit of Jackson's autograph took a long time to accomplish. The story is one for the ages.

"I was one of those kids that used to wait out after the ballgames and try to get his autograph, but he was the type of player that an autograph wasn't a big thing for him," Henderson said. "So he would never give me an autograph. He would say hello or give me a pin or something with his name on it but never an autograph."

Staying out too long after the game got little Rickey in a little bit of trouble with his mama.

"I'd be coming home late and my mom would be spanking me here and there and asking me what the hell I was doing out so late," he said. "I'd tell her that I was waiting outside for Reggie Jackson, but he's always the last one to come outside. And when I get him outside, he don't give me an autograph! I'm pissed off at him."

It was a turning point for Henderson's career path.

"I would say that he gave me that: making me want it. He made me want to be a ballplayer so that I could show him I was that kid."

Once Henderson got called up to the bigs, getting that hand-written name was one of his biggest goals. Would he finally get his hero's signature on something?

"We got to go play the Yankees in New York. He was in the cage. He was always one of the last guys to get out in the cage, so I got dressed real quick and ran out there. I got to see Reggie Jackson hit. I got to go out there and talk to Reggie Jackson."

Just listening to Henderson talk about him, you can tell how much reverence he has for his idol. Every time he mentions his name, he uses his full name, Reggie Jackson. Every time.

"Now remember, I never could get an autograph as a kid, and when I got called up, I never got to see him because he went to New York. So we're in New York and I'm the left fielder. I made it! So I'm going to tell Reggie Jackson that I was that little kid that asked him for his autograph all the time and he never gave it."

You would think, at this point, there would be some kind of mutual respect or brotherhood type of thing that would garner Henderson his long overdue signature. Not a chance. Not yet at least.

"I told him I was playing left field today, and he straightened up his cap and said, 'Let me tell you something, young man. When I come up to the plate, I want you to back up because I hit the ball a long way, and I don't want you to embarrass yourself.'

"I said, 'Reggie, I'm that kid that they talk about that has so much speed.'"

So there he was. Already a young, brash kid who wasn't going to back down from anyone, even his childhood hero.

"Since you told me that, here's what I'm going to do," Henderson told Jackson. "When you come up to the plate, I'm going to run all the way in and get closer."

Jackson immediately snapped back.

"Oh, no, no, no. You can't do that. You can't do that," Jackson replied, according to Henderson.

"I said, 'Yeah, unless you hit the ball out of the ballpark, I'm going to run it down.'"

The gauntlet had been thrown down, the challenge issued.

"We did that at batting practice, so I went in and got dressed for the game. The first three guys come up — one out, two outs, three outs. I come back out for the second and Reggie's leading off."

Let the games begin.

"So I'm out at regular depth and all of a sudden notice that Reggie is at the plate," Henderson said. "I go run in just like I said I would. Reggie looks out at me. I think it was a 2-2 pitch, and he drove it right to left-center. When the ball left the bat, all I did was sprint. I put my head down, looked up one time and sprinted again. The ball was coming on a bead. I caught the ball backhanded right at the end of my glove. It freaked me out because he drove it and I caught it!"

There was no way Jackson thought Henderson had a chance to reel it in.

"He was boogieing and, because he had thought he had a double, he was pulling into second base. He looked up at me, stood on second base and donned his cap to me."

In baseball, that is the most respect one ballplayer can show another.

"So, what happened when I saw him after the game and asked if I could finally get an autograph? Well, he gave me the autograph."

CC: "He's awesome! He's a good guy to have in the clubhouse." – Josh Horton

"I Tell You What, We're Having an Earth-----"

The matchup Bay Area fans waited a lifetime to see finally happened in 1989. The Oakland A's took out the Toronto Blue Jays in the same fashion the San Francisco Giants dismantled the Chicago Cubs that postseason by winning four of five during the Championship Series.

The stage was set for what was to be known as the "Bay Bridge Series." It was the brash Will Clark and powerful Kevin Mitchell versus the "Bash Brothers," Mark McGwire and Jose Canseco. Both teams had excellent starting pitching that season, as well as a solid relief crew. But only one team had Henderson.

Henderson was chosen as the ALCS MVP that year and he put up the numbers against the Blue Jays: a .400 batting average, two home runs, 5 RBI, seven walks and eight stolen bases.

Too bad that's not what Bay Area residents remember when they think of 1989.

After the A's won the first two games at home handily, outscoring the Giants 10-1, the series shifted to San Francisco for Game 3.

"We had already beaten the Giants twice and were feeling pretty confident," Henderson said. "We felt like we were going to win."

And why not? With Bob Welch and his 3.00 ERA slated to start Game 3, confidence was at an all-time high.

Many of the A's had made their way out onto the diamond getting ready for the pre-game festivities. But not Henderson. He was in the clubhouse using the facilities.

And then it happened.

"So I sit down to use the restroom and all of a sudden the building is shaking, and it seemed like there was a lot of rumbling going on, a lot of noise. So as I sit there in the restroom, I'm thinking, man, this is exciting! The fans are really getting excited about the game, so let me hurry up and get back outside."

Henderson had no idea what was about to come.

"All of a sudden, someone comes running in and said, 'You've got to get out of here. we're having an earthquake!' I was like, what? I didn't have a clue what was going on outside. So when I stepped outside, I was shocked!"

Teammates had already feverishly snatched their loved ones out of the stands and were milling about in the middle of the field, away from any possible falling debris. Tears were seen rolling down the cheeks of several of the players' wives and loved ones.

"Most of my teammates had never been in an earthquake and were scared and shocked at what was going on. Then I'm saying that this stuff happens all the time. This is just a rumble for us."

Little did Henderson or the rest of the people on the field that fateful day know what was going on outside the Coliseum. Once ABC came back on air, the pictures of the devastation in the surrounding areas came pouring in to the dismay of everyone in attendance.

"There was more hurt for us when we really found out what happened," he continued. "The bridge collapse and all the people that passed away. That was the sad part about it. You know, we were so up for the game. It was a chance for the Bay Area to have both of their clubs play in the World Series and one of them to bring the trophy home. The whole Bay Area was excited. It was one of those times there were A's fans and Giants fans all coming together, but then we had a major tragedy."

The quake lasted for 10 to 15 seconds and was a 6.9 on the Richter scale. Sixty-three people died and 3,757 were injured. Estimates of up to 12,000 people were left homeless.

When the live pictures started coming in from the news helicopters, the pictures told a devastating story.

Part of the Bay Bridge had collapsed and a 1.25-mile section of Interstate 80 in the Oakland area known as the "Cypress Freeway" had fallen and was stacked upon itself, crushing many people caught in rush-hour traffic.

Luckily, less than half of the expected crowd had taken their seats, as most were still filing into Candlestick Park or in a concession line. One still wonders if the upper deck would have come crashing down if it had been full when the massive quake struck.

Instead of getting the customary — at the time — one day off in between games, the Loma Prieta Earthquake forced the series to take an 11-day sabbatical. The A's used that time wisely.

"Before we came back for Game 3, we went to Arizona to practice," Henderson said. "The Giants had the opportunity to go to but decided to stay in the Bay Area. They really didn't get in as much work as we did, so we were prepared. We were so prepared and really happy the series was going to resume."

To this day, Henderson wonders why the Giants didn't make the trip.

"Once we got back from Arizona, it seemed like they were still in shock. As soon as we got on the field, we were ready to play. The Giants didn't seem like they were ready for it. The next thing you know, we beat them the third game and then beat them in the fourth game."

Being an A's fan, I clearly remember 'Frisco skipper Roger Craig saying it wasn't fair that Oakland could use their two aces again. Funny. Craig could have done the same thing as Tony LaRussa. Problem was, his best two starters weren't as good as the A's top two guys. And the A's knew it.

"Their excuse was that if they didn't have the earthquake, they would've beaten us," Henderson said. "Even though it wasn't something they could complain about, we did have an advantage. We could use our top two starters again and they were better than their first two starters."

"The whole thing about it was that it was such an odd year. What was so strange is that every game in spring training we beat the Giants. Every game. So we play the season and all of a sudden the Giants get to the World Series and we say, no way this can be happening, because they never beat us. So our confidence was so high, and that's what helped us win the series."

CC: "I've been around a few Hall of Fame players, and they can be a little standoffish and think they're above it all, but Rickey gets right in there. He's willing to help and give us any kind of tidbits he can come up with, and he's willing to share it, anything he can offer. You have to be like a sponge and soak it up." – Matt Carson

MVP

In 1990, Henderson picked up his one and only American League MVP award. Even though he missed almost 30 games because of injury, he put up some fantastic numbers: 119 runs scored, 33 doubles, 28 homers, 65 stolen bases, 97 walks, a .325 batting average, a .577 slugging percentage and, maybe most astonishing of all, a 1.016 on-base percentage. Truly incredible numbers.

"That year was such a great year," he said. "I think I started off hot. I had never had a great start. I was seeing the pitches and was really driving the ball out of the ballpark well."

That season Cecil Fielder nearly doubled the home run and RBI output of Henderson. With an astonishing 51 HRs and 1,323 RBI, Fielder seemed poised to take the award.

"I had no idea that I had a chance to win the MVP because that year I think he hit 50 home runs. It was something that, as a player, you never expect is going to happen. It happened and everything went well that year"

In the end, it was Henderson's overall performance that gave him the honor, although much of the other competition for the award was from members of his own team. Unbelievably, the season ended with six of the top 12 vote-getters in Kelly green and gold.

"We were always a real scrappy club, and we always manufactured runs any way we could. The bottom of the lineup decided they knew how to get on the base paths, and it gave me the opportunity to really see some more fastballs and pitches I could handle and drive out of the ballpark."

CC: "He's preaching more than anything to have fun when we're playing. For me, I thought I was pretty laid back, but you see him and you say you got to take it to another level." – Adrian Cardenas

The Bash Brothers

While winning the MVP trophy was about as cool as it could get, being in a lineup every day with two of the most feared hitters in baseball at the time was an honor in itself.

In 1990, Mark McGwire and Jose Canseco were collectively the heavy lumber that struck fear into the eyes of opposing pitchers. McGwire and Canseco blasted 39 and 37 home runs respectively and both went over the 100 RBI plateau.

It was all a leadoff guy could ask for.

"There really wasn't nothing much better than that," Henderson said. "You had two guys that could drive the ball out of the ballpark, two guys that were feared at the plate. And then you had a guy (Henderson) to begin the lineup that you had to get on base and use the base paths, so there was always an opportunity to get the guys into scoring position and score runs in any given inning. That's the fear we put in our opponents. It boosted up everybody. With them and all those home runs, it made everybody feel like they could go out and hit one."

For the players, it was more than that. These guys really liked each other.

"We tried to do more things together. Instead of just going out in the field together, we would have dinner arrangements and we'd go to other people's moms' houses. We were more of a family type, and I think that's what made it so good, because instead of just taking it out on the field, we did it as a lifestyle."

Not having to play to a big stage, like what Henderson experienced his first time in New York, also played a key role in the players being able to focus and play well.

"I think it was an easier way to jell. In a big market, they would expect so much, but here in Oakland, they were not really expecting that much. We really didn't have the pressure of going out there and being the best. All we had to do was go out there and play."

In part three next Sunday evening, Rickey talks about playing in New York, an unlikely ally in the Big Apple and trying to end his career on his own terms.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Sacramento offense left barking up wrong tree

06/12/2011 7:17 PM ET

By Veronika Tafoya / Sacramento River Cats

It doesn't happen often, but on Sunday the dogs came out to support the Cats at Raley Field.

Unfortunately for the dogs, they might have to find something else to get their tails wagging as the River Cats were shut out 4-0 against Tacoma during Bark in the Ballpark presented by Atta Boy!

River Cats batters, who mustered four hits from four players, were kept on a tight leash all day. The River Cats offense had not been shut out since a 11-0 loss at home to Portland on July 10, 2010.

After a solo homer in the second inning by Tacoma's Mike Wilson, the River Cats were ready to show some teeth in the third, both defensively and offensively. Left fielder Michael Taylor threw a bullet from the outfield to catcher Josh Donaldson, who tagged out Johan Limonta out at home plate to end the inning. In the bottom half, Eric Sogard snatched the team lead after stealing his ninth base.

Sacramento's A.J. Griffin made his first appearance as a River Cat after being promoted from the Stockton Ports. Although he threw eight strikeouts, it wasn't enough to muzzle the Rainiers offense, which added two runs in the fifth for a 3-0 lead. Griffin tossed 6.0 innings and gave up the three runs (two earned) off of six hits.

A throwing error by Donaldson allowed another Tacoma run in the seventh. In the ninth, right fielder Matt Carson matched Taylor's throwing effort by throwing out Matt Tuiasosopo at the plate.

The River Cats dug for their last chance to break a shut out in the bottom of the ninth, but the Rainiers weren't willing to throw them a bone.

Rainiers starting pitcher Blake Beaven was top dog, taking the win after pitching 8.0 scoreless innings, allowing just four hits and throwing six strikeouts.

The River Cats start a new series Monday at 6:05 p.m. at Spring Mobile Ballpark, with Cats left-hander Carlos Hernandez (2-1, 6.65) facing Salt Lake Bees right-hander Eric Junge (3-3, 4.27).

RockHounds win series opener with Frisco

Jordan Mason

Midland Reporter-Telegram | Posted: Monday, June 13, 2011 12:12 am

After the Midland RockHounds bats sputtered while trying to erase deficits in the last two games, hitting coach Tim Garland decided Sunday was the perfect time for a hitters' meeting.

"All I stressed to them today was, (Martin Perez) was 4-0 prior to us, so obviously he's pretty good. He has an idea of what he's doing out there on the mound," Garland said. "I advised the guys to kind of take what this guy gives them and not try to beat them with the long ball or anything like that."

The result? Nine runs on 14 hits, including seven extra-base hits, all against Texas Rangers' No. 1 prospect Perez in a 9-2 route at Citibank Ballpark.

Gary Daley was impressive for the second straight game, allowing just two runs in 7.2 innings and fanning five, but RockHounds manager Steve Scarsone credited the win to Garland and his timely adjustments.

"He deserves all the credit for this win," Scarsone said.

Midland did itself a favor Sunday by getting on the board first for the first time in this homestand.

Grant Green exemplified the RockHounds' overnight transformation, starting with an RBI single on the first pitch he saw in the game.

The shortstop went 3 for 5 Sunday less than 24 hours after he lasted two pitches against Corpus Christi thanks to a chopper that got lost in the sun and hit him in the face.

His first RBI gave Midland the early 1-0 lead, and when Frisco tied it on a solo home run by Mike Biannuci in the fourth, the RockHounds responded emphatically, scoring eight runs in the next four innings on a flurry of extra base hits.

Matt Sulentic, who went 3 for 4, delivered one of his two RBI on a double in the bottom of the fourth then later crossed the play on a triple by Petey Paramore, his first of the season.

The next inning, Adam Heether drilled a two-run double to center over the head of Engel Beltre to put Midland up 5-1.

Then, already up 6-1 heading into the seventh, Midland exploded again on a bases-clearing double to left by Jeremy Barfield.

"They executed their game plan almost to perfection," Garland said of the team.

The RockHounds played a better game on defense as well, committing no errors one night after committing four that deflated the team.

That pleased Scarsone and Daley, who was able to be aggressive on the mound, recording no walks on the day.

"It was awesome. They were great," Daley said. "I try to use my defense as much as possible and keep them in the game because I know they're going to be good behind me."

And while everyone was happy with the big win over a team that swept them the last time they met, Scarsone was simply happy with the improvement he saw in his team from Saturday.

"I'm just more pleased about the way we played, the energy, " he said. "Smart baseball and aggressive and taking advantage of their mistakes. It was a good win for us."

'HOUND BITES: Sunday was the RockHounds first win in six tries against Frisco after they were swept by the RoughRiders in the last series between the two in Frisco. ... The RockHounds avoided falling into last place in the Texas League South standings and are now two wins ahead of last-place Corpus Christ ... The win by Midland Sunday halted a season-long seven game road winning streak by Frisco. ... Sunday was the fourth start against Midland for Texas Rangers' No. 1 prospect Martin Perez, who entered the game with a 1.32 ERA and 14 strikeouts in 13.2 IP against the RockHounds. Perez managed a 3.03 ERA Sunday but gave up 12 hits and only struck out three.

TODAY'S PROBABLES: The RockHounds are expected to start southpaw Anthony Capra (0-2, 5.13) today while the RoughRiders are expected to start Jake Brigham (2-5, 5.05).

Choice, Carter Blast Ports Past Blaze 4-2

06/12/2011 5:00 PM ET

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. - The Stockton Ports enjoyed having Chris Carter back in their lineup for their series with the Bakersfield Blaze. Carter, over the four-game set, blasted three home runs, including a three-run shot on Sunday afternoon that helped the Ports earn a series split, defeating the Blaze by a final of 4-2.

The Ports would use the home run ball as the source of all their runs on Sunday. Michael Choice got the offense starter with a solo shot down the right field line with two outs in the 1st to put the Ports up 1-0. It was Choice's first home run since May 27th at Visalia.

Stockton starter Sean Murphy (1-0), in his Cal-League debut, was fantastic from the start. Murphy struck out his first two batters to open the game as part of a 1-2-3 1st inning.

The Ports broke the game open in the 5th against Blaze starter J.C. Sulbaran (3-1). With two down, Sulbaran walked Ryan Lipkin, and then hit Choice in the helmet with a pitch. Choice remained standing after being hit as his helmet absorbed the blow. Carter came to the plate next and hit an opposite-field three-run blast to give the Ports a 4-0 lead.

Sulbaran would take his first loss of the season, going 4.2 innings and allowing four runs on five hits while striking out four and walking three.

Meanwhile, Murphy continued to shine. Murphy allowed his only run of the afternoon in the 6th and it was due to some bad luck. Didi Gregorius led off the inning and hit a lazy fly ball to right that Ports right-fielder Rashun Dixon lost in the sun, a gift double for Gregorius who went to third and then scored on two ensuing ground balls to put the Blaze on the board at 4-1.

Murphy would earn the win in his debut, going six full innings and allowing just the one run on six hits while striking out five.

Brett Hunter took over in the 7th and surrendered a solo home run to Mark Fleury to make it a 4-2 game. Hunter came back out for the 8th and kept the Blaze off the board.

In the 9th, Jose Guzman (SV, 8) took over and walked Ryan LaMarre and Stephen Hunt to begin the frame. After a sacrifice bunt from A.J. Means advanced the runners into scoring position, Guzman got Fleury to fly to left and Gregorius to bounce out to second to pitch out of trouble and earn the save.

After earning a series split in Bakersfield, the Ports return home on Monday for a seven-game homestand against two South Division foes. The homestand begins with a three-game set against the High Desert Mavericks on Monday night. Rob Gilliam (5-4, 4.90 ERA) takes the hill for Stockton in the opener, opposed by Mavericks right-hander Chris Sorce (5-3, 4.30 ERA). First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

Bees Pounded 14-5

06/12/2011 6:48 PM ET

By Jon Versteeg

BURLINGTON, IA (June 12)- The West Michigan Whitecaps (30-33) completed the three-game sweep of the Burlington Bees (41-23) by pounding out 14 runs on 21 hits to earn a 14-5 win at Community Field on Sunday afternoon. The Bees missed out on a chance to clinch their first playoff spot since 2009. Their "magic number" sits at one. Any combination of Burlington wins or Quad Cities loses gives the Bees the first-half West Division Crown. With Quad Cities winning 4-1 over Great Lakes, the Bees will now try to clinch a playoff berth on Tuesday at home against West Michigan.

West Michigan scored three runs in the first inning against Burlington RHP Jonathan Joseph (1-2). After 3B Nick Castellanos (2-4) lifted a sacrifice fly to right field, 1B James Robbins (4-6) followed with a two-run home run for a 3-0 lead.

The Whitecaps scored four runs in the fourth inning and three runs in the fifth inning to make it 10-0.

Burlington scored two runs in the fifth inning. DH A.J. Kirby-Jones (0-2) walked and went to third base on a double by 2B Ryan Pineda (2-4). RF Jose Rivero (3-4) lined a two-run single to get the Bees on the scoreboard at 10-2.

1B Josh Whitaker (1-4) added an RBI double as part of a two-run sixth inning to get the Bees within six runs at 10-4.

With West Michigan scoring two runs in both the eighth and ninth innings, 3B Tony Thompson (2-4) led off the ninth inning with a solo home run to make it 14-5.

The Bees take Monday off before starting a three-game series with the Kane County Cougars, the Midwest League affiliate of the Kansas City Royals on Tuesday at 6:30. It's KRAFT Singles Two for Tuesday. Fans can get a two for one ticket offer with the presentation of their KRAFT Singles Package Wrapper. It's also Hawkeye Two for Tuesday with two for one general admission tickets when you present your Hawkeye Newspaper ad at the game. Kane County will send RHP Jason Adam (2-1, 4.39) to the mound against RHP Tyler Vail (1-2, 5.15) for the Bees