

Oakland A's rally to beat San Francisco Giants for their fourth straight victory

By Daniel Brown, Oakland Tribune

The movie trailer for "Moneyball" was released last week, conjuring memories of the A's successful run during the early 2000s.

A film about this year's team would be a silent movie: The lineup doesn't provide much action. But one big outburst Saturday -- complete with a surprise hero -- was enough to send the A's to a 4-2 victory over the Giants.

Daric Barton, stuck in a slump that could send him to the minors, keyed the pivotal four-run fifth inning with an RBI double. It was the A's fourth consecutive victory, matching their longest winning streak of the season.

"I'm feeling better at the plate. I'm making a little progress," said Barton, who went 1 for 3 to eke his average from .211 to .213. "I'm starting to trust my hands more and have a better approach at the plate."

Like so many of his fellow A's hitters, Barton has disappointed with his bat this season.

His struggles include a homerless streak that reached 65 games Saturday. That's the longest season-opening drought by an American League first baseman since Rick Leach went 66 games for the 1983 Detroit Tigers.

On Saturday, Barton settled for his 13th double of the season, smacking a ball into the right-center gap with one out in the fifth. That drove home Scott Sizemore from first. One out later, Barton came home on Cliff Pennington's double to tie the score 2-2.

Hideki Matsui capped the rally with a two-run single. Matsui is 9 for 28 (.321) with nine RBIs over his past nine games, the span since new manager Bob Melvin came on board.

"I haven't seen any of his slump. He's the same guy I've seen for years," Melvin said, referring to Matsui's slow start.

Just like that, the A's had erased their mistake-prone early innings and a 2-0 deficit to take the lead for good.

"The thing that stands out is the fight, the perseverance," Melvin said. "That's what I've seen, really, since I've been here -- win or lose."

The resilience included winning without Josh Willingham, out for at least a few days with a strained Achilles tendon. (After the game, Melvin ruled Willingham out for Sunday's series finale.)

The overhauled lineup featured Jemile Weeks in the leadoff spot, Coco Crisp hitting third -- and Barton hitting ninth for the first time this season.

For a night, it worked. The A's improved to 24-9 when they score at least four runs. They have a five-game winning streak against the Giants in Oakland.

Through the early innings, though, the biggest number produced by the A's offense came in a rundown -- 1-3-6-3-4 on the putout when Conor Jackson was caught straying off first base. During that play, the speedy Crisp watched from third base waiting for the right time to break for home. It never came.

"He did the right thing," Melvin said, putting the onus on Jackson for the baserunning gaffe.

The Giants compounded the A's frustration from that missed opportunity by scoring unearned two runs against starter Guillermo Moscoso in the top of the fifth. Chris Stewart led off with an innocuous grounder that third baseman Sizemore misplayed for an infield hit.

After Andres Torres walked, Emmanuel Burriss bunted back to the mound. Moscoso fielded the ball but rifled his throw past third base for an error, allowing Stewart to score. (The A's have committed at least one error in nine consecutive games.) Aubrey Huff made it 2-0 with a sacrifice fly.

But after the A's bounced back with their four-run rally in the bottom of the inning, the bullpen ended the drama. Moscoso was followed by scoreless outings from Brad Ziegler (2-0), Joey Devine, Brian Fuentes, Grant Balfour and Andrew Bailey (fourth save).

"Our bullpen is a strength," Melvin said.

A's update: Hideki Matsui may play a lot more in left field for Oakland on upcoming trip to N.L. parks

By Daniel Brown, Oakland Tribune

With injured left fielder Josh Willingham out a few days, Hideki Matsui will spend more time with his glove than expected.

Manager Bob Melvin said Saturday that Matsui could play "multiple games" in left field, if Willingham remains sidelined during the A's upcoming road games against the New York Mets and Philadelphia Phillies.

Playing in National League ballparks means no designated hitter. And the power-starved A's can't afford to have their top two home run hitters out of the lineup at the same time.

Matsui had been in line to start in right field once in each city. Instead, he will acquaint himself with the position he has played 582 times in his major league career -- but only 18 times since 2009.

Willingham, who leads the A's in home runs (10) and RBIs (42), had to come out of Friday's game after aggravating an injury to his left Achilles. He is listed as day-to-day because the A's remain confident he can avoid the disabled list.

On Saturday, Adam Rosales made his fourth career start in the left field. Because he makes his living as a utility player, Rosales was unfazed to see his name in the lineup as an outfielder.

The biggest difference between the infield and the outfield?

"A bigger glove," Rosales said.

With Willingham out, Melvin shuffled the lineup. Outfielder Coco Crisp hit in the No. 3 spot for the first time since 2005 and could stay in that spot until Willingham returns.

Rookie second baseman Jemile Weeks took over Crisp's leadoff spot.

"I was a little reluctant to do that because (Weeks) is hitting so well in the No. 9 spot," Melvin said.

Weeks had 13 hits in the first 10 games of his career. The only Oakland players to do better are Mitchell Page (18 in 1977) and Ben Grieve (15 in 1997).

First baseman Daric Barton, who entered play hitting .211, was the No. 9 hitter for the first time this year.

"(He's) in the lineup," Melvin said. "It is what it is."

Right-hander Brandon McCarthy, on the disabled list since May 19 with a stress reaction in his right scapula, faced hitters during batting practice and said he felt fine.

McCarthy's next big stop will be in San Jose on Thursday, when he is scheduled to throw 65 to 70 pitches for the Single-A Stockton Ports. After that, he is slated to throw 85 to 95 pitches for Triple-A Sacramento on June 28.

Second baseman Mark Ellis went 0 for 3 in a rehab assignment with Sacramento.

Frances Perenon, who has lived in Oakland her entire life, celebrated her 100th birthday by throwing out the ceremonial first pitch.

Chin Music: A's to get creative during Willingham's absence

By Dan Brown, Oakland Tribune 6/18/2011 6:56pm

It's Dan Brown tonight filling in for Joe Stiglich. The last time I covered an A's game, Jimmy Haynes was pitching. Have I missed anything? Anyway, here are a few pre-game notes as well as tonight's starting lineup.

Pre-game notes

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– Brandon McCarthy, on the D.L. since May 29 with a stress reaction in his right scapula, faced hitters during batting practice and said he felt fine.

McCarthy’s next big stop will be in San Jose next Tuesday, when will throw 65-70 pitches for the Class A Stockton Ports. After that, the right-hander is slated to throw 85-95 pitches for Triple-A Sacramento on June 21.

“I’m just putting things back together,” McCarthy said.

– Frances Perenon, who has lived in Oakland her entire life, celebrated her 100th birthday by throwing out the first pitch.

Trivia time

Two of the top five players taken in the 1981 draft are now on the A’s staff. Name them.

(Answer below)

Starting lineup

Jemile Weeks, 2B
Cliff Pennington, SS
Coco Crisp, CF
Hideki Matsui, DH
Conor Jackson, RF
Kurt Suzuki, C
Scott Sizemore, 3B
Adam Rosales, LF
Daric Barton, 1B

Guillermo Moscoso, P

Trivia answer

In the 1981 draft, Bob Melvin went No. 2 (to the Tigers) and Ron Romanick went No. 4 (to the Angels).

If you need me ...

You can always reach me directly at dbrown@mercurynews.com

Hideki Matsui's hit leads A's over Giants 4-2

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

-- A new A's lineup was on display at the Coliseum. Not a permanent lineup, manager Bob Melvin said. Just a temporary arrangement with Josh Willingham missing a couple of games because of a sore Achilles tendon.

But after the A's came alive in the fifth inning of their 4-2 victory over the Giants on Saturday night, Melvin might want to reconsider.

Coco Crisp third? Daric Barton ninth? Adam Rosales in left?

And, yes, Hideki Matsui hitting fourth. If we were still on Bob Geren's watch, Matsui would have been on the bench, as he usually was against left-handed pitchers. But thanks to Melvin's confidence in Matsui, the designated hitter faced lefty Jonathan Sanchez in the decisive rally and broke a 2-2 tie with a two-run grounder to right field.

"They got a two-out, seeing-eye base hit," Giants manager Bruce Bochy said. "It was a crushing blow. But they got it, and we didn't."

That's for sure. The Giants stranded 10 runners and were 0-for-9 with runners in scoring position, making them hitless in 22 runners-in-scoring-position at-bats during a three-game skid.

Asked if he'd take a "seeing-eye base hit" now and then, Bochy said, "Sure, I'll take one. He put the ball in play. Good piece of hitting. He hit it where we couldn't get to it."

Sanchez credited Matsui by saying, "I threw a slider down, where it was supposed to go. I guess he was looking for it. He found a hole. It was his day. You've got to be careful with him. That's why he's still in the big leagues."

The Giants stranded multiple runners in the second, fourth and sixth innings. Nate Schierholtz doubled to open the sixth but mistakenly tried to advance on a grounder to short and was thrown out.

Their only rally (two unearned runs in the fifth) came courtesy of two goofy A's plays. Third baseman Scott Sizemore stumbled after fielding Chris Stewart's grounder and didn't make a throw. With two aboard, pitcher Guillermo Moscoso picked up Emmanuel Burriss' bunt and sailed his throw past third base.

The A's answered in the bottom of the inning with their four-run rally. Sizemore singled and scored on Barton's double.

On why he hit Barton ninth, Melvin suggested the first baseman should be happy he's playing at all, saying, "You're in the lineup, and other than Matsui, he's the only left-hander in there. It is what it is. It could be worse."

Cliff Pennington doubled to tie the score. Crisp, batting third for the first time since 2005, walked and stole second, and Matsui's two-run single made it 4-2 and gave him nine RBIs since Melvin took over.

"To place this kind of expectation on a player is a compliment," Matsui said, referring to Melvin. "I feel like guys are more settled in, more focused, and we're putting together some rallies."

Brad Ziegler, who replaced Moscoso in the fifth, got the win. Joey Devine, Brian Fuentes, Grant Balfour and closer Andrew Bailey finished up, Bailey inducing Pablo Sandoval to bounce into a game-ending double play.

A's Brandon McCarthy close to rehab outing

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

On Friday, **Brandon McCarthy** had a proposal for outfielder **Ryan Sweeney**: If Sweeney homered off McCarthy during his simulated game the next day, McCarthy would pay him \$100, and if McCarthy broke Sweeney's bat, Sweeney would pay McCarthy the same amount.

"He initiated it," Sweeney said. "I said, 'But there's a better chance you'll break my bat - you'll just throw me cutters inside.'"

Sweeney, however, did homer off McCarthy on Saturday during the third of his three simulated innings.

"I'll be a gentleman and pay up," McCarthy said, "but he wasn't all that into it - until he hit the home run. And then he remembered the bet."

McCarthy threw 60-some pitches, and Sweeney and **Adam Rosales** said his stuff looked good.

McCarthy, who has missed one month with a stress reaction in his right shoulder, said that he'll next pitch for Class A Stockton at San Jose on Thursday and the following Tuesday for Triple-A Sacramento. That puts him in line for a potential July 3 start for Oakland.

Tyson Ross (oblique) said he'll throw to hitters Tuesday and Sunday, and then he's likely to go on a rehab assignment.

Willingham out: **Josh Willingham** was out Saturday with the nagging Achilles tendon soreness that has sidelined him for a handful of games this month.

As a result, manager **Bob Melvin** said that **Hideki Matsui** will play left field rather than right when Oakland plays interleague games at New York and Philadelphia this week. Matsui, the A's designated hitter, has played primarily left field in his career.

Melvin doesn't believe Willingham's injury will warrant a trip to the DL.

Bright approach: The A's wore their yellow alternate jerseys for the fourth game in a row, after winning the previous three in the gold tops.

They won again, and they are 8-3 in those jerseys.

"I'm guessing there's a chance this jersey is used tomorrow," Melvin said.

Briefly: Mark Ellis (hamstring) began his rehab assignment by going 0-for-3 in Triple-A Sacramento's 3-0 loss to Fresno on Saturday night. Ellis told The Chronicle that there were no plans for him to play any position other than second. ... The A's signed right-hander **Doug Mathis** to a minor-league deal; he had been with the Giants' Triple-A Fresno team but exercised his out clause Thursday.

Leading off

Fan of the Century: Frances Perenon of Oakland turned 100 on Saturday and she threw out the ceremonial first pitch. One of her favorite players, third-base coach Mike Gallego, served as catcher. From about 30 feet away, she delivered a strong underhand toss.

A's pitching: Cahill struggling, Moscoso solid

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

-- One of the oddest trends to emerge in the A's unusual past month is this: The team's most reliable starter in that time is Guillermo Moscoso, and the least, Trevor Cahill.

Cahill was an All-Star last year, when he won 18 games. Moscoso was acquired in a minor offseason deal and was in Triple-A Sacramento's rotation until late May.

What is the difference? Moscoso, who allowed two unearned runs in 4 2/3 innings Saturday night at the Coliseum, is doing a better job of throwing strikes. Cahill, who starts against the Giants today in the series finale, is struggling to find the zone.

Cahill is 0-5 with a 5.67 ERA over his past seven starts, and his most recent outing was particularly poor - he walked seven Royals and struck out none in a 7-4 loss.

The reasons for Cahill's struggles are up for debate. Manager Bob Melvin and pitching coach Ron Romanick believe that, with three members of the Opening Night rotation out of action, Cahill is trying to do too much. He's overthrowing sometimes. He's trying to be too fine other times.

"At the start of the season, he was part of five Musketeers, and they were all feeding off each other," Romanick said. "Now it's just Trevor and Gio Gonzalez left. I told Trevor not to put all that burden on himself, don't try to do too much.

"But he's just missing the glove, and then he's behind, and then it kind of goes from there."

Cahill believes that mechanics come into play because he feels as if he cannot repeat his delivery. Yet during his bullpen sessions, he does everything perfectly. He repeats his delivery well.

It's taking it into games that's the trouble; the urgency of big-league pitching doesn't allow for thinking about mechanics.

"I feel like I'm fine," Cahill said. "Now it's getting the bullpen session into the game. My bullpens are better than they've ever been. Ron said I need to keep that rhythm."

Until Saturday, Moscoso had gone at least five innings in every start. His ERA is 3.30.

On Saturday, he probably would have made it through the fifth were it not for defensive lapses: Third baseman Scott Sizemore stumbled while fielding a bouncer by Chris Stewart, who reached first. After Moscoso walked Andres Torres, Emmanuel Burriss bunted toward the mound. Moscoso got to it quickly but threw wildly past third. Stewart scored on the error and Torres came home on a sacrifice fly.

Brad Ziegler replaced Moscoso and struck out Cody Ross. Ziegler got the win.

Moscoso started his stint with Oakland 2-0 but has dropped his past three decisions. Cahill started 6-0 with a 1.72 ERA but has not recorded a win since May 9.

Cahill has had good results against the Giants, going 2-0 with a 1.37 ERA in three starts.

Drumbeat: Josh Willingham's absence prompts unusual A's lineup; McCarthy rehab plans

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 6/18/2011 5:20pm

Josh Willingham is out with that nagging Achilles tendon injury, as manager Bob Melvin had anticipated last night, so Melvin's lineup is a little out of the ordinary: Among other things, Coco Crisp is batting third - and Adam Rosales is in left field. Rosales has played there, some, including three starts there last year. Rosales, off for more than a week, said he's just happy to be in the lineup.

Daric Barton is batting ninth, and when I asked about that, Melvin said of Barton, "You're in the lineup, and other than Matsui, he's the only left-hander in there. It is what it is. It could be worse."

Melvin clearly is not as taken with Barton as was ex-manager Bob Geren. And as I wrote the other day, Barton is likely to be optioned out. I actually thought it might have come this weekend, but considering that the team will activate Mark Ellis on Wednesday, that timing might make sense. It's coming, though. Unless Barton has a monster game or two here this weekend.

Melvin doesn't believe Willingham's continued Achilles issues - he's missed several games over the past few weeks - will warrant a DL stay. If necessary, the team might get him a stretch of four or five days to let it calm down, but the DL doesn't look like a possibility right now.

Willingham's Achilles does mean a position shift next week for Hideki Matsui - Melvin said last week that Matsui would play right in interleague play (one start at New York, one at Philadelphia), but now Matsui would play his usual outfield spot, left, to give Willingham a break. I wouldn't be surprised to see him there Tuesday - that would give Willingham four straight days off to rest the Achilles, though he might be available to pinch hit or double switch.

Here's the full lineup behind Guillermo Moscoso, who probably has been the team's best starter overall the past three weeks or so: Weeks 2b, Pennington ss, Crisp cf, Matsui dh, Jackson rf, Suzuki c, Sizemore 3b, Rosales lf, Barton 1b.

Brandon McCarthy threw 60-some pitches to hitters today, including Rosales, Ryan Sweeney, Landon Powell ... and Josh Outman? Outman only bunted, but he did get a good look at McCarthy and thought he looked smooth, the delivery good. Rosales liked McCarthy's curveball, Sweeney mostly saw cutters - and he homered.

McCarthy is a perfectionist, so he wasn't crazy about his cutter or his sinker, feel pitches that take some time to get back to normal after missing time. He has been out a month with a stress reaction in his right shoulder.

McCarthy said he'll start for Class-A Stockton at San Jose on Thursday, then at Triple-A Sacramento the following Tuesday. Then he'll return to the A's, which means he's in line to start for Oakland about where he said he thought he would: July 3 against Arizona.

Tyson Ross will throw to hitters Tuesday and Sunday while the team is gone and then is likely to go on a rehab assignment, so he's maybe a start or two behind McCarthy in his comeback.

Unstable ground for Bay Area pro sports

Al Saracevic, sports editor, San Francisco Chronicle

For one of the strongest sports markets in the country, the Bay Area sure has an uncertain future.

Jed York wants to move the 49ers to Santa Clara. A's owner **Lew Wolff** has his heart set on San Jose or Las Vegas. The Raiders are prime candidates to move into a new NFL stadium in Los Angeles. And the Warriors want to leave Oakland for San Francisco.

Add it all up and you have more story lines than a **Tolstoy** novel.

Granted, the moving and shaking could take years, and much of it will never transpire. But it makes you wonder what the Bay Area landscape will look like in a few years.

If everyone stays on their current trajectories, here's what will happen:

The A's will find a way to leave the Bay Area. Ownership has made it clear that they want to move to the South Bay. Meager spending, tarp-covered stands and closed vending stations at the outdated Coliseum have made that abundantly clear. By dragging its feet for years now, Major League Baseball has also made it clear it wants no part of a jurisdictional lawsuit with the Giants. The Oakland A's will be playing somewhere else in a few years. If you can't buy into Las Vegas as a destination, have you heard about the movement in Philadelphia to bring the team back to its ancestral home?

The Raiders will end up back in Los Angeles. As it stands, the team has said it is not for sale. But that could change in a big way when and if **Al Davis** is no longer part of the equation. Since their return from Los Angeles, the Raiders have played a distant second to the Niners in this market, rarely selling out and fielding mostly lackluster teams. A change of scenery, and an influx of new ownership money, will lure the Silver and Black back to Southern California.

The Warriors will be playing in "The City" as soon as they can. Having spoken to the teams' new owners, **Joe Lacob** and **Peter Guber**, about this a number of times last year, I can attest that both men are open to the idea and would welcome a new arena. Giants President **Larry Baer** has also expressed a deep desire, on behalf of his team and ownership group, to develop the land on the outskirts of AT&T Park's parking lots. And a mixed-use arena that could house an NBA team, along with entertainment acts, is at the top of everyone's list.

The Niners will fail in their efforts to move the team to Santa Clara. Despite their desire to leave San Francisco for greener monetary pastures, the team still has to secure hundreds of millions of dollars in financing to pay for the estimated \$987 million project. With the NFL in labor chaos, and Santa Clara civic leaders questioning a recent request to give former great **Joe Montana** and former owner **Eddie DeBartolo Jr.** an exclusive agreement to build a hotel, bar and restaurant across from the proposed stadium site, legitimate questions are popping up about this project. Where will the money come from? Why is Santa Clara being asked to make sweetheart deals? In the end, strong civic leadership in San Francisco will find a way to keep the city's first pro franchise where it was born.

So, after it all shakes out, San Francisco will be left with the Niners, Giants and Warriors. Oakland will be left out in the cold.

And the Bay Area's status as one of the top sports markets in the country will be diminished.

Is everyone OK with that? I'm not.

Vallejo's finest: Jeff Gordon is living the life.

The 39-year-old NASCAR driver recently tied for third place on the circuit's all-time wins list, with 84. He's married to a gorgeous Belgian model. He's worth millions of dollars. And he has two beautiful young children.

His daughter is turning 4 on Monday. Guess what? Daddy is making his movie debut this week in the Pixar movie "Cars 2," doing the voice for Jeff Gorvette. It's the kind of life that could make one jealous. Until you talk to the guy.

Gordon is one of the most approachable superstars on the planet, easygoing and conversational. Seemingly no worries in the world.

When I asked the Vallejo native how it felt to come back to the Bay Area every year to race at Infineon Speedway, Gordon gushed about the area and the track.

"It's so interesting coming back every year now, because I never raced in Sonoma as a kid," said Gordon, who is racing in Michigan today before coming here for next Sunday's Toyota/SaveMart 350. "I raced go-karts and quarter midgets as a kid out here. And then I moved to the Midwest to pursue sprint car racing, and it wasn't until I came back here with NASCAR that I got a chance to race at Infineon."

It didn't take him long to get acquainted. Gordon has won five times on the road-course track.

"I never really considered myself much of a road racer growing up," Gordon said.

"My specialty was ovals, and that's what took me into NASCAR. But we put big effort into every race we do, and after our second or third year out there, we started to have success."

After winning five times, though, Gordon hit a bit of a slump. He hasn't won in Sonoma since 2006, a drought that has mirrored his overall downturn on the circuit.

As **Jimmie Johnson** kept piling up championships over the past five years, many thought Gordon's time of dominance had passed.

He switched crew chiefs before the season started, and it's starting to pay off.

"We all go through stages in our lives," Gordon said. "We get more comfortable with who you are. And I've been racing for a long time. It's great we won two races (this year), but we've been inconsistent."

"There's no doubt my body doesn't feel quite the same when the race is over," he said. "It takes a couple days to recover. In the car, mentally, I feel as good and sharp as I've ever been."

As the shop talk died down and we got back to talking about the Bay Area, Gordon reflected a bit on the town he grew up in.

"Every once in a while, I try to drive through Vallejo and look at the schools I went to and the houses I lived in," he said. "When I was younger, I remember watching the World Series and **Tug McGraw** was pitching.

"You never know what's going to come out of Vallejo."

Indeed.

DH standing in way of major realignment

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

Baseball's vision of extreme realignment, all the rage the past couple of weeks, would result in two 15-team leagues and an interleague game every day.

It's fine for teams in the National League Central that believe it's unfair competing against five division opponents while teams in the American League West compete against three.

It's also fine for the also-rans of the AL East — Baltimore, Toronto and, in most cases, Tampa Bay — that need to beat the Yankees and/or Red Sox to reach the postseason.

Furthermore, expanded playoffs, from eight to 10 teams, would provide more hope for low-revenue clubs.

But a subplot to the quest for 15-team leagues — with a six-division format, which is far more realistic than two leagues without divisions — is the designated-hitter rule. An odd number of teams warrants a daily AL-NL game, and it would seem ridiculous to maintain the current system of using a DH in AL parks and forcing pitchers to hit in NL parks — imagine the Red Sox fighting for the playoffs and playing in Philadelphia the final weekend of the season unable to use **David Ortiz**.

Under the 15-team league plan, it would seem baseball would need to make the DH rule applicable in both leagues or ditch it altogether.

For as much as purists want the DH eliminated, it's a farfetched thought considering:

The union wouldn't stand for the job losses. For as much as managers use the DH to give their position players frequent "rests," there's still a large number of high-paid, big-name players in DH roles: Minnesota's **Jim Thome**, Cleveland's **Travis Hafner**, Baltimore's **Vladimir Guerrero**, Oakland's **Hideki Matsui**, Chicago's **Adam Dunn**, Tampa Bay's **Johnny Damon**, the Angels' **Bobby Abreu**, Detroit's **Victor Martinez**, Texas' **Michael Young** and Boston's Ortiz.

Major League Baseball initiated the DH rule, thanks to **Charlie Finley** in the '70s, and how goofy would it be to scrap it when it's used in virtually every pro and amateur league in the country, if not the world?

Offensive numbers are down across the board, as is attendance, so perhaps the climate isn't right for removing hitters from lineups. Remember, the DH was created to boost deficient AL numbers.

Eliminating the DH in the majors would mean canning it in the minors so that pitchers would be experienced swinging bats by the time they reach the big leagues. But these days, GMs are overly paranoid about pitchers, afraid more at-bats mean

more chances for injuries.

So are we talking about the NL incorporating the DH? Egad. That seems to be the only way to make the 15-team leagues work — unless the A's and Rays are contracted (pause here for effect), leaving MLB with 14-team leagues. Making the DH universal would ruin what the NL stands for: more strategies, more fundamentals, more managerial decisions that determine outcomes.

NL teams don't like the DH for a lot of reasons, including that it's cheaper carrying a utility player as a 25th man than a significant DH.

So what we have here are solid reasons the DH won't be dumped by the AL or incorporated by the NL.

With the labor deal expiring in December, where does that leave plans for 15-team leagues?

On the drawing board.

Henderson can be great influence

Gwen Knapp, San Francisco Chronicle

Before Saturday's game at the Coliseum, two Padres' alumni had a little chat on the field. Bruce Bochy couldn't remember how much time had passed since he last saw Rickey Henderson, but he knew he had been keeping a certain message on ice for nearly two years.

"I told him what a great speech he gave at the Hall of Fame," the Giants' manager said, echoing a consensus rave about Henderson's 2009 induction.

Henderson works as a roving instructor in the minors for Oakland, and he joined the parent club for this weekend series. His technical mission involved advising some of the top baserunners, an asset that newly installed manager Bob Melvin will relentlessly exploit. In the bigger picture, his appearance can help connect the current team to the franchise's lustrous history, fulfilling another priority of Melvin's.

The A's manager got an assist from Bochy, who polished part of the rivals' history by reminding the media of how Henderson had matured from a remarkable talent into a great teammate. Bochy managed Henderson in San Diego 15 years ago, and again in 2001.

"He was a pleasure for me," Bochy said. "He was one those guys who was always laughing, keeping people loose, and always helping younger guys. He was already a teacher when he was still playing the game."

Bochy could have left it at that, but he acknowledged that Henderson's reputation underwent a transformation.

"You know, I had heard things about Rickey, that he was set in his ways and he could be difficult," Bochy said. His voice rose as he reached his real point: "But I didn't see any of that. ... He was probably the most popular guy on the club."

Certain A's greats of recent vintage have ended up in the wrong places: Congressional hearings, grand-jury rooms, book signings for "Juiced." Some have simply settled in with other clubs, because Oakland couldn't afford to hold onto them long enough to stake a full claim to their sentimental value.

Henderson, however, has always been and always will be an Oakland Athletic. It doesn't matter that he played for the Yankees, Padres, Red Sox, Newark Bears, San Diego Surf Dawgs ... to spare trees, let's just stop here.

He grew up in the city, served four stints in green and gold and bridged two of Oakland's most important baseball eras — the Billy Ball days of the early '80s and the Bash Brothers regime almost 10 years later.

Melvin said he didn't have anything to do with Henderson's appearance this weekend, in time for the Bay Bridge Series. "But I'm all for it," he said.

Henderson said he had come in from Stockton and also recently visited Sacramento and Midland.

When he talks with the next generation of A's, he said, he deals more in attitude than technique.

He wants to encourage younger players to believe in themselves, to meld the expanding science of the game into their instincts without being overwhelmed by data.

"We've got more stats than we've ever had, and you can have all sorts of computer printouts about what a pitcher does in a certain situation," he said. "I think the kids get a little frightened and they rely on that too much. I tell them: 'But what do you think? How does your body feel?' " Lean and limber at 52, Henderson still looks as if he could steal a base. If the A's announced that he would be reactivated for a three-game series and guaranteed to pinch-run at least once, they could sell out the park, with the upper-deck tarps on or off.

In Jemile Weeks, the team has another farm-grown player with killer speed, and he has been tutored by Henderson. Bochy compared him to Alan Wiggins, a dynamic second baseman with the Padres in the '80s. He wouldn't dare mention Henderson in the same sentence. It would be unfair to Weeks, and completely wrong. Henderson wasn't a prototype. He was completely unique.

But a random youngster has to be tempted to challenge the Hall of Famer to a foot race every now and then, just to see what's still there.

"You get a few guys, always," Henderson said. "But I think they're joking with me because sometimes it'll be the slowest guys that want to race me. I always ask them: 'Which way do you want me to run? Forward or backward?' "

Right now, he and his legacy could help take the A's in both directions at once.

BASEBALL SUNDAY

THE BULL PEN

By John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

Which will happen first — the **Barry Bonds** litigation ending or the Pirates ending a season with a winning record? The Pirates moved above .500 this past week, the latest in a season since 1999 they have owned a winning record. They're trying to snap their 18-year losing streak, dating to 1993, Bonds' first year as an ex-Pirate.

The A's were the first team to make a managing change this season.

The Marlins could be the second. They have lost 20 of 23 since their sweep in San Francisco. Manager **Edwin Rodriguez's** hitting coach, **John Mallee**, already has been fired, and the Marlins' owner is **Jeffrey Loria**, he of the hot temper and quick hook.

With **Barry Zito's** role up in the air upon his return, let it be known that rehabbing **Jake Peavy** of the White Sox, whose rotation is a solid fivesome, said he'd be willing to return as a reliever.

The Padres will retire **Trevor Hoffman's** No. 51 after their Aug. 21 game against the Marlins. Early in his Padres career, he preferred 15 but somebody already had it. So he flipped the numbers and wore 51. The man with 15 was **Bruce Bochy**.

Alarmingly, San Diegan turned Bostonian **Adrian Gonzalez** said the NL West is as good as the AL East: "There's more talented pitching in the NL West. But when you put in the hitters here, it's evened out."

Republican presidential candidate **Mitt Romney** attended Wednesday's Red Sox-Rays game at Tropicana Field and rooted for the Red Sox while sitting behind the Rays' dugout. He admitted to the St. Petersburg Times he hadn't known the Trop was a dome, saying, "I thought I was going to be in sweltering heat, but instead it's cool."

Nice job, handlers.

SHEA HEY

Whose cap will La Russa wear in Hall?

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

Tony La Russa, third all time in wins and the second manager to win a World Series in each league, one day will be in the Hall of Fame. Like players, a manager generally would be inducted representing one team — with his plaque featuring an image of him wearing a team cap.

"At the end of the day," Hall of Fame President **Jeff Idelson** said Saturday, not speaking of anyone in particular, "we want to be sure the logo is emblematic of where the electee made his greatest impact."

So La Russa would go in as an Oakland Athletic, right? Not necessarily.

The first thought is that La Russa did more in Oakland, where he managed 1,471 games. But next Saturday, he'll have managed his 2,507th Cardinals game.

That'll eclipse his combined games with the A's and White Sox. He was in Oakland 10 years.

This is his 16th with the Cardinals, who have won eight division titles, two pennants and the 2006 World Series under La Russa. His winning percentage is .543, a tad better than his .542 in Oakland.

Longevity notwithstanding, his impact was greater in Oakland.

Three straight World Series.

The Bash Brothers. The evolution of **Dennis Eckersley** as a newwave, one-inning closer. The remaking of **Dave Stewart**. Two manager of the year awards. Oakland's leader in games managed and games won.

On the steroid front, we'll call it a wash. Oakland was a PED hotbed, but **Mark McGwire** did his record-setting in St. Louis. Not that the Hall would weigh all that, but it does have the final say on which team an electee represents.

La Russa's final chapter in St. Louis hasn't been written, and he could put the Cardinals over the top with another World Series title. Otherwise, he should go in as an A.

A's good as gold thanks to four-run frame

By Tom Green / MLB.com | 6/19/2011 3:23 AM ET

OAKLAND -- Prior to Saturday's Bay Bridge Series matchup with the Giants, A's manager Bob Melvin admitted to having a few superstitions. Apparently, his team does too, and if they keep winning, the A's may never wear a non-gold jersey again.

After winning three straight games sporting the alternate tops, the A's pushed the streak to four Saturday night as they downed the Giants, 4-2, and clinched their second straight series win.

"If it ain't broke, right?" Melvin joked before the game.

After his team rallied from a two-run deficit in front of another sold-out Coliseum crowd, the A's skipper sang a similar tune.

"I'm guessing there's a chance this jersey is tomorrow," he said.

The A's continued their recent success at home despite not getting a quality start from their starter for the first time in three days. Righty Guillermo Moscoso tossed just 4 2/3 innings and gave up two runs -- both in the fifth and both unearned.

The Giants got on the board first in the frame after Moscoso fielded an Emmanuel Burriss sacrifice bunt attempt on the third-base side. Moscoso tried to throw out lead runner Chris Stewart, but an errant throw past third baseman Scott Sizemore led to Stewart scoring. Two batters later, Aubrey Huff picked up an RBI on a sacrifice fly to put the Giants on top 2-0 and chasing Moscoso from the game.

"One error kills me and I have to get out of the game," Moscoso said. "But I know we're playing to win the game. ... We're coming from struggling and now we're back on track."

The A's had an answer for the Giants, though, and got back on track in the bottom of the frame, scoring four off Giants starter Jonathan Sanchez. Sizemore hit a one-out single before Daric Barton and Cliff Pennington followed with a pair of RBI doubles to tie the game at 2.

Pennington advanced to third on one of Sanchez's two wild pitches before the southpaw walked Coco Crisp. The A's center fielder, hitting third for the first time since July 25, 2005, then swiped second for his 21st steal of the season.

Hideki Matsui, who was moved to the cleanup role with Josh Willingham sidelined by a sore Achilles tendon, knocked a base hit through the right side that cleared the bases. Since Melvin reinserted Matsui into the everyday lineup, the slugger is hitting .321 with nine RBIs, including Saturday's go-ahead RBIs, which Giants manager Bruce Bochy called a "seeing-eye single."

"You know what? They got it and we didn't," Bochy said.

That's been the difference for the A's the last four games, and overall since Melvin took over nine games ago.

"I think the thing that stands out is the fight, the perseverance," Melvin said. "That was a big momentum shift from one inning to the next, and them scoring and for us to come back and put up a four-spot on top of that. That's what I've seen, really since I've been here. Win or lose, that's what I've seen."

After the four-run rally, the A's bullpen completed the momentum shift, as five relievers combined to toss the final 4 1/3 innings and blanked the Giants' lineup, shutting the door each inning with the go-ahead or tying runs at the plate.

"Nothing these guys do surprises me anymore," said Brad Ziegler, who earned the win after throwing six pitches in one-third of an inning to get the A's out of the jam in the fifth. "We expect to have success every time out. They step up and close the door and don't even give the team a breath of hope. It's exciting to watch and it's exciting to be a part of that.

"We're feeding off each other for sure. No matter who gets the opportunity, we take it as a challenge. We don't want to let anyone else down, let alone the rest of the team."

The bullpen didn't disappoint anyone Saturday, except for the contingent of Giants fans in the Coliseum. Aside from Ziegler's brief appearance, Joey Devine, Brian Fuentes, Grant Balfour and Andrew Bailey each pitched a scoreless frame. The quartet combined to record six strikeouts and a double play that ended the game and gave Bailey his fourth save of the season.

As for the gold jerseys, Melvin isn't the only one who believes they'll make more appearances in the immediate future.

"Absolutely," Ziegler said when asked if the team would wear them for Sunday's series finale. "We'll take them on the road if we win [Sunday]."

Cahill seeks turnaround in A's quest for sweep

By Quinn Roberts / MLB.com

There is no better way to put it: Trevor Cahill is in a funk.

A perfect 6-0 to begin the season with a minuscule 1.72 ERA, the A's right-hander is 0-5 with a 5.67 ERA over his last seven starts.

Looking to reverse his fortune, Cahill will take the mound in Sunday's Bay Bridge Series finale against the San Francisco Giants at the Oakland Coliseum as the A's try for a sweep.

In his last start Tuesday against the Royals, Cahill threw a season-low 4 1/3 innings, giving up four runs on four hits to increase his ERA to 3.42.

His Achilles' heel the entire game proved to be issuing seven walks, a career high.

"Just been off lately," Cahill said. "Trying to work on things and get back on track. Hopefully, I can figure it out and get out of this funk I'm in.

"Just looking at video from last year and the beginning of this year now, something kind of looked different. It's just me finding a comfort zone is the biggest thing, and I don't feel like I'm comfortable out there to repeat my delivery more than once in a row."

Opposing Cahill will be right-hander Matt Cain, who is the only Giants starter with a record over .500.

Much of his success this season can be attributed to how much run support he receives in a game. In seven starts this season in which he has received three runs or more, Cain is 6-0. In his seven other starts, the right-hander is 0-4.

In those 14 games, Cain has received 39 runs of support, which averages out to 2.79 runs per game.

Yet in his last start Tuesday against Arizona, Cain got an ample amount of run support. The Giants scored six runs and Cain won, going 6 2/3 innings, while giving up five runs on eight hits. He also walked four and struck out four.

"Like always, he mixed his fastball with breaking balls and he's always been the same guy," said Arizona catcher Miguel Montero after the game.

Giants: Team sticking with catching duo

Barring a trade, another injury or any unforeseen circumstances, the Giants are staying with Eli Whiteside and Chris Stewart behind the plate.

Whiteside is batting only .200 this season, and Stewart has been even worse, hitting .174. He got the start Saturday; Whiteside is expected to get the start Sunday.

"This isn't where one catcher's catching a certain guy. I don't want to get into that because the pitchers are comfortable throwing to either one," manager Bruce Bochy said. "I just know that Eli's caught Matt Cain for the most part the last couple starts."

A's: Rosales replaces Willingham in left

With Josh Willingham dealing with an injured Achilles tendon, A's manager Bob Melvin has begun to re-evaluate who will play in left field in the immediate future.

With Willingham day to day from the injury, which happened while pushing off third to score in Friday's 5-2 win over the Giants, Melvin inserted Adam Rosales in left field Saturday.

"We want to get some righties in there, definitely, against [lefty Jonathan] Sanchez," Melvin said. "With the way [Scott] Sizemore is swinging the bat, that's the way you got to do it. [Rosales] is an active kid, a great athlete and he's all for it. I know he's played it a few times and a bit in winter ball.

Rosales, who recently returned from foot surgery, saw some time at the position last year, but Saturday marked the first time this season he has been in left field.

Worth noting

- Hideki Matsui has 499 home runs between his career in Japan and the U.S.
- Cain is 3-5 with a 2.30 ERA against the A's, with a 1.01 WHIP (walks plus hits per inning pitched).
- The A's have hit just 38 home runs this season, the fewest in the Majors.

Weeks moved to leadoff, Matsui to cleanup

By Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- With left fielder Josh Willingham out of Saturday's game against the Giants with a sore left Achilles tendon, A's manager Bob Melvin did some shuffling of the lineup, starting with the top of the order.

Rookie Jemile Weeks, who has hit .361 -- primarily in the nine-hole -- since being called up, was moved to the leadoff role for the second game of the Bay Bridge Series. It marked the second time Weeks has hit leadoff with the A's, though it's a role he's accustomed to, having hit there in the Minors.

Melvin said he was a little reluctant to put Weeks there given his success batting ninth and the track record of Coco Crisp, who was hitting third Saturday, in the leadoff role. But Weeks, whom teammates have referred to as a sparkplug to the A's offense, said it doesn't matter where in the lineup he hits.

"I think anywhere in the lineup gives you an opportunity to spark the offense," Weeks said. "But the leadoff spot is definitely a spot where it's looked at. You get to start off the game and really send a message from that spot."

While Weeks hoped to send a message to the A's cross-bay rivals, Melvin hoped the second baseman's energy, which he called "contagious," continued to spread through the lineup with Weeks hitting leadoff.

Along with the shift of Weeks to the top of the order and Crisp batting third, Melvin moved designated hitter Hideki Matsui to the cleanup role in Willingham's absence.

"I'm a firm believer you have to have some stability in your everyday players in the three- and four-spots," Melvin said.

Additionally, Adam Rosales got the nod in left field for the injured Willingham and batted eighth while Daric Barton returned to first base Saturday while batting ninth for the first time since Aug. 25, 2008, against the Angels.

"You're in the lineup," Melvin said about Barton. "Other than Matsui, he's the only lefty in the lineup. It is what it is. It could be worse -- could be out of the lineup, right?"

McCarthy looks good in simulated game

OAKLAND -- Brandon McCarthy is approaching the "finish line," at least according to A's manager Bob Melvin.

The A's righty has been sidelined for almost a month with a stress reaction in his throwing shoulder, but after throwing three simulated innings prior to Saturday's second game of this weekend's Bay Bridge Series, McCarthy is inching closer to a return from the disabled list.

"You could see a little added fire in his eyes today, getting a little closer to the finish line to where potentially he could go out," Melvin said.

McCarthy, who was 1-4 with a 3.39 ERA and a 1.24 WHIP (walks plus hits per inning pitched) before hitting the disabled list, tossed three innings of about 20 pitches apiece and faced live hitters Saturday, including backup catcher Landon Powell.

"He looks good," Powell said. "He looks normal and he should be back soon. We're looking forward to having him back."

Just how soon before McCarthy is activated remains to be seen, though. He is one of five A's starters currently on the disabled list, along with Dallas Braden, Brett Anderson, Rich Harden and Tyson Ross. Melvin said prior to the game that he is unsure what the next step will be for McCarthy, but will check with the team's athletic trainers and see how the righty responds to Saturday's session, adding that he thinks McCarthy is currently ahead of Ross (oblique) in terms of making a return.

While the team is still figuring out what's next for McCarthy, Melvin said he has been impressed with what he's seen from the sixth-year hurler.

"I like those big pitchers that throw downhill, and he certainly does that," Melvin said. "It was good to see him out there."

Rosales replaces Willingham in left field

OAKLAND -- Josh Willingham's left Achilles injury has caused A's manager Bob Melvin to re-evaluate the left-field position, if only for the immediate future.

Willingham is day to day with the injury, which occurred while pushing off third to score in Friday's 5-2 win against the Giants. Saturday in Willingham's absence, Melvin inserted utility man Adam Rosales into left field Saturday.

"We want to get some righties in there, definitely, against [lefty Jonathan] Sanchez," Melvin said. "With the way [Scott] Sizemore is swinging the bat, that's the way you got to do it. [Rosales] is an active kid, a great athlete and he's all for it. I know he's played it a few times and a bit in winter ball.

Rosales, who recently returned from foot surgery, saw some time at the position last year but Saturday marked the first time this season he has been in left field. As Melvin noted, Rosales also played in the outfield during winter ball in Mexico prior to the 2010 season.

However, Rosales didn't field the position at all during his rehab stint with Triple-A Sacramento and said he has rarely warmed up there this season. But he isn't worried about the adjustments, adding that he's used to being used anywhere on the field.

"It's a bigger glove," Rosales said about the difference between the infield and the outfield. "I think it's more of an adjustment going from the outfield coming to the infield, to tell you the truth. There's a lot more going on in the infield."

While Rosales got the nod to fill the void left by the injured Willingham on Saturday, Melvin brought up another option when the A's travel to New York and Philadelphia for a six-game Interleague road trip. The A's skipper originally planned to use designated hitter Hideki Matsui in right field -- where he hasn't seen time since 2008 -- on the trip, but said if Willingham is still sidelined, he would prefer to put Matsui in left. Melvin added he likely would start Matsui more than one game per series if that situation arose.

"We can't afford to have our three- and four-hitters out, both of them out at the same time," Melvin said. "He'll say he can play either, but I know he's played a lot more games in left field, so hopefully that's more comfortable for him."

Worth noting

- Mark Ellis made the first of three rehab appearances Saturday for Triple-A Sacramento. Ellis was slotted in the two-hole for the River Cats and started at second base.
- Melvin admitted prior to Saturday's game that he has a few superstitions. When asked about the gold jerseys the A's have worn for the duration of their current three-game winning streak, Melvin joked: "If it ain't broke, right?" The skipper then added: "Having said that, we'll probably see another jersey tonight." In fact, the A's didn't change it up and came out wearing the gold tops for Saturday's game.

Better pitching through biochemistry

A's Breslow is smart enough to stop thinking when he takes mound

By LOWELL COHN, THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Craig Breslow, the A's lefty reliever, is the smartest player in baseball. The Sporting News gave him that honor last fall. So, let's put that on the table right from the get-go, and admit he's thinking thoughts right now that would blow your mind.

He graduated from Yale in 2002 with a degree in molecular biophysics and biochemistry. He thought he would be a doctor — he's only 30 and might end up going to med school later on — and until a few years ago he lugged his Yale textbooks on road trips and studied molecular whatchamacallits on the plane. When he realized his big-league career was working out, he dropped the textbooks, at least for now.

He seems wary when writers ask about his superstar brain — the topic makes him seem like a freak. But he's polite and he understands a writer's need for a story and he obliges.

How does he feel being identified as smart?

"It's doesn't feel any different to me," he said, "than if I were identified by anything else, I guess. Considering other professional athletes' discerning characteristics, I think smart is certainly one I can live with. Once I'm in a clubhouse, I like to be identified as a baseball player just like the 24 other guys in here. Like I say, if that's my defining characteristic I could do worse."

Is Breslow smart on the mound?

"I try not to think at all," he said.

What does that mean?

"When it comes to physical activity your brain only acts as an inhibitor. Keep it out of the equation. I know how to throw a ball. My body knows how to throw a ball. If I can keep my brain from preventing me doing that, I'll be in better shape."

How does the brain prevent?

"By over-analyzing or thinking negative thoughts or assessing worst-case scenarios."

Breslow is so smart he even knows when not to be smart. So what does he like about baseball?

"I love the variability day by day. You really can't script the way the day is going to play out."

As Breslow spoke, Andrew Bailey, who has the locker next door, listened and sometimes nodded his head. He glanced at Breslow when he unloaded the "variability" quote. Remember Bailey, because he comes back later.

In 2008, Breslow started the Strike 3 Foundation, a charity dedicated to research and medical treatment of pediatric cancer. It started small but last year raised \$250,000. Bailey is on the board of the charity. But this isn't where Bailey comes into this story, so be patient.

One other thing you should know about Breslow. He starred in a comedy video produced by a New York comedy bunch, 12 Angry Mascots — proceeds went to his charity. In the video, Breslow is relaxing in his car with his left hand sticking out the window. A woman wanders by and falls in love with his hand; the video is funny and semi-sexual and Breslow is a scream and you should watch it on YouTube.

That's after you watch the video allegedly showing Jets coach Rex Ryan ogling his wife's foot, as in foot fetish, as the foot dangles out a car window. Some people's children do the strangest things. So, Breslow was spoofing the Ryan lookalikes/soundalikes if in fact that's what they were.

OK, here comes Andrew Bailey, who characterizes his pal Breslow this way: "You wouldn't think for how smart he is he'd be that down to earth."

Bailey said A's players seek out Breslow for answers to questions requiring extra brain power.

"He always gives an answer with such confidence that you believe him, and it could be totally false," Bailey said. "He's the guy on our team that, if you need an answer, you go talk to him. Anything from physics to rotation of the baseball to medical advice to street smarts. He really doesn't have street smarts."

Does he pretend to?

"I think there's guys in this clubhouse with more street smarts than he has. He can out-test-take you, that's for sure."

Is he smarter than you?

"Yeah."

Does it bother you?

"No, because I think I'm bright enough to get by and that's all I care about. For him, he enjoys doing other things besides normal activities. For me reading isn't a big thing, but for him he enjoys that."

Does he read a lot on planes?

"Not abnormally too much."

Does he play video games?

"No. He thinks he's good at flying the (model) planes. He's not that good, because I don't think he played video games as a kid. You know what I mean, because the controller is just like a video game. Not so good. He does enjoy cribbage, card games, blackjack — loves it. If you ever need blackjack advice, he knows the book inside and out when to hit and when not to hit."

Is he a nerd?

"Yeah. But a good nerd."

"Good nerd" is probably the highest compliment Breslow ever received in a baseball clubhouse. He gives every indication of being wise enough to understand that.

A's chase Sanchez early

SF leaves too many runners on base; Matsui doesn't

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Jonathan Sanchez had another wild day on the mound, which has become typical of the San Francisco left-hander's season.

The Giants' offense was even worse, continuing another troubling trend for the defending World Series champs.

Sanchez was off with his command, walking three and throwing two wild pitches, and San Francisco stranded 10 baserunners in a 4-2 loss to the A's on Saturday night.

"We're in a rut right now," Giants manager Bruce Bochy said. "We've got some young kids trying to get settled in but there's just no excuse. We're better than this."

San Francisco dropped its third straight game overall and second consecutive to its cross-bay rivals.

In both losses to the A's, the Giants got men on base with little problem but failed to come through after that.

They left the bases loaded in the second inning against Oakland pitcher Guillermo Moscoso, stranded two in the fourth and then two more in the sixth. Typical of San Francisco's night, Manny Burriss drew a one-out walk in the ninth but Pablo Sandoval grounded into a game-ending 6-4-3 double play.

"That's been the case the last few days," Bochy said. "We're having a hard time driving in runs. That's what it comes down to, and that's what wins ballgames for you. We're getting them out there, we're just not getting a hit with runners in scoring position."

Hideki Matsui had two hits and two RBIs while Cliff Pennington and Daric Barton both had RBI doubles for the A's, who matched their season best with a four-game winning streak.

Aubrey Huff drove in a run for the Giants and Nate Schierholtz added two hits.

Brad Ziegler (2-0) struck out Cody Ross to end the fifth, the only batter he faced. Joey Devine, Brian Fuentes, Grant Balfour and Andrew Bailey each pitched a scoreless inning, with Bailey getting his fourth save in five chances.

Sanchez (4-5) pitched a season-low 4½ innings, allowing four runs on six hits. He walked three and struck out three in falling to 1-3 over his past seven starts.

"I gave up a couple of high hits and they scored," said Sanchez, who has only one win in his last seven starts. "They knew I was throwing strikes and they were just looking down the middle and swinging."

Moscoso lasted 4½ innings, giving up two unearned runs on three hits. He walked three and struck out one.

The Giants broke a scoreless tie in the fifth with the help of the A's defense. Chris Stewart was credited with a single after Scott Sizemore apparently caught his spikes in the dirt on a grounder and could not make an accurate throw.

Moscoso walked Andres Torres and then threw away Burriss' bunt, allowing Stewart to score. One out later, Huff hit a sacrifice fly.

The A's came right back in their half of the fifth. Barton and Pennington had their run-scoring doubles and Coco Crisp walked ahead of Matsui's two-run single.

NOTES

* Both teams used switch hitters in the top three spots of the batting order.

Giants INF Mark DeRosa began hitting off a tee.

* Giants OF Darren Ford is 2 for 11 with four strikeouts in his rehab stint.

* Huff is batting .308 in June after hitting only .218 through May 31.

* A's RHP Brandon McCarthy (stress fracture in right shoulder) threw about 60 pitches to hitters and will likely be heading on a rehab assignment early next week.

* A's RHP Tyson Ross is expected to throw to hitters next week in New York and Philadelphia.

* A's OF Josh Willingham was out of the lineup with an Achilles' tendon strain.

Gutierrez: Ellis, Barton could meet at career crossroads

Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com

OAKLAND - In one corner of the A's clubhouse, the consummate professional. A 10th-year veteran who's not looking forward to his three-game rehab stint beginning Saturday at Triple-A Sacramento but, rather, at the end of it so he can rejoin the major league club. Even if his replacement has been a revelation.

Across the way, is the one-time "phenom," so dubbed by none other than Frank Thomas. A former hitting machine whose once oh-so-pretty swing now is now so out of whack - physically and mentally - he might actually be looking forward to being sent down to work on his hitting. Might being the key word.

Mark Ellis and Daric Barton could be meeting at individual career crossroads come Wednesday, when Ellis and his strained right hamstring is eligible to come off the disabled list. Barton, who told me he has two options remaining, being sent down to the River Cats, just might be the corresponding roster move to make room.

And it might be the best of both worlds for both men.

Because while many A's fans are wondering if Jemile Weeks' inspiring play at second base has pushed Ellis to the brink of becoming trade bait or, in some fantasy G.M.'s minds, to another position, Ellis plans on returning to second base.

"That stuff will work itself out," Ellis told me before the A's 5-2 series-opening win over the Giants Friday night at the Coliseum. "You never have enough good players."

So I asked him if I should be surprised if I saw him playing third base or first base for the River Cats.

"Yeah," he said. "I'd be surprised."

The plan, then, should be to continue to let Weeks play as the spark he's been in not only hitting .361 with three triples and six RBI in 10 games, but also, as Conor Jackson said, bringing a certain "swagger" to the A's.

Ellis has played Gold Glove-caliber defense in his career and when Weeks tires or cools off, Ellis' glove will come in handy, so long as he does not sulk, which he's too much of a pro to do.

Then do the A's move Ellis before the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline?

"I don't have any control over it," he said. "I understand the situation. When something happens, *if* something happens, I'll deal with it then."

Barton, meanwhile, is having a tough time dealing with his shortcomings at the plate.

He is three for his last 27 and has not homered this season, the lone regular first baseman in the big leagues without a home run.

"I could say no, but I'd be lying," Barton said when I asked him if his home run drought bothered him. "Of course I feel like (crud) not hitting home runs. I don't feel right in the box.

"I feel like I'm losing strength. Something's keeping me from my game."

It's been like this all season, and he's become the fans' favorite whipping boy. Well, now that Bob Geren is no longer the A's skipper.

Barton's 64-game homer-less streak as a first baseman is the longest such skid since Sean Casey went 63 games in 2007 for Detroit. The Oakland record for such a power outage is 75, by Mike Hegan from July 6, 1971 to Aug. 16, 1973.

"I'm grinding it out right now," he said. "I don't know what else to say. I'm trying to find it.

"I'm going through my normal routine, just trying to keep it simple. Is it pitch selection? Is it my approach? I just can't miss my pitch when I get it ... I'm putting pressure on my self to make things happen.

"Being my arbitration year, it (stinks), but it is what it is."

A's interim manager Bob Melvin had some sage advice for Barton - don't focus on the funk; focus on getting out of the funk.

Which is why Barton did not say he'd welcome a demotion to get his swing, and his head, straight.

"Obviously, it's not something I want to do," he said. "But when I went back in '09, I put a lot less pressure on myself and it let me get back to finding myself."

Hmmmm, sounds like it might be a welcome respite, right? Besides, first base could be handled by Conor Jackson and Adam Rosales in the interim.

"I look at baseball in a simple way - if somebody's playing better than me, then put them out there. My job is to produce, and I'm not doing that right now.

"They've given me every opportunity in the world and I'm thankful for it."

A return on the A's investment from Barton, much like a bonus from a returning Ellis, would please all.

A's take second straight game from Giants, 4-2, while relying on five relievers

Sam McPherson, examiner.com

(OAKLAND) -- This certainly isn't the way the Oakland Athletics would have scripted a win, but they'll take it.

The A's beat the San Francisco Giants for the second straight night on Saturday, this time a 4-2 win behind the efforts of five relievers and some key hits in the fifth inning.

Oakland starter Guillermo Moscoso did himself in with a throwing error in the top of the fifth inning that allowed the Giants to score two unearned runs before Brad Ziegler relieved him for the final out. But the A's hitters picked their starter up in the bottom half of the frame, with four hits and four runs to chase San Francisco starter Jonathan Sanchez.

Hideki Matsui delivered the go-ahead runs with a two-out single to right field, and then -- in order, Joey Devine, Brian Fuentes, Grant Balfour and Andrew Bailey each pitched a scoreless inning to secure the win.

With the victory, Oakland now has a four-game winning streak and will look to sweep the Giants in Oakland for the second season in a row on Sunday.

But it wasn't pretty.

The A's made two official errors on the night -- and a third "error" strangely was ruled a single. This is the ninth game in a row Oakland has committed an error, and it handed San Francisco its only two runs. And, of the four runs the Giants have scored in these two games, three of them have been gifts from the A's pitiful defense.

Beyond the unearned runs, however, the errors put more strain on a pitching staff that must already carry a large burden -- a mediocre offense.

For example, in the second inning, Cliff Pennington made an error for the second straight game on a routine play. Since the miscue came with two outs, the inning was extended unnecessarily -- and Moscoso threw nine extra pitches to get out of the inning.

That mental and additional physical strain showed up in the fifth inning when Moscoso's own error led to the Giants' only runs on the night.

So while the A's team ERA doesn't take a hit because of the defensive blunders, the team ends up carrying a heavier burden in the long haul: the pitchers press more to overcome, as do the hitters because they've fallen behind on the scoreboard unnecessarily.

Bob Melvin seems to have addressed some of the offensive issues in his first week-plus on the job, so perhaps it's also time now to work on the defense.

Oakland looks to build momentum Saturday night against the Giants

Sam McPherson, examiner.com

(OAKLAND) -- Guillermo Moscoso takes the mound for the Oakland Athletics tonight as they face the San Francisco Giants in the second game of a three-game, interleague series.

The A's broke a six-game losing streak against the Giants on Friday night with a 5-2 win over the defending World Series champions. Oakland has won four of the last ten games against San Francisco dating back to last season's interleague contests.

Moscoso's time with the major-league club may be short-lived, too, as three injured A's starters are getting closer to returning to the Oakland roster.

So the 27-year old righty will want to make the most of this opportunity.

In 25 1/3 innings this year, Moscoso has posted a 2-3 record with a 3.91 ERA -- solid numbers for any rookie starter. But with Tyson Ross, Brandon McCarthy and even Rich Harden returning to solid health soon, it will be tough to keep Moscoso on the roster.

Meanwhile, the A's offense is showing some signs of life in the current three-game winning streak. Averaging five runs a game with their pitching staff is bound to result in some wins, and it's nice to see Oakland beating pitchers like Tim Lincecum, too.

But it doesn't get any easier for the A's as they face Jonathan Sanchez tonight. The Giants' 28-year old lefty threw a no-hitter in 2009, and he currently sports a 4-4 record with a 3.47 ERA in 2011.

However, Oakland actually hits 22 points higher against left-handed pitching than it does against right-handed pitching, so this may be an opportunity for the A's to keep scoring -- and winning.

And if Moscoso can come through like Graham Godfrey did last night against the Giants, Oakland could be in pretty good shape in pursuing its fifth straight win against San Francisco at the Overstock.com Coliseum.

One thing the A's must improve if they want to keep winning is their defense.

Cliff Pennington's error on a routine grounder in Friday night's game extended the team's streak of consecutive games with an error to eight -- and the unearned run that scored as a result added to Oakland's already-American League worst total of 37 free scores on the year.

Plans for A's up in air

San Jose wait taking too long

Tracy Seipel, San Jose Mercury-News

SAN JOSE - Exasperation and ennui are taking their toll on this city's fans of the Oakland A's.

No wonder.

The struggling team is last in its division. The 12th of Never appears to be when Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig will decide whether the A's can relocate to San Jose. And to top it all off, San Jose's redevelopment agency is near death, meaning it won't be able to buy the last two parcels of land needed to complete the downtown ballpark site.

All of which leads some to ponder: How much more can A's co-owner Lew Wolff endure before he decides to walk away?

"At some point, it would seem to me that Lew would just say, 'The heck with it,'" said Roger Noll, a Stanford University sports economist. "At some point, enough is enough.

"The circumstances are as unresolved as they ever were, and the progress is not fast enough to risk the value of his franchise in waiting for San Jose."

Wolff, who has waited more than two years for an answer from Selig, brushes off that suggestion.

"We have always planned for the worst-case scenario," he said.

The San Jose Redevelopment Agency has spent about \$24 million to purchase a little more than half the 14 acres earmarked for the ballpark site near the HP Pavilion and Diridon Station. After recently selling about \$26 million of assets, the agency had hoped to buy the remaining two parcels, owned by AT&T and a Los Gatos family, for about \$20 million.

But the agency, which has seen its budget and staff dwindle in recent years, is now nearly broke -- and is diverting the \$26 million in land sales to pay for its own anemic budget and crushing debt.

Wednesday's vote by the state Legislature to eliminate the state's 398 active redevelopment agencies - considered a lifeblood to such stadium ventures, including the San Francisco 49ers project in Santa Clara - doesn't help matters.

Gov. Jerry Brown on Thursday vetoed the budget sent to him by Democrats, but it does not affect the Legislature's vote to kill redevelopment, a state Assembly official said. The final decision on the agencies' fate rests with Brown.

Still, the loss of the \$20 million needed to buy the land is significant, some observers say.

"It looks like it's going to be difficult for anything to happen in San Jose for the next few years," said Marc Morris, spokesman for the anti-stadium group Better Sense San Jose.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Ellis provides leadership to young players

By Kyle Tucker / Sacramento River Cats

It's surreal to watch an established Major Leaguer like Mark Ellis suit up for the River Cats.

However, that's exactly what's happening this weekend at Raley Field. Having a guy like Ellis around gives the younger players a chance to pick his brain as he acts as their mentor.

Ellis, who is in Sacramento on an MLB rehabilitation assignment, is no stranger around Raley Field. This is his sixth stint with the River Cats over his career. Ellis played 132 games with Sacramento in 2001 before making his Major League debut with Oakland in April of 2002.

Ellis has played second base with the A's for the last nine years and has made a name for himself as one of the best defensive second basemen. In 2007, his best MLB season, Ellis hit .276 with 19 home runs and 76 RBIs. He also tied the A's franchise record for errorless games by a second baseman, playing in 70 consecutive games without an error.

If you watch Ellis play, you notice he plays baseball the way it was meant to be played -- with hustle and heart, while being a great teammate. Younger players on the River Cats know this and aren't shy to asking him about his experiences in the Majors.

River Cats shortstop Eric Sogard is thrilled to play beside Ellis again, as the two got to know each other in Spring Training.

"Mark is obviously a tremendous player as well as a person and it's an honor to play alongside him," Sogard said before Saturday night's game. "He is great about helping us out if he notices anything that we could be doing better and we all respect that about him."

With strong play from former River Cats second baseman Jemile Weeks in Oakland, Ellis' starting spot in Oakland may be in question.

Ellis has played with the A's organization since being traded from Kansas City in 2000.

"I have been loyal to the A's and they have recognized that and done the same for me," Ellis said. "Not many players stay with one team as long as I have gotten the chance to anymore, so I feel blessed that I have been there this long."

The 34-year-old Ellis will weigh his options at the end of the season, but whatever the case may be, he will be remembered as a great Oakland Athletic and River Cat.

"Mark is one of the best guys in baseball, no doubt about it," said River Cats Radio Broadcaster Johnny Duskow. "These younger kids all look up to him, and with good reason." Ellis is humbled by the reception he gets from younger players and takes pride in his role as a leader.

"These guys know what they are doing for the most part," Ellis said. "I just tell them to play hard every day and that will give them the best chance of success."

Fresno evens Highway 99 Showdown series

By Alex Sadorf / Sacramento River Cats

The River Cats entered Saturday on a five-game winning, including a dramatic win Friday that left slugger Chris Carter being mobbed by teammates.

But things turn quickly in baseball, and Fresno pitchers silences Sacramento bats Saturday night for a 3-0 victory before 13,732 fans at Raley Field.

In the top of the fourth, left fielder Thomas Neal hit a hard line drive to right field, scoring Tyler Graham and Edgar Gonzalez. Gonzalez singled earlier in the inning to extend his on-base streak to 24 games. In the ninth inning, Neal scored Gonzalez with another RBI single.

This game marked only the second shut out against the River Cats this season -- the River Cats were also shut out June 12 against Tacoma.

River Cats starter Carlos Hernandez retired the first eight batters he faced. He had a formidable opponent, however, in right-hander Andrew Kown, who didn't allow a hit over 6.0 innings and claimed his eighth win of the season.

Sacramento got its first hit with no outs in the seventh inning when Andy LaRoche's fly ball to right field fell in front of James Simmons, who seemed to lose the ball in the twilight.

"As far as the River Cats and the Grizzlies go, it goes back to the A's and the Giants, River Cats Pitching Coach Scott Emerson said. "The Northern California people."

Whiplash, the famous cowboy monkey, will be making an appearance Sunday at Raley Field to celebrate Father's Day. game time is 1:05 p.m.

RockHounds snap five-game losing streak

Staff Reports, Midland Reporter-Telegram

SAN ANTONIO -- The Midland RockHounds ended a five-game losing streak thanks in part to a four-run second inning in a 6-4 victory over the San Antonio Missions Saturday night at Nelson Wolff Stadium.

The RockHounds actually had a 6-0 lead before the Missions scored four in the sixth inning to make the game interesting.

But Ben Hornbeck, Jonathan Ortiz and Neil Wagner combined to pitch three scoreless innings of relief to help the RockHounds end their slide.

Jeremy Barfield, who went 2 for 4 with two RBI, got the second inning rally started with a single. After a single by Matt Sulentic and a sacrifice bunt by Tyler Ladendorf, Mitch Canham singled to score Barfield. Jermaine Mitchell added a sacrifice fly, Grant Green had an RBI single and Adam Heether added an RBI double in the inning for a 4-0 lead.

The RockHounds made it 6-0 in the fifth thanks to a two-run single by Barfield.

Anthony Capra (1-3) had arguably his best start of the season as he pitched five scoreless innings before running into trouble in the sixth after giving up two singles and a walk to cut the lead to 6-1. After Jared Lansford came into the game in relief, James Darnell made it 6-4 with a three-run home run to center field.

But the Missions' bats were quieted by the Midland bullpen the rest of the way as the RockHounds got their first win of the four-game series.

The series ends at 4:05 p.m. today with the RockHounds looking for a split at Nelson Wolff Stadium.

Home Runs Earn Ports Win

Stockton Ports

As has been the trend of the home stand, the Stockton Ports defeated the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes 4-3 by way of the long ball. The home run-fueled victory extended the Ports win streak to seven, making this the Ports longest win streak of the season.

The Quakes struck first in the second inning. Blake Smith lead off the inning with a double against Ports starter Rob Gilliam. Gilliam, who was coming off a win with a career-high 12 strikeouts, got the next two batters to ground out before hitting trouble against Austin Gallagher. Gallagher stepped up to the plate and drilled two-run homer to right field on a 1-1 pitch to give the Quakes their first lead of the night.

The Ports responded with their own two-run blast in the bottom of the third. Jason Christian walked to lead off the inning, which brought the struggling Dusty Coleman to the plate. Coleman, who had been batting just .121 through the last ten games, hit a home run to left field on a 0-1 pitch, his ninth home run of the season.

The Quakes regained the lead the very next inning, grinding out their final run of the evening in the top of the fourth. With two outs already recorded in the inning, Ramon Jean singled through the hole at shortstop, and promptly scored on a Rafael Ynoa double to right field.

The Ports once again tied it up in the fourth with their second home run of the evening. With one away in the fourth, Athony Aliotti stepped up to the plate and drilled a pitch over the center field wall. Aliotti has been hot against the Quakes this series, batting .500 going into tonight.

The Ports took the lead the next inning as Leonardo Gil, who was seeing his first action of the series, drilled his second home run of the series. Gil's leadoff home run to the right field was enough to earn the Ports the win on a night where all but one run was scored by way of the long ball.

The Ports pitching would hold the Quakes scoreless through the final five innings of play. Despite giving up all three runs in the game, Rob Gilliam would go on to earn the win, thanks mostly to the two solo home runs in the fourth and fifth innings. Brett Hunter came in to pitch a scoreless sixth and seventh innings, recording two strikeouts in the appearance. Ports closer, Jose Guzman, then entered the game to attempt his tenth save of the season. Guzman had the Quakes number, and pitched two scoreless innings, recording two strikeouts and earning the save.

The Ports look to extend their streak to eight and earn their second consecutive series sweep tomorrow on Father's Day. Lefty Jake Brown takes the mound for the Ports at 2:09 p.m.

Bees Lose to Snappers 7-4

By Matthew Wheaton, Burlington Bees

BURLINGTON, IA - The Beloit Snappers (37-32) scored seven runs in the second inning to earn a 7-4 win over the Burlington Bees (45-24) in front of 585 fans at Community Field Saturday afternoon.

Burlington started the scoring in the bottom of the first inning after RF Royce Consigli (0-3) drew a lead-off walk. Consigli stole second base and scored on an RBI double from 1B A.J. Kirby-Jones (2-4) to make the score 1-0.

After a single to center field by Beloit 1B Michael Gonzales (4-5) to lead off the top of the second inning, LF Daniel Ortiz (1-5) hit a double to right field to move Gonzales to third base. A single from 2B Jairo Perez (2-5) knocked in Gonzales and moved Ortiz to third. Beloit manager Nelson Prada then called for a double steal and Perez moved to second base, while Ortiz scored. RF Lance Ray (0-3) walked and advanced to second base on a RBI single from C Kyle Knudson (1-3). SS Daniel Santana (0-3) was hit by a pitch. Ray moved to third base and Knudson to second. CF Wang-Wei Lin (2-5) hit a RBI single to center field. DH Nate Roberts (1-5) followed with a two-run single to right field. With Gonzales batting, Roberts was caught stealing second base, and Lin scored from third base to put the Snappers up 7-1.

Kirby-Jones hit a RBI single in the bottom of the eighth inning, which drove in 2B Ryan Pineda (2-4), and DH Josh Whitaker (2-4) hit a two-run home run to make the score 7-4.

Bees RHP Sean Murphy allowed seven runs on six hits, walked one and struck out in 1.1 innings of work in his season debut and earned the loss. RHP Zach Thornton pitched 2.2 innings, allowed three hits, walked one and struck out three. RHP Mike Hart toed the rubber for three innings, allowed one hit and struck out three. RHP Pedro Vidal finished the game by throwing the final two innings and striking out two.

The Bees and Beloit Snappers wrap up their series on Sunday at 2 p.m. It's "Faith Day" and "Louisa Communications Kids Day" at Community Field. Bring your Church bulletin on Sunday home games and get \$1 off up to four general admission tickets. All kids 12 and under get in free (when accompanied by a paid adult) and get to run the bases after the game brought to you by Louisa Communications. RHP Manuel Soliman (2-4, 4.61) gets the start for the Snappers against RHP Tyler Vail (1-2, 5.23) for the Bees.

Tri-City Blanks Vermont 10-0 Saturday

By Paul Stanfield / Vermont Lake Monsters

TROY, NY --- Kellen Kielsgaard went 2-for-3 with a solo homer and double in his pro debut, while Matt Duffy broke open a 4-0 ValleyCats lead with a three-run double as Tri-City blanked the Vermont Lake Monsters 10-0 in New York-Penn League action Saturday night at Bruno Stadium.

The contest was scoreless until the fourth inning when the ValleyCats scored two runs, then Kielsgaard homered to rightfield in the fifth and added a sacrifice fly in the sixth for the 4-0 Tri-City lead. Vermont reliever Jeller Castillo came on to pitch in the seventh and walked the bases loaded before Duffygreated reliever Jeff Urlaub by blasting a three-run double to centerfield for a 7-0 ValleyCats advantage.

Duffy, who played baseball at the University of Vermont in 2008 and 2009, latered scored an unearned run in the seventh on a double play. Tri-City added two more runs in the eighth off Urlaub as Kielsgaard led off with a double and scored on a triple by Hector Rodriguez, who scored the ValleyCats 10th run on a groundout.

Three Tri-City pitchers each tossed three innings in combining on a five-hit shutout of the Lake Monsters. Vermont's best chance to score came in the second with runners on first and second as Dan Petitti singled with two outs, but centerfielder Justin Gominsky gunned down Lake Monster Jacob Tanis at the plate to end the inning.

Vermont would put runners on base again late in the game, but Tri-City turned double plays in the sixth, seventh and eighth innings to keep the Lake Monsters off the scoreboard. The 10-0 defeat was Vermont's worst shutout loss since 13-0 to Jamestown on August 19, 2009.

Petitti had two of Vermont's five hits for the game, while starting pitcher Argenis Paez (0-1) allowed three runs on five hits over 4 2/3 innings to take the loss. Tri-City starter Jonas Dufek gave up two hits with two walks and two strikeouts over three innings in his pro debut out of Creighton, while reliever Dayan Diaz (1-0) one hit in his three innings for the win and Travis Smink two hits over his three innings for the save.

The Lake Monsters and ValleyCats will wrap up the three-game series at Tri-City on Sunday at 5:00 pm with J.C. Menna the scheduled starter for Vermont, which will open its 2011 home season beginning on Monday night at historic Centennial Field against the Lowell Spinners.