

## A's Daily News Clips, Tuesday, June 21, 2011

### A's All-Star slot is up for grabs

By Daniel Brown, Oakland Tribune

Television cameras recently caught Grant Balfour at his self-berating best. The A's reliever screamed into his glove as cameras zoomed in -- and lip-readers recoiled in horror.

Some hitters, most notably Orlando Cabrera in 2008, have mistaken Balfour's expletive-laden monologue for trash talk. Nope, it's just the Sydney native's way of staying focused on the mound.

"He's a little crazy," A's closer Andrew Bailey explained. "He's always talking 100 mph. And half the time you can't understand what he's saying, anyway, because of his Australian accent."

Balfour serves as a fitting symbol for an issue that might soon have American League manager Ron Washington muttering a few choice words: Who the (heck) will represent the A's in the All-Star Game?

Will less than a month before the July 12 game in Phoenix, there are no slam-dunk candidates. No A's player ranks in the league's top 40 for batting average and there's no one in the top 20 for home runs or top 30 for runs scored.

More likely, the A's will be represented by a pitcher -- a wide-open field that includes Balfour, who has been a steady set-up man during a tumultuous season for A's closers. He would love to represent the A's at the All-Star Game.

"I don't know what they're going to do (for that spot), but I'll put my hand up," Balfour said, adding that he's encouraged by a recent trend of All-Star set-up men.

As the A's begin a six-game trip Tuesday against the New York Mets, here are the A's players Washington should monitor closely.

Listed in order of All-Star likelihood:

P Trevor Cahill (7-5, 3.24 ERA)

Why he'll make it: He delivered a bounce-back performance against the Giants on Sunday, allowing one run and striking out seven in eight innings. Cahill looked like himself again after vowing to keep things simple. "You're not supposed to be thinking about mechanics while you're trying to get the hitter out," he said. At selection time, Cahill might also profit from the lingering afterglow of last year, when he went 18-8 with a 2.97 ERA.

Why he won't: Before Sunday, Cahill was in a tailspin, going 0-5 with a 5.67 ERA over his previous seven starts. He'll have to prove he really has righted his ship -- against a team other than the offense-challenged Giants.

P Gio Gonzalez (6-5, 2.69)

Why he'll make it: The left-hander ranks seventh in the A.L. in ERA, ahead of such luminaries as Felix Hernandez (3.34) CC Sabathia (3.39) and David Price (3.61). Opponents are hitting only .233 against him with a .664 OPS.

Why he won't: Like Cahill, he has cooled lately. He's 1-3 with a 4.01 ERA in June. Also like Cahill, he continues to struggle with control. Those two A's are tied (with the Angels' Tyler Chatwood) for second in the A.L. in walks.

OF Coco Crisp (.262, 2 HRs, 23 RBIs)

Why he'll make it: He's tied for second in the league with 21 stolen bases and ranks third with five triples. He's also heating up, with an eight-game hitting streak that includes six runs and three stolen bases. A down year for Seattle's Ichiro Suzuki might leave room for another speedy outfielder on the roster.

Why he won't: Most of Crisp's other numbers are pedestrian, including a .300 on-base percentage that ranks 74th among qualifying A.L. hitters. There is no shortage of All-Star worthy outfielders, including Toronto's Jose Bautista, New York's Curtis Granderson, Texas' Josh Hamilton, Chicago's Carlos Quentin, Boston's Jacoby Ellsbury and Tampa Bay's Matt Joyce, to name a few.

P Grant Balfour (4-1, 2.59 ERA)

Why he'll make it: Traditionally neglected at All-Star time, set-up men are now getting their due. Last year's game alone included Matt Thornton, Evan Meek, Arthur Rhodes and Hong-Chi Kuo. "You could definitely make the case for Balfour," Bailey said. Here's the case: Opponents are 3 for 21 (.143) against the right-hander with runners in scoring position.

Why he won't: Making the mid-summer classic as a set-up man requires insanely good numbers. (Rhodes had a 1.54 ERA at the time of his selection). Balfour's numbers are nice, but not dominant enough to give him the benefit of the doubt over a starter or closer.

Rich Harden threw three scoreless innings in his first rehab start for Triple-A Sacramento on Monday. He didn't allow a hit, struck out six and walked one in a 3-2 win over Fresno. In the same game, second baseman Mark Ellis went 2 for 4 with a double and RBI. Ellis is eligible to come off the disabled list Wednesday.

### **A's Rich Harden is dominant in Triple-A rehab outing**

Oakland Tribune

SACRAMENTO -- A's pitcher Rich Harden, sidelined all season with a right shoulder strain, was dominant Monday afternoon in his first minor league rehab start with Triple-A Sacramento.

The 29-year-old right-hander started and threw three hitless innings while striking out six batters against Fresno, the Giants' Triple-A affiliate. Harden struck out the side in both the first and third innings. He walked just one batter and exited after throwing 30 of his 42 pitches for strikes.

### **A's Grant Balfour looks like an All-Star**

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Grant Balfour is passionate. Watch him for one inning, even one batter, and it's apparent. The man plays baseball with the intensity of a middle linebacker while trash-talking like a pro wrestler, and he's as reliable and effective as anyone in the A's clubhouse.

He's good entertainment, though not always G-rated. A stream of profanity echoes off the mound whenever Balfour prepares to make a pitch, and the words aren't directed at anyone but him. He says it's for self-motivation, and it seems to work, based on his success as the A's setup man.

"It fires me up," he said.

How would that play in Phoenix on July 12?

That's the site and date of the All-Star Game. The A's, winners of five straight heading into tonight's game against the Mets in New York, aren't exactly loaded with All-Star candidates. Nobody in their lineup is deserving, and 60 percent of their season-opening rotation is on the disabled list. Closer Andrew Bailey, an All-Star the past two years, wasn't activated until late May. "The obvious choices here have been hurt," manager Bob Melvin said.

So the not-so-obvious choices must be considered. The most steady starter has been Gio Gonzalez, who's 6-5 with a 2.69 ERA. Trevor Cahill started quickly (6-0, 1.72) but lost five straight decisions before rebounding to beat the Giants on Sunday.

Then there's Balfour, the hard-throwing right-hander who leads American League relievers in wins (four), sports a 2.59 ERA and is especially adept at the Coliseum, where his ERA is 0.98 in 17 appearances.

"I like the stadium," Balfour said. "I think I've pitched on the road pretty well. I treat it all the same and don't do anything different at different ballparks. Here (at the Coliseum), it's pitcher-friendly. It's one of those things, the more you pitch, the more comfortable you get."

No longer are closers the only All-Star relievers. Last year, three setup men from the National League (Arthur Rhodes, Hong-Chih Kuo and Evan Meek) and one from the AL (Matt Thornton) were appointed. That might enhance Balfour's candidacy.

"It's always tough to make an All-Star team when you're not in a premium position because you don't get as recognized for what you do," A's reliever Craig Breslow said, "but Balfour's been a big key to this team. It shouldn't be blanketed. Guys who deserve to make the All-Star team should make the All-Star team."

"I'm a big advocate of non-closers going to All-Star Games. They sometimes pitch in more difficult times than closers," added Brian Fuentes, a four-time All-Star. "You come in down one, up one, with the game tied, while the closer for the most part comes in when you're up. Both Balfour and (Brad) Ziegler have had strong years."

In past managing gigs, Melvin usually contacted the All-Star manager in late June to go over candidates from his team, but Melvin has been with the A's only 10 games. The best players on his watch have been Jemile Weeks and Hideki Matsui. The A's play 19 more games before the All-Star break.

**Rehab update:** Triple-A Sacramento topped Fresno 3-2 on Monday, with rehabbing Rich Harden pitching the first three innings, allowing no runs or hits, striking out six and walking one in throwing 42 pitches. Playing in his third rehab game, Mark Ellis singled and doubled for his first two hits with the River Cats. Ellis is expected to be back with the big club Wednesday.

**Restless:** Winners of five straight, the A's flew to New York on Monday's off day to resume their interleague schedule against the Mets. "I would prefer not to have an off day," manager Bob Melvin said. "When you play like this, you want to play every day."

### **Drumbeat: Harden sharp, Ellis hits in River Cats win**

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle, 6/20/2011 4:56pm

Playing a rare weekday day game, the Sacramento River Cats topped the Fresno Grizzlies 3-2 today (box). Rehabbing Rich Harden pitched the first three innings, allowing no runs or hits, striking out six and walking one in throwing 42 pitches. He could be back with the Oakland A's by next homestand.

In the same game, Mark Ellis got his first two hits on his rehab assignment, including a double and a triple. He's expected back with the big club Wednesday. With Jemile Weeks establishing himself at second base, the leading corresponding roster moves include:

-- Demotion of Daric Barton, who hasn't hit but is useful--the A's get better defensively in late innings when he replaces Conor Jackson at first and Jackson replaces Josh Willingham in left.

-- Demotion of Adam Rosales. That would require either Ellis or Weeks to be backup shortstop and third baseman, which is asking for trouble.

-- A trade involving Ellis, which would probably require the A's to eat most of his salary and would be unpopular in the clubhouse.

I'd probably go with option 1, and if Barton regains his stroke in AAA, make the tough call on Ellis later. Which would you do?

## **Weeks provides 'winning' energy for A's**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- In the confines of a typical Draft room scene not much more than three years ago, A's general manager Billy Beane and his army of scouting gurus sat deliberating on a handful of premier prospects.

Staring back at them was film of a speedy switch-hitting infielder out of the University of Miami. He was listed at a generous 5-foot-9 and displayed a knack for flare, flash and extra-base hits. Even more, this player greeted the latter with a fast set of hand claps once securely on the bag and standing.

And that's when Beane and Co. decided to make Jemile Weeks their first-round pick in 2008.

"We were trying to make a decision on a couple of guys," Beane recalled, "and I said, 'We need some of that. I want to see a guy who does exactly that.'"

The outlook appeared dim during the three years that followed, as Weeks played in just 176 Minor League games because of nagging leg and hip issues.

But the 24-year-old second baseman, younger brother of the Brewers' Rickie Weeks, needed only 45 more games to assure Oakland that his promising ways -- a .321 average with three homers, 22 RBIs and 10 stolen bases in that span at Triple-A -- could translate onto the big league scene.

On June 7, the A's placed veteran Mark Ellis on the disabled list with a hamstring strain amidst a season-high seven-game losing streak. Precious little gave A's fans reason for excitement, given the mounting number of wounded players and the equally growing separation from first place in the American League West.

Weeks' arrival, along with interim skipper Bob Melvin's just two days later, has helped changed that. The losses continued for all of three days upon the youngster's promotion, but entering Tuesday's series opener against the Mets in New York, the A's will bring with them a five-game winning streak -- not to mention a few significant intangibles made courtesy of Weeks.

"He's added some swagger that I think we've been missing a little bit," Conor Jackson said. "He's definitely thrown in some energy."

All that and more, including 16 hits in 44 at-bats (for a .362 average) and five multihit games. Seven of his 16 hits have been for extra bases, among them three triples -- meaning lots of claps.

"When we drafted him," Beane said, "we envisioned the guy we've seen in the last week, a guy that can do a lot of things -- run, hit the gaps and create some excitement."

One of Oakland's all-time greats, who offered much of the same, agrees.

"I think he's exciting," said Rickey Henderson, who worked with Weeks plenty at the Double-A level. "Usually you get a guy like that just coming up to the big leagues, he's got a little fire in him. He's a little hyper out there. It seems like the team picks something up."

The swagger, the excitement, the hyperness -- it's all simply a credit to comfortability, something Weeks gained rather quickly.

"I just came in hoping to add to what these guys have already been doing, hopefully add a spark and do the little things here and there to help us stay uplifted and win each game," Weeks said. "That's all I'm trying to bring to the team."

"He's doing a phenomenal job," Coco Crisp said. "He came in here with a lot of energy, but he carries himself wonderful and plays the game hard and hustles -- everything a young guy should do. So we're lucky to have him on our team right now. He's doing the job better than you can ask for."

Weeks' presence, which has included more than a few noteworthy defensive plays, comes at the expense of Ellis, who for a decade has been a bedrock of dependability for an A's organization that views him as the ultimate consummate professional.

Ellis is expected to be reinstated from the DL on Wednesday, at which point the A's will have to ultimately choose between youth and a veteran when filling in the second-base spot in the lineup. Weeks' performance has seemingly guaranteed a prolonged stay in the Majors, meaning a demotion is unlikely.

That sets up another potential move, as another member of the A's -- possibly a struggling Daric Barton -- could be optioned. But while neither Beane nor Melvin has tipped a hand about the looming decision, the A's general manager hinted Weeks has earned his roster spot.

"We would not have called Jemile up if he was just going to be a bench guy," Beane said. "A player like Jemile needs to play all the time.

"There was no guarantee going in, but we thought he was the type of kid that was going to respond at the higher levels. At each level he went up to, he'd be able to play. But given that this is the big leagues, it's never easy to come up and do what he's done. He doesn't look afraid."

Weeks assures he's not. He's intent on achieving at the plate, on the bases and in the middle of the infield, where he's impressed several familiar faces in the organization.

"There are obviously some things I think can only make him better, but for the most part, he's definitely not intimidated," A's infield coach Mike Gallego said. "He said he was nervous the first game. I think he did a pretty good job hiding it. He's definitely an excited player we're all anxious to continue to watch play.

"As he learns the intricate parts of the game, he's only going to get better, day in and day out. I'm impressed with his interest in learning."

The neverending lessons are already being learned.

After just six home games, Weeks trotted out to the plate with a walk-up song -- Ace Hood's "Hustle Hard," only to go 0-for-4 and hear a playful mouthful from his teammates, who told the young hotshot he had to be in the bigs at least three years before picking out such theme music.

Weeks hasn't exactly surprised himself by his immediate acclimation to the big leagues.

"I guess you could say I'm just excited about it," he said.

"I knew within myself I could calm down and act like I'm part of this team," he explained.

Said Gallego: "He's not a complete project yet, but he definitely has some great starting points. The face that we're molding already has a face to it.

"He gives off this youthful look, obviously with his size and his face and his wild hair, but when you get between the lines, this is a grown man. And he plays like one."

The hair hasn't been cut in two years. It's not going anywhere. And Weeks likely isn't either.

"All we do is trim," he said. "No cutting. That's it."

### **Melvin leads A's in NY to face determined Mets**

By Tom Singer / MLB.com | 6/19/2011 7:59 PM ET

Bob Melvin will finally get to wear his uniform to Citi Field. He won't be in the dugout he had hoped to occupy when he interviewed for the Mets' managerial opening in the offseason, but he'll be happy to be on the visitors' bench as his Oakland A's begin a three-game Interleague series Tuesday night.

The A's -- 6-4 since Melvin replaced Bob Geren -- will have their hands full as the Mets renew their quest to climb Mount .500 after getting knocked back a couple of notches by the Angels.

Oakland comes in having won five straight -- matching the total of wins in the last 31 games under Geren's guidance. They completed a 5-1 homestand, the A's best since 2006.

New York came into the Interleague weekend a game shy of the .500 level, and two losses to the Halos delayed its aim to get over the hump for the first time since being 3-2 on April 6. But it was the Mets' first series loss since late May, when they dropped two of three to the Phillies.

The Mets' next push begins with their hottest hand. Dillon Gee, personally 7-0 while the Mets have gone on to win each of his 10 starts, will try to maintain that perfect record.

Gee will be opposed by Josh Outman, the lefty who lived up to his name in his last outing by blanking Kansas City for seven innings of a 2-1 victory.

Gee has yet to face Hideki Matsui but hopes Godzilla doesn't include him in his habitual mistreatment of Mets pitchers. The former Yankees outfielder revisits New York with a lifetime average of .310 against the Mets -- including .500 against the pitchers on their current staff.

Matsui and Melvin may not rank with some of baseball's great M&M tandems -- Mantle and Maris, Mauer and Morneau -- but it has clicked pretty well for Oakland. Matsui has three homers and nine RBIs, along with a .300 average, in the 10 games since Melvin became his manager.

#### **A's: Barton still looking to break loose**

Daric Barton took off Sunday's game, bringing him to New York still without a home run this season. This isn't incidental information. Barton hasn't homered through 66 games and 235 at-bats, the deepest a first baseman has gone into a season without a homer in at least 24 years.

- Right-hander Rich Harden is due for his first rehab start, on Monday with Triple-A Sacramento; Harden is on the 60-day disabled list with a strained right shoulder.
- With their 2-1 win over the Giants on Sunday, the A's maintained a Bay Bridge Series tradition: The home team has won 12 straight in the Interleague series between the teams.
- Trevor Cahill's second-inning pickoff of Aubrey Huff was Oakland's 15th of the season, highest in the Majors.

#### **Mets: Reyes quiet in Interleague action**

National League batting leader Jose Reyes had a low-key celebration of the eighth anniversary of his first Major League homer, which had come on Father's Day 2003 off the Angels' Jarrod Washburn. Reyes went 1-for-5 on Sunday, making him 5-for-35 in his last seven Interleague games.

#### **Worth noting**

First base being one of the game's power positions, no one ever played more games at that position without a home run than Charlie Grimm, who in 1922 failed to hit one in 154 games for the Pirates. Grimm's nickname was Jolly Cholly, although he had little to be Jolly about that season.

## Are the Twins, A's and Nationals for real?

### Recent runs could be signs of things to come or just anomalies

By Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com

The Marlins' recent struggles, which culminated with the resignation of manager Edwin Rodriguez on Sunday, reminded us of something: success in this game can be very fickle.

It was less than four weeks ago that the Marlins had completed a sweep of the defending-champion Giants, were a game out of first place in the National League East and looked like one of baseball's best underdog stories. Twenty-four games and a mere three wins later, they're desperately seeking answers.

And now, **in this season of great parity**, three clubs have reversed their fortunes, but in the opposite direction of the Marlins.

The Twins, Athletics and Nationals have toiled at the bottom pretty much all year, and, up until recently, their seasons looked lost. But each of them has turned it around in its own way, suddenly making us wonder if they're actually legit, or if their current state is merely an anomaly.

Here's a look ...

#### **Twins (31-39)**

**Recently:** 20 games below .500; 16 1/2 out of first place after June 1

**Now:** Winners of seven in a row and 14 of 16; eight games out of first

**How it can continue:** You had to think the team that won the American League Central six of the past nine years wouldn't go quietly into its 10th summer under Ron Gardenhire. And what makes the Twins' recent surge seem most legit is that their early-season struggles came mostly because they weren't healthy. Minnesota has used the disabled list 15 times for 13 players this season. Six of those players are still on the shelf, but Joe Mauer and Tsuyoshi Nishioka returned this week, Jim Thome and Joe Nathan don't seem too far away, and Denard Span and Jason Kubel may follow. The great thing about the Twins' streak is that the team's biggest boost has come from what seemed like a weakness heading into the year -- starting pitching. Twins starters have an 11-2 record and a 1.86 ERA in their past 16 games.

**How it can end:** The Twins' biggest problem is the same as last year's -- the health and state of Justin Morneau. Thanks to a big lift from Thome, the Twins were the first team to clinch a playoff spot in 2010, even though their biggest run producer didn't play after July 7 because of a concussion. You can't expect them to overcome another lost year from Morneau, not with how deep the AL Central is now. Morneau's 2011 issue is a left wrist strain. There's no telling when he'll return and -- considering the .225 batting average and four homers he carried through his first 55 games -- how he'll perform when he does.

**What they'll need:** The Twins could use some help for a bullpen that currently ranks last in the Majors with a 4.86 ERA. The recent return of lefty Glen Perkins, and the upcoming return of Nathan, is a boost. But this is a club that ranked in the top 10 in bullpen ERA in five of the previous six years, and this group is a long way removed from that.

**Playoffs?** I wouldn't put it past them, even though they play in one of baseball's best divisions. Gardy's clubs usually find a way.

#### **Athletics (33-40)**

**Recently:** 12 games below .500; eight games out of first place heading into Wednesday

**Now:** Winners of five straight; five games out of first

**How it can continue:** Perhaps Marlins fans searching for hope that a switch at manager can help turn things around need not look any further than the A's. Oakland's season looked lost after it dropped 10 in a row and 13 of 14, but the A's just completed their first sweep since May, and word is there has been a renewed sense of confidence since one Bob (Melvin) replaced another (Geren) at the helm. Now, for a more tangible reason to expect sustained success: The A's have pitching -- lots and lots of it. And even though five starters are on Oakland's disabled list, pitching isn't the problem. Not when the bullpen is as deep as it is, or when Trevor Cahill and Gio Gonzalez are leading a rotation that has received solid contributions from fill-ins Josh Outman and Guillermo Moscoso. Oakland has the second-best starter ERA and ninth-best reliever ERA in baseball. Once Brandon McCarthy, Tyson Ross and (eventually) Brett Anderson get back, they A's will only get better.

**How it can end:** If they just don't hit enough. The A's offense is just as bad as their pitching is good. Consider: The A's rank 25th in the Majors in runs and batting average; Jose Bautista has just 17 fewer homers than the entire A's team; Sunday's cleanup hitter (Hideki Matsui) has a .646 OPS; their first baseman (Daric Barton) is hitting .213 and hasn't homered in 235 at-bats this season; and their 2010 home run leader (Kevin Kouzmanoff) is toiling in the Minors. We saw the Giants win the World Series last year despite a makeshift offense, but San Fran at least had its Buster Posey. Unless new second baseman Jemile Weeks follows that path, the A's don't have a single go-to guy in their batting order.

**What they'll need:** The A's need to improve their offense if they want to vault into and stay in the race. Somewhere, anywhere, they need to find an upgrade, particularly for the middle of their order. Carlos Beltran? Ryan Ludwick? Hunter Pence? Carlos Pena? Somebody.

**Playoffs?** The AL West still looks like a wide-open division, but in case I forgot to mention it before, the A's will need to add a bat, or two, or three.

### **Nationals (35-37)**

**Recently:** Nine games below .500; 11 1/2 games back of first place after May 30

**Now:** Winners of eight of nine; 13-6 since May 31; 4 1/2 back in the Wild Card race

**How it can continue:** Here are two very good signs if you're a Nationals fan: Their biggest weakness over the past five years (defense) is now an area of strength, and the franchise player's return is making an impact. The Nationals ranked no better than 24th in fielding percentage from 2006-10, but now -- despite a three-error game on Sunday that helped snap an eight-game winning streak -- they're tied for second in that department. And since third baseman Ryan Zimmerman returned on Tuesday, their offense has averaged 6.8 runs and 10.8 hits per game. The Nationals stayed afloat while their superstar was out, going 27-31 from April 10-June 13, and they'll only be better with Zimmerman back. Their bullpen is as good as anyone's, too.

**How it can end:** The Nationals have received some nice contributions from Mike Morse and Laynce Nix, but their big offseason signee, Jayson Werth, has yet to really get going. Werth, signed to a \$126 million contract in December, has been shuffled through the first four spots of the lineup and carries a .232 batting average through 68 games. The Nats aren't good enough to sustain this kind of winning if Werth isn't producing at the rate he's accustomed to, especially now that Adam LaRoche has been lost for the year. Pitching-wise, their rotation has been solid, but a foursome of Livan Hernandez, John Lannan, Jordan Zimmermann and Jason Marquis pales in comparison to that of the teams in front of them -- namely, the Phillies and Braves.

**What they'll need:** Their biggest acquisition could come in-house via future ace Stephen Strasburg, who could make it back from Tommy John surgery in time to make an impact on 2011. Besides pitching, the Nats need a guy who can consistently get on base and solidify the top of the order. They're tied for 25th in on-base percentage.

**Playoffs?** Highly doubtful. But a strong 2011 season can go a long way in general manager Mike Rizzo's yearly struggle to add prominent free agents. It's easier to acquire a guy like, say, Prince Fielder if you can sell a ballclub with the ability to win now.

### **Cahill dominates to lift A's to sweep**

By Tom Green / MLB.com | 6/19/2011 8:06 PM ET

OAKLAND -- There has been a noticeable change in the A's since Bob Melvin took over as the club's manager. He knows it and his players will admit it: The A's have a renewed sense of confidence.

That confidence helped the A's reach a season-high five-game winning streak Sunday as they downed the Giants, 2-1, in the finale of the Bay Bridge Series to complete their first sweep since May 27-29 against the Orioles and pull within five games of the lead in the American League West.

"We're just playing with a lot of energy," pitcher Trevor Cahill said. "We have more confidence now that even if we're down, we're going to come back, and if we're ahead, we're going to hold it. It's definitely nice."

That renewed confidence not only helped the A's win their fifth straight, but it helped Cahill get out of a lengthy funk. After starting the season 6-0 with a 1.72 ERA, the former All-Star dropped his last five decisions entering Sunday and struggled with command at times.



But the version of Cahill that trotted out to the mound Sunday was more reminiscent of the pitcher who dominated opposing teams earlier in the season than the one who struggled with location the last month.

Cahill hurled eight innings of one-run ball and limited the Giants to five hits on the afternoon -- and only one after the third inning -- for his first quality start since May 25. Unlike that day, though, when Cahill scattered 10 hits (including two home runs) and five walks while surrendering three earned runs, the righty was dominant against the Giants.

After fanning two in the first, Cahill hit a slight speed bump in the second, when he walked Nate Schierholtz and then gave up an RBI double to designated hitter Aaron Rowand en route to a 25-pitch frame. But Cahill remained confident and settled down after that inning.

"You could see him in the middle innings start to gain his confidence," Melvin said. "When he stops thinking about the mechanics and all the exterior things, has good thoughts and throws the ball, good things happen to him."

Cahill gave up a pair of two-out hits in the third before retiring 16 of the last 17 batters he faced, including 10 straight at one point. The righty threw a career-high 118 pitches, eclipsing his previous high of 116 he tossed twice before. He struck out seven and walked just one a start removed from walking a career-high seven and recording no strikeouts.

"Trevor has amazing movement every time he goes out there," said Landon Powell, who started at catcher Sunday. "Today he was able to get ahead in the count, which gave him the opportunity to keep on throwing his nasty pitches and kept the hitters off balance.

"I'll take him any day when he's like he is today. I'll take him against anybody."

"Anybody" includes the Giants' Matt Cain, who nearly matched Cahill pitch for pitch. After giving up a leadoff hit to Jemile Weeks in the first, Cain didn't allow another hit until the sixth, when Weeks again came up with a hit. During that span, Cain retired 14 straight at one point.

But Weeks' double, which gave him his fifth multihit game since joining the A's, changed the tone of the game. Coco Crisp followed two batters later with an RBI single to tie the game at 1 and ultimately give Cain a no-decision. The righty tossed seven innings and gave up three hits and the lone run.

It wasn't until the A's got into the Giants' bullpen that the game was decided, all thanks to one stroke of the bat from Powell. Facing reliever Jeremy Affeldt with one out in the bottom of the eighth, Powell launched his first home run of the season, and first since Sept. 18, to left-center field to give the A's a 2-1 lead.

"Was it a good pitch? Yeah," Affeldt said. "Obviously it was the wrong pitch. He hit it for a homer. But I looked at it, and honestly maybe I could have thrown it a little further away from him. ... He just got a barrel on it and lifted it."

Powell, a switch-hitter, hit the game-deciding shot while batting right-handed -- something he hasn't done in a game in more than a month.

"Getting in there from the other side of the plate, I was just trying to simplify my swing and get my foot down early ... and do some damage," Powell said. "He came at me with fastballs and I was just able to get the fat part of the bat on it and drive it."

After Powell, whom Melvin has made a point of playing more regularly since taking over as manager, put the A's ahead, Brian Fuentes came in to pitch a perfect ninth inning and record his 12th save of the season, sealing the A's fifth straight win before they embark on a six-game National League road trip.

"I would prefer not to have an off-day," Melvin said. "When you play like this, you just want to keep rolling out there every day. You just want to stay with it, stay with it and keep the positive feelings because we've been pretty good about winning games late or close. You just want to stay with it and not get down. If you stay positive some good things can happen."

### **A's honor perseverant MVP Dad**

By Jane Lee and Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- David Yeager is a cancer survivor. He's also a father.

Yeager was honored by the A's before the finale of the Bay Bridge Series against the Giants on Father's Day as part of the "My Dad, My MVP" contest.

In recent years, Yeager has been through a lot. He won a year-long bout with meningitis and also battled leukemia -- which is currently in remission thanks to aggressive treatment. Through it all, though, Yeager has always been there for his family, including his daughter Heather.

"My dad has been one of my heroes since before Day 1," Heather wrote in her winning letter. "He's always been able to make everyone around him laugh."

Even before her father's recent health setbacks, Heather has fond memories of her relationship with her father, many of which involve the game of baseball. The Yeager family has spent numerous days at the Coliseum to watch the A's take the field, and Yeager took his daughter to her first game there.

One of her favorite memories of those annual family outings was watching Dennis Eckersley warm up in the bullpen while Dave Parker hit a home run over the fence. Along with taking in A's games throughout the years, Yeager also taught his daughter the game at a young age.

"We spent countless afternoons in the backyard 'in the bottom of the 9th, looking for a clutch hit,'" Heather wrote. "Dad means the world to my mom and I, as well as so many others."

Heather's letter was one of more than 3,200 stories submitted to MLB.com/mvppdad in the inaugural campaign. Of those submissions, one was selected as the winner for each club by a celebrity panel of judges -- including A's catcher Kurt Suzuki, who presented Yeager with a personalized A's jersey before Sunday's game -- and nearly 270,000 fan votes online.

Along with the personalized jersey, Yeager and his daughter were invited to watch the A's take batting practice and received tickets to Sunday's game. Yeager will also receive a game ball from the Father's Day game that will be authenticated by Major League Baseball.

### **Jackson earning regular playing time**

OAKLAND -- Conor Jackson received his 11th start of the month for Sunday's series finale against the Giants, a nod to consistent production that has stemmed from consistent playing time.

Jackson, playing first base while Daric Barton sat, entered the day 12-for-37 over his last 12 games and 6-for-20 against Giants starter Matt Cain.

"I'm not going to shy away from at-bats, that's the biggest thing," he said. "Any way you can get four or five at-bats a game -- I'll catch if I need to -- it's going to help you out in the long run. It's hard to sit seven, eight games -- which I've had before this year -- and get in there and face [pitchers]."

"It's not an easy thing to do. Whether it's spelling Barton or whether it's spelling the outfielders, whatever it is, I'm not going to shy away from it."

Barton's struggles at the plate have been well-documented over the past couple of weeks. The A's first baseman, a candidate to be optioned to Triple-A Sacramento on Wednesday when Mark Ellis is expected to be activated from the disabled list, has just four hits in his last 30 at-bats.

Overall, Barton is hitting just .213 with a .594 OPS (on-base plus slugging percentage) on the season. He's also homerless in his first 65 contests, marking the longest season-opening streak by a first baseman since Al Oliver went homerless in his 101 games for San Francisco and Philadelphia in 1984.

Melvin, however, saw a positive from Barton on Saturday, when he notched an RBI double against the Giants' Jonathan Sanchez to jump-start a four-run fifth inning, Barton's 13th two-bagger of the season.

"He had a nice night last night," the A's skipper said before Sunday's game. "I put two left-handers in there last night, and he was one of them and really got us started. Each and every day you work toward improving and improving your mindset and your confidence, and I thought he handled himself well yesterday."

Meanwhile, Jackson's productivity will likely continue to draw him starts, whether it be in Barton's stead or in a shuffling outfield. He's started 37 games at four different positions this season. Among those is right field, where David DeJesus, 7-for-49 over his last 16 contests, and Ryan Sweeney, who has just 13 hits in his last 62 at-bats, are struggling.

### **Anderson having to be patient on DL**

OAKLAND -- A's lefty Brett Anderson surely found comfort in avoiding Tommy John surgery, but it hasn't necessarily taken away from the frustration that came along with a platelet-rich plasma injection in his pitching elbow, which requires a minimum six weeks of rehab.

Anderson, making his first appearance in the A's clubhouse Sunday since receiving the shot, is one of five Oakland starters on the disabled list, and it marks his third trip there in the last two years after he agreed to a four-year contract extension worth \$12.5 million.

"It's always unfortunate going on the DL," Anderson said. "As a competitor, you want to be out there, you want to be helping your team."

The 23-year-old lefty is on Day 6 of a seven- to 10-day resting period and is wearing a brace on his left arm to stabilize his forearm. There's no timetable on when he'll pick up a ball again, but he's hopeful the combination of rest and the shot -- which he also received last year during his second DL stint -- yield successful results.

"The shot wasn't much fun," he said, "but it's better than having surgery."

"Whenever you go get your elbow checked out, surgery is always an option and kind of in the back of your head, but it wasn't really something [Dr. James Andrews] brought up on this visit. We decided I'd get the shot and see how it heals and go from there."

### **Worth noting**

- As expected, outfielder Josh Willingham (strained Achilles tendon) was held out of the A's lineup for a second straight day Sunday, but manager Bob Melvin hinted he might be good to go for Tuesday's series opener against the Mets.

"He's better today," Melvin said. "With the off-day tomorrow, we'll see where we are in New York."

- Right-hander Rich Harden (strained latissimus dorsi muscle) is still on track to make his first rehab appearance with Triple-A Sacramento on Monday. Harden will be stretched out as a starter. Fellow rehabbing righty Tyson Ross (strained oblique muscle) will travel to Arizona on Monday to face hitters and will likely undergo a few sessions there before embarking on a Minor League rehab stint.

- The A's brought in their fifth sellout crowd of the season Sunday, welcoming 36,067 fans for their final contest with the cross-bay rival Giants.

## **Melvin fits in as A's manager, strengthened by Bay Area ties**

Ann Killion, Sacramento Bee

In the 25 months that Bob Melvin was looking for work – after being abruptly relieved of his duties as Arizona Diamondbacks manager on May 7, 2009 – he interviewed with five teams.

First the Houston Astros. And then, last season, the New York Mets, Milwaukee Brewers, Chicago Cubs and Toronto Blue Jays. He didn't get an offer.

"I heard I came in second in a couple of places," Melvin said after he returned to the Bay Area as the A's new manager. "That can be a downer. But I'm a believer that things happen for a reason. And when this job came up, that was the reason. I'm plenty happy to be here."

But "here" is largely considered one of the most thankless jobs in baseball. The man occupying the manager's chair in Oakland is considered a marionette of general manager Billy Beane, the master puppeteer who is believed to pull all the strings, allow no independent movements and take credit for any success.

Melvin disagrees with that characterization.

"This is a job as high up on my list as could possibly be," Melvin said. "It has a lot to do with being home and the relationship I've had with Billy in the past.

"I've heard the rumors as well. But I'm a first-looker. I need to evaluate the experience myself. And it's been anything but what some of the rumors are. I make out the lineups. If I have a question, I ask Billy. Everyone's working together."

Working together or not, Melvin has the A's playing winning baseball. After sweeping the Giants over the weekend, the A's have won five of their past six games and are 6-4 under Melvin.

### **Predecessors struggled**

Working together hasn't been the case in the past. The men who preceded Melvin struggled to succeed under Beane.

Art Howe – who Beane inherited when he took over from Sandy Alderson – was frustrated and devalued by Beane. As detailed in the book "Moneyball," Beane connived a way to unload Howe on the Mets in 2002.

Next was Ken Macha, who took the A's to the 2006 American League Championship Series but chafed under Beane and was fired two days after the A's last playoff game.

And then came Bob Geren, who did whatever Beane wanted, without complaint, but had little credibility or support in the clubhouse and no record of success. Beane fired Geren on June 9, and – for the first time in his career – hired a manager from outside the organization.

Those who have known Melvin at his other stops – as a Bay Area high school star, a college player at Cal, a Giants player and as a manager – insist Melvin is not the type to be Beane's pushover.

"I don't see Bob Melvin being a 'yes' man, I just don't see it," said Giants broadcaster Mike Krukow, who played with Melvin in San Francisco from 1986 through 1988. "He'll do things his way. I think he's a hell of a manager."

That's what the players at Melvin's last major league stop thought, too.

"I was very happy when he got hired here because I know what he brings to the table," said Conor Jackson, who played for Melvin on the Diamondbacks. "He's a phenomenal communicator. He puts life into a clubhouse."

Melvin, who won the National League Manager of the Year in Arizona in 2007, was fired 29 games into the 2009 season, replaced by novice A.J. Hinch (who was fired midway through last season).

"When a manager is fired, like he was, usually you might have half the clubhouse who wasn't really feeling him," Jackson said. "But in Arizona there were a collective 25 guys who were in extreme shock, thinking, 'What's going on?' "

### **Showed potential early**

Melvin was pointed toward a managerial job from an early age. He had a take-charge personality when he played American Legion ball on the Peninsula, according to his coach Tom Dunton.

"He always had a good feeling of what was going on," Dunton said. "If a pitcher started to wobble, he'd let me know. He was inquisitive. He's a strong individual.

"He'll be his own man, and I think Billy knows that," said Dunton, who knows both men. "I think he'll let Bob call his own shots."

Dunton, a former A's minor league manager and Stanford pitching coach, spent a lot of time with Melvin, who was his son Jim's best friend. Melvin was a star at Menlo-Atherton High in basketball and baseball. In American Legion ball, Dunton would have Melvin start the game behind the plate and finish things with an inning or two of relief pitching.

Melvin was so critical to his team's successes, great lengths were taken to make sure he was at games.

The day Melvin's older sister was married in Menlo Park, his American Legion team was playing in Yountville. A team parent had access to a private jet: Melvin was at the Peninsula wedding at 10 a.m., rushed to the airport, flew to Napa and made it to Yountville by the 1 p.m. first pitch.

Former Cal coach Bob Milano was thrilled to land Melvin, one of the Bay Area's top recruits. Melvin was drafted by the Orioles out of high school, but opted to play at Cal.

As a freshman – a sports junkie who used to steal away from Berkeley to attend Warriors and A's games – he helped lead the Bears to the 1980 College World Series, making a play at first that helped send Cal to Omaha.

"I remember how well he fit in, even as a freshman," Milano said. "He asked a lot of questions. You could tell he wanted to understand. He knew that as the catcher, the leader of the team, he needed to be well-schooled."

Milano said older pitchers were so impressed with Melvin's presence behind the plate that some requested the freshman catch them.

"He was very vocal," Milano said. "I think he'll run things the way he thinks they should be run."

Melvin played one year at Cal. The major leagues beckoned again – he was drafted by the Detroit Tigers in 1981 – and this time he signed.

### **'Humm Baby' lives**

At every stop of his 10-year major league career, he absorbed the lessons of his managers: Sparky Anderson, Roger Craig, Frank Robinson, Johnny Oates. He coached under two former Bay Area players-turned-managers, Phil Garner in Milwaukee and Bob Brenly in Arizona.

"I tried to take a little bit from every manager I played for," Melvin said.

So far in Oakland, his most obvious borrowing has come from former Giants manager Craig. In 1986, the year Melvin arrived in San Francisco, Craig and general manager Al Rosen told their team not to denigrate downtrodden Candlestick Park. Craig pointed out Willie Mays and Willie McCovey had done OK there.

"Once you bought into it, you could tell we played better," Krukow said. "They were trying to create a home team atmosphere."

It was all part of Craig's positive "Humm Baby" message that helped turn the Giants around from 100-game losers in 1985 to division champions in 1987.

Melvin arrived in Oakland at a similar nadir in team history. The A's organization is preoccupied with leaving the Oakland Coliseum. So it was startling to hear Melvin wax poetic about the maligned stadium on his first day in Oakland.

"Maybe I'm biased because I grew up here, but I like this place," he said. "I like older ballparks, ballparks with history. There's a few World Series in this ballpark."

Melvin saw the A's play in the World Series in 1973 and 1974, when he was an adolescent. He is wearing No. 6, as a nod to Sal Bando, the captain of those Swingin' A's World Series teams.

"Depending on when you were around, there have certainly been times when it's a lot easier to be an A's fan than a Giants fan," Melvin said. "It's flipped back and forth."

"I'm fine with playing here. My position is you play the cards you're dealt. I don't want my club thinking about how we have to get into a new ballpark. I want my club thinking that this ballpark is advantageous."

### **Leading Off: Put Giants, A's in same league, division**

Tom Couzens, Sacramento Bee

Talk of realignment in baseball is heating up.

Interleague play has spiced up baseball since it began in 1997, but it makes no sense to have 16 teams in the National League and 14 in the American. During interleague play, there's always two N.L. teams that don't participate.

Realignment could correct this – and advance other changes that would be good for baseball and its fans.

Here's how we'd like to see it done:

- Create two 15-team leagues – but not be beholden to the current N.L.-A.L. breakdown.
- Keep three divisions in each league, with the three winners plus two wild-card teams making the playoffs.
- Create divisions based on geography that generate more regional interest. How about putting all five California teams in the same division? Or what about Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington and Cleveland in the same division?

After the A's swept the Giants over the weekend, we think it would be great to see them play more often each season – and compete for the same division title.

But there's one thorny issue with any realignment plan: the designated hitter. Should baseball eliminate it? Should the N.L. adopt it? Or should it still be used only in A.L. parks?

Imagine the NFL having different rules for the NFC and the AFC. You can't see it? Neither can we.

### **A's dilemma with Ellis shouldn't be a problem at all: it's time for Weeks now**

Sam McPherson, examiner.com

Mark Ellis is the Oakland Athletics' longest-tenured player, and when he comes off the disabled list on Wednesday, there isn't a doubt what his role on the ballclub should be now.

Veteran backup.

Ellis started a three-day rehab stint at Sacramento Saturday, and when he returns to the big club, he should not regain his former status as the starting second baseman: Jemile Weeks is the A's second baseman of the present and the future.

It's hard to find anyone who doesn't like Ellis. He's been a solid contributor to the A's success over his eight-year career in Oakland, and he's one of the best defensive second basemen around.

But he isn't getting the job done this year, and Ellis also is in the last year of a contract.

Throw in Weeks' dynamic start to his young major-league career, and you realize the Oakland lineup needs an infusion of new blood and talent moving forward in this 2011 campaign.

When Ellis went on the disabled list June 7 with a strained hamstring, he was only hitting .211 with one home run. He's never been the most durable of players, having logged 150 games in a season only twice in his career -- and not since 2007.

He also just turned 34 years old, which is an age when a lot of players start a slow decline into oblivion.

So the A's can't be blinded by loyalty here, especially when Weeks is hitting .364 in his first 12 games with the big club.

Ellis can still be a valuable presence on this team, but everyone needs to accept that value in different terms than it has been hitherto.

In his career with the A's, Ellis has played all four infield positions. He can be a solid utility player for Oakland, filling in for Weeks here and there -- while also spelling Scott Sizemore at third, Cliff Pennington at short, etc., if necessary.

The A's already have Adam Rosales to do that, in truth, but Ellis is certainly more valuable to the club in a backup role than someone like Daric Barton is to the club as a starter.

And that's the serious rub of the situation.

To keep both Ellis and Weeks on the major-league roster, as they should do, Oakland will need to send someone else down to Sacramento -- and Barton is that player.

The A's first baseman is the worst player at his position in the American League right now, and he still has two options left. It makes sense to demote him so he can figure out his current issues and be of value to the Oakland organization moving forward -- into 2012, for example, when he's still under contract and Ellis is not.

If Billy Beane and Bob Melvin make any other roster decision this week, it will be the wrong direction they're headed in -- period.

And the A's can't afford that right now at all, especially with a five-game winning streak on the menu.

### **A's turn to Marin orthopedist in hopes of limiting injuries**

By Theo Fightmaster, Marin Independent Journal

IN 2010, the A's sent 23 players to the disabled list, combining to miss a franchise-record 1,426 games — nearly nine seasons worth of Major League Baseball action. In 2008, the team set a franchise record by sending 25 players to the DL. By those standards, 2009 was a healthy season for Oakland as it only listed 17 players disabled.

For a low-revenue club without a hefty payroll to serve as a panacea, the A's found themselves in need of much more than a few Band-Aids and athletic tape. During the offseason, changes were made and new faces have been introduced.

Dr. Jon Dickinson, a Marin resident for more than 21 years who currently lives in Ross, is among the new additions. He was hired to work as the team's orthopedist, a doctor who specializes in diagnosis and treatment of problems of the musculoskeletal system. The decision was made in November, just weeks after another injury-riddled campaign came to an end.

"Jon leads a respected, dynamic practice, he has experience in professional sports, and he was highly recommended by both patients and other doctors," A's assistant general manager David Forst said. "As (team physician Dr. Allan Pont) went through the interview process, it was clear that Dr. Dickinson was right for the A's."

Dickinson, who practices in San Francisco and at a satellite office in Greenbrae, saw it as a good match.

"They wanted somebody who had a little experience being around professional athletes," he said. "I said 'I'd love to do it.'"

Along with a medical degree from Tulane University and years of experience as an associate clinical professor of orthopedic surgery at UC San Francisco, Dickinson brought with him a wealth of experience and insight, perhaps even unique to some of his peers.

Dickinson hit .380 while playing for the UC San Diego baseball team, maintaining an intimate understanding of the game. In 1979, along with earning his Bachelor of Science degree, he was the school's athlete of the year.

Working with professional athletes wouldn't be anything new to the doctor either. He has spent several seasons as a physician with the Warriors, and currently serves as a consultant for the San Francisco Ballet.

But baseball is his passion.

"It doesn't get any better than this," said Dickinson, not intending to be ironic amidst a 1-hour, 25-minute rain delay prior to Oakland's 10-inning win over the Los Angeles Angels on a damp, frigid night last month. "I'm one of their biggest fans and so are all of the trainers. When you help with the team, you want them to win. "... Baseball is a passion of mine, so to be able to combine my love of the game with medicine is really exciting."

For Dickinson, who grew up in the Bay Area and is a father of four Redwood High graduates — Peter, 20, Zachary, 21, Jennifer, 23, and Lauren, 25 — his job is the same, regardless of the sport.

"There's not a whole lot of difference really, from an orthopedic standpoint," Dickinson said. "It's really straightforward, "... if you have a knee injury and you're a baseball player or a ballet dancer or a basketball player, "... you basically treat them the same way. Maybe there are differences in bringing them back (from an injury) and the types of rehabilitation. But as far as the treatment goes "... they want to get well, their team wants them to get well, and there's the pressure of how fast you can bring them back."

There is pressure to not rush them back, too.

"I think it's all in their best interest these days. Medicine has come a long way. Maybe in the past you've seen some of these players given Novocaine shots and pushed back on the field. That just doesn't happen anymore," Dickinson said. "Everybody's concerned about the long-term health of these players as well as treating their injuries."

Along with Dickinson, who attends about half of the A's home games, sharing his duties with associate team orthopedist Dr. Will Workman, the A's hired new head athletic trainer Nick Paparesta. Oakland has endured its share of struggles — see fired manager Bob Geren and a recent 10-game losing streak — but the triage process, at least has been less daunting.

Oakland currently has five players on the DL, one of them being oft-injured pitcher Rich Harden. The biggest blows have been dealt to the pitching staff as Dallas Braden is expected to miss the rest of the season with a shoulder injury. Dickinson recently visited with Brett Anderson who is on the 15-day DL with soreness in his left elbow.

"Other than that, everybody is doing really well, we're really happy with how well all the players are doing, even some (who) have had some problems in the past," said Dickinson, whose A's sit five games out of first in a balanced American League West. "I love doing this job. Personally I think they can hang in there and be right there at the end of the year and put something together. They could do what the Giants did last year; they hung around and everything just clicked for them right when it needed to."

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **Ellis, Harden lift Sacramento past rival Fresno**

By Zeke Fine / Sacramento River Cats

Matt Carson's infield single scored Chris Carter for the game-winning run in Sacramento's 3-2 victory over Fresno on Monday afternoon at Raley Field.

The win splits the series, 2-2, and gives the River Cats a record of 46-26.

Oakland A's starter Rich Harden, making an MLB rehab start for the River Cats, threw 3.0 hitless innings, allowing one walk and collecting an impressive six strikeouts.

Harden, recovering from a strained right shoulder, was relieved by Travis Banwart. In only his second relief appearance of the season, Banwart allowed two runs, two hits and two walks over 6.0 innings to earn the victory.

"There's a different routine when I'm relieving," Banwart said, "but I just tried to focus on throwing well."

The best part of Banwart's line was his 11 strikeouts, the most by a River Cat this season. His 11 strikeouts also tied a franchise record for most strikeouts by a relief pitcher, first set by Harden in 2003.

"He's a great pitcher and it's an honor to be in his company," Banwart said of matching Harden's mark.

Sacramento scored its first run in the third inning. After left fielder Shane Peterson doubled to left, he advanced to third on a Mark Ellis single and scored on a sacrifice fly to right field by Kevin Kouzmanoff.

The Grizzlies responded in the fifth inning, when Tyler Latorre hit a two-run home run to right, his first of the season. This gave the Grizzlies a 2-1 lead.

The score stayed that way until Ellis collected his second hit of the game in the eighth, a double to left center that scored Peterson.

After a scoreless top of the ninth by Banwart, the River Cats rallied in the bottom half. After Jai Miller popped out to third, Chris Carter and Anthony Recker hit back-to-back singles. Adrian Cardenas then hit a shallow fly ball to right field that fell in to load the bases.

This set the stage for Carson, who hit a sharp ground ball between third base and shortstop, enabling Carter to score and the River Cats to win.



The River Cats next travel to Tucson, where they take on the Padres on Tuesday at 7 p.m.

### **Haviland Roughed Up In Loss**

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

Dr Pepper Ballpark in Frisco, TX - - -

While it didn't appear on the Frisco RoughRiders' pocket schedule, there was an unusual "ballpark entertainer" on the field ... twice ... Monday night at Dr Pepper Ballpark.

A brown-and-gray jack rabbit made two appearances, delaying the game, entertaining the fans, and completely frustrating the member of the security game-night staff charged with the task of catching the critter (the guy had no prayer of catching the rabbit, who escaped both times).

"Elsewhere," the RoughRiders got to RockHounds starter Shawn Haviland for eight runs on 10 hits over 4.0 innings (101 pitches), building an 8-2 lead. Two of the 10 hits were home runs, each with a man on base, from two of the Texas League's top power hitters. Tommy Mendonca continued an 11-game stretch in which he's hitting nearly .550, ripping a home run to dead center (his 15th) ... and Mike Bianucci drew within one home run of the league lead, belting his 16th.

The RockHounds took a 1-0 lead when Grant Green homered in the top of the first off Texas Rangers right-hander Darren O'Day, who made a one-inning re-hab appearance.

The 'Hounds then drew within 3-2 when Tyler Ladendorf homered off Robbie Erlin (the Rangers' # 4 prospect) in the third. For the second straight time, the RockHounds got to Erlin, scoring four runs on eight hits in 4.2 innings against the talented lefty. The 'Hounds scored six runs on 10 hits in 5.0 innings against Erlin, June 15 at Citibank Ballpark.

The RockHounds fell behind, 8-2, after four, but chipped away to get back to within 8-5 before the RoughRiders scored a pair of insurance runs in the eighth.

Frisco loaded the bases with no outs in the sixth, but the 'Hounds got out got of the jam with a triple play. Adam Heether snared a Bianucci line drive, moving toward second. He stepped on the bag to force Renny Osuna, then threw to first to triple Mendonca off the bag.

- The RoughRiders won their 40th game of the season, second-best in the league behind San Antonio. Frisco is 11-2 against the RockHounds, including a perfect 5-0 at Dr Pepper Ballpark.
- Jermaine Mitchell has encountered his first slump of the season, now 3-for-his-last-29, with his average now at .343.
- Tyler Ladendorf went 3-for-4 with a pair of doubles to go with his home run. On May 10, Ladendorf was hitting .167, but finished Monday's game at .249, and is hitting .303 in June.
- Matt Sulentic lost a 9-home hit streak, although he did drive in a run with a sacrifice fly. Including Monday's 0-for-3, Sulentic has raised his average 32-points (to .282) over the last 10 games.
- The game was the fifth of a 12-game road trip. The RockHounds play the next three at Frisco, with the first half ending Tuesday and all clubs returning to 0-0 on Wednesday, June 22. The 'Hounds conclude the road trip with another, 4-game set with the Missions in San Antonio (next Friday-Monday).

### **Vermont Wins Home Opener 8-6 Monday**

By Paul Stanfield / Vermont Lake Monsters

BURLINGTON, VT --- The Vermont Lake Monsters got their 2011 home season off to on a winning start as they scored seven runs over the first four innings and went on to defeat the Lowell Spinners 8-6 in New York-Penn League action Monday night at historic Centennial Field.

Lowell jumped out on top 2-0 in the first on a Jose Garcia solo homer and a Travis Shaw RBI single, but Lake Monster starter Jose Macias settled down and retired 13 straight Spinners, including six by strikeout. An 18th-round selection in the 2010 draft out of Franklin Pierce, Macias (0-1) allowed the two runs on four hits over five innings for the win.

After Vermont got a run in the first on a Jordan Tripp two-out triple and run-scoring wild pitch, the Lake Monsters sent nine batters to the plate in the second inning and put four runs on the board to take a 5-2 lead. Three straight singles and a hit

batter tied the game at two before Chih-Fang Pan gave Vermont the lead with a two-out RBI single and Tripp followed with a two run double down the leftfield line.

The Lake Monsters added single runs in the third and fourth innings off Lowell starter Luis Diaz (0-1), who allowed seven runs on eight hits over 3 1/3 innings to take the loss. Spinner relievers Luis Bastardo and Mike McCarthy kept Vermont off the board as they combined to retire 11 straight Lake Monsters, including eight by strikeout.

A Moko Monaroa solo homer in the sixth and a Shaw two-run homer in the seventh cut the Vermont lead to one, but Diomedes Lopez gave the Lake Monsters an 8-6 lead with a two-out solo homer in the eighth. It was Vermont's first home run of the season and the 499th all-time in the franchise's history.

Tripp finished 2-for-3 with a run, double, triple and two RBI for Vermont (3-1), which is now 9-9 all-time in home openers including wins in each of its last five home liflifers. Lopez was 1-for-2 with the solo homer and three RBI, while Chad Lewis and Jacob Tanis each added two hits for the Lake Monsters. Five different Spinners collected two hits as Lowell outhit Vermont 10-9 for the game.

The three-game series continues on Tuesday night as the Spinners and Lake Monsters face off with first pitch at 7:05 pm as part of Star 92.9 Night at Centennial Field. The homestand continues for Vermont all week as the Lake Monsters host Lowell again Wednesday and then the Connecticut Tigers Thursday through Saturday.