

Oakland A's winning streak snapped at six

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

NEW YORK -- The A's did not part easily with their winning streak.

But after another down-to-their-last-strike revival in the ninth inning Wednesday, they fell 3-2 to the New York Mets in 13 innings when Brad Ziegler grazed Justin Turner with a pitch with the bases loaded.

That snapped a six-game winning streak that was Oakland's longest since a seven-gamer in September 2009.

Ziegler (2-1) retired the first batter in the bottom of the 13th before allowing consecutive singles to Lucas Duda and Daniel Murphy. With two out, Jose Reyes was intentionally walked after the count went to 3-0.

Then Ziegler hit Turner on the left thigh with a first-pitch slider, bringing an unlikely conclusion to a marathon contest.

The first pitch was delayed 1 hour, 3 minutes because of rain, and the game clocked in at four hours, ending at 12:13 a.m. local time.

Ziegler was steamed at himself for giving up the winning run, but he also wondered whether Turner leaned into the final pitch.

"I haven't seen the replay, so I'm not going to say he did lean into it," Ziegler said. "But if he did, it's kind of a cheap way to end a game."

Turner denied leaning into the pitch.

"I definitely didn't move out of the way," he said. "But it's not like I was on top of the plate. It was a slider that backed up on him. I definitely wanted to end it. I didn't want to do it that way, but I'll take it."

The A's lost for the first time in a seven-game stretch of wearing their gold jerseys. They are 10-4 in them for the season.

Turner also hurt the A's in the eighth, breaking a 1-1 tie against reliever Joey Devine.

With one out, Reyes drove a triple to right field that escaped the leaping attempt of Ryan Sweeney.

With the infield playing in, Turner hit a sharp grounder past third baseman Scott Sizemore to score Reyes.

But Conor Jackson, the A's new everyday first baseman with Daric Barton being optioned to Triple-A, tied it with a two-out single in the top of the ninth that scored Coco Crisp.

The count was 2-2 on Jackson when he grounded a single to left off Francisco Rodriguez.

That conjured up memories of a June 10 ninth-inning rally against the White Sox, when the A's took the lead after being down to their final strike.

"I think we battled all the way through," A's starting pitcher Gio Gonzalez said. "It shows we had signs of life."

The A's were mesmerized most of the night by the knuckleball of Mets starter R.A. Dickey.

Oakland scraped together just three hits over eight innings off Dickey.

How tough was he?

Switch hitter Jemile Weeks struck out swinging from the left side in the first, missing a knuckler by a good six inches. In his next three at-bats, Weeks made the rare decision to bat right-handed against the right-handed Dickey. He took a called third strike and grounded out twice, finishing 0 for 6.

Gonzalez threw seven innings of one-run ball, striking out eight and walking one.

Hideki Matsui had a poor offensive night -- four strikeouts -- but again looked strong in left field. He reached into the stands to make a lunging catch of Duda's foul pop-up in the fourth, and he ended the 11th with a tumbling catch of Murphy's low liner.

Kurt Suzuki's solo homer off Dickey in the fifth tied it 1-1.

Oakland A's update: Mark Ellis realizes red-hot rookie Jemile Weeks must stay in lineup at second base

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

NEW YORK -- Mark Ellis took the news in stride that he has been supplanted by rookie Jemile Weeks as the A's starting second baseman.

The move didn't come as a shock Wednesday, when Ellis was reinstated from the 15-day disabled list after nursing a strained right hamstring.

Weeks has made a huge impact since coming up from the minor leagues, entering Wednesday hitting .362 with 10 runs and four stolen bases in 13 games.

Ellis, 34, who holds the Oakland record for games played as a second baseman (1,021), will see time at first and third base, as well as second as a backup infielder, manager Bob Melvin said.

"It's different, I'm not going to lie," Ellis said. "But Jemile has played great and added a spark for this team. "... He's played too good to (take him out)."

Melvin said Ellis immediately removed any tension when the manager broke the news to him.

"The first thing I said to him was 'OK, the second base situation,' " Melvin said. "He said, 'That's an easy one. You gotta play him.' "

Will the A's trade Ellis? He has a clause that allows him to veto trades to six teams, though he didn't identify them.

The Giants reportedly have interest in Ellis, and the Bay Area News Group learned San Francisco is not on the no-trade list.

"I still see myself playing second base every day," said Ellis, who was hitting just .211 entering Wednesday. "We'll see what happens there as far as wherever."

Ellis played seven games at third base in 2002 but none since then. He's played just two major league games at first.

Adam Rosales remains the primary backup to shortstop Cliff Pennington, Melvin said.

KTRB 860, the A's former flagship station, is switching formats to ESPN Deportes, all-Spanish sports programming that will replace the sports talk format currently on the station. The change takes effect Friday.

Chin Music: 5:10 (PT) announced start time for A's-Mets

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 6/22/2011 4:41pm

The rain appears to have let up at Citi Field and first pitch has been announced for 5:10 p.m. (West Coast time). That would be a one-hour delay if we indeed get underway then.

Chin Music: Jemile Weeks staying as A's starting second baseman; Mark Ellis to be utility man

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 6/22/2011 4:24pm

We're in a rain delay at Citi Field. The announcement just came as rain started falling right around the time first pitch was scheduled for. No word yet on when we'll start. Until then, here's the pregame update ...

The expected news came down that rookie Jemile Weeks will remain the A's starting second baseman and Mark Ellis will slide into a utility infielder role. Ellis will be an option at first and third base as well as second, manager Bob Melvin said, and he could start at first as soon as Thursday.

Ellis is handling the news extremely well and saying all the right things, which isn't surprising considering what a class act he is. "I wasn't bracing myself," Ellis said. "I've been in (Weeks') position before. I've been that guy before. So I wasn't bracing myself. But watching him play, I'm proud of him. He's done a great job, and he's my teammate."

At the same time, reading between the lines, I get the feeling Ellis would welcome a trade if it meant going somewhere to be a starting second baseman. "I still see myself as playing second base every day," Ellis said. "We'll see what happens there as far as wherever." Ellis said he has a no-trade clause that allows him to veto a trade to six teams, but didn't say who they are. I've been told by another trustworthy source that the Giants are not one of the six teams. Even with Daric Barton going down to the minors and Conor Jackson being the regular first baseman, the A's still have two right-handed hitting utility infielders in Ellis and Adam Rosales (Melvin said Rosales will serve as the backup shortstop and not Ellis).

Melvin commended Ellis for how well he took the news, and that Ellis took all the tension out of the conversation when the two talked.

—In other news, left fielder Josh Willingham was scheduled to test his sore Achilles' tendon by running. That's the main hurdle for Willingham to clear before he returns to the lineup. He's OK hitting, he said. If Willingham can't play Thursday, Melvin said Jackson likely would go to left field and Ellis might play first.

—As things currently stand, Melvin said he envisions Hideki Matsui getting two starts in left field against Philadelphia this weekend, though that depends a lot on Willingham's availability.

—One man who's still the odd man out of playing time — David DeJesus. With Jackson playing first, that relieves a bit of the outfield logjam. But you saw how Ryan Sweeney played last night — four hits and a sliding catch in right-center. It's hard to take that guy out of the lineup right now. DeJesus, like Ellis, is taking his situation very well. "To hang my head and be miserable, the season is way too long to be like that every day," DeJesus said.

The lineups:

A's — Weeks 2B, Pennington SS, Crisp CF, Matsui LF, Jackson 1B, Sweeney RF, Suzuki C, Sizemore 3B, Gonzalez LHP.

Mets — Reyes SS, Turner 3B, Beltran RF, Bay LF, Hairston CF, Paulino C, Duda 1B, Tejada 2B, Dickey RHP.

A's Mark Ellis a backup: could he be a Giant?

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Change is coming to the A's fast and furiously this month and the most recent one displaced the team's longest tenured player - and might benefit the cross-bay rival Giants.

Mark Ellis, one of the best defensive second basemen in the major leagues, officially became a utility player before Oakland's 3-2 loss to the Mets in 13 innings at Citi Field on Wednesday night. There is widespread belief that Ellis will be traded to the Giants.

"I think there's a very good chance," one industry insider said Wednesday.

Oakland's loss ended the team's season-high six-game losing streak.

Ellis came back from a slight hamstring strain incurred on his 34th birthday only to find his position usurped by rookie Jemile Weeks, a 24-year-old who was the A's top draft pick in 2008. Weeks, called up June 7, was hitting .362 entering Wednesday and he was a key component of the team's winning streak.

A level-headed type, Ellis assured new manager Bob Melvin that he was not upset.

"I told him to put me wherever he wants to," Ellis said. "I told him not to worry about me. He doesn't need to be thinking about me, it's about the team.

"Jemile is playing too well to take him out. He's provided a spark. You can't take him out. ... I hope he does well and plays 10 years in Oakland."

Melvin appreciated Ellis' reaction, although it did not surprise him.

"He made it very easy on me," Melvin said. "To an extent, you would expect that, but for me, the level he went, that was off the charts. He said, 'You've got to play him.' "

Ellis said that he still envisions himself as a second baseman, but he doesn't mind playing anywhere, and he took grounders at first and at third before the game. There is a chance Ellis will start at first base today.

His severe shoulder injury in 2004 would not limit Ellis at third, he said. He played third in college and has started seven games there in the majors. He has appeared three times at first base.

Ellis, a free agent after the season, is aware that he's been linked to the Giants. He has a limited no-trade clause but San Francisco is not among those teams, which are all on the East Coast. He does not have 10 years of service time, which would allow him to veto a trade.

Ellis lives within a few blocks of AT&T Park, but he can't get his mind around the concept of changing teams.

"It's hard to even think about it, I've been here so long," Ellis said. "This is all new to me. My loyalty is obviously to Oakland, but I realize the situation - Jemile is the future, and we play the same position. It's something I have zero control over, anyway."

Ellis pinch-hit in the eighth and flied out; Weeks went 0-for-6 with three strikeouts, lowering his average to .321.

A's lose to Mets on a hit-batsman in 13th inning

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Oakland's 3-2 loss Wednesday came despite a fine outing by All-Star candidate **Gio Gonzalez**, who allowed four hits and one run in seven innings, and despite the team's lucky gold jerseys, worn for all six games of the now-finished winning streak. And it came courtesy of **Justin Turner's** left thigh, grazed by a **Brad Ziegler** slider in the 13th inning.

After intentionally walking **Jose Reyes** to load the bases with two outs, Ziegler hit Turner with his first pitch. Ziegler was upset afterward because he thought Turner might have leaned into the pitch.

"I haven't seen the replay, but if he did, it's kind of a cheap way to win," Ziegler said. "It was inside, but if we're going to lose the game, I'd rather have him beat me with a base hit."

Ziegler noted that the ball only grazed Turner, because catcher **Kurt Suzuki** caught it.

Turner said he just held his ground, and, "I'll take the bruise to get the game over with."

A's first baseman **Conor Jackson** sent the game into extra innings with a two-out, two-strike RBI single off **Francisco Rodriguez** in the ninth.

Hideki Matsui, playing in left for just the second time this season, made a plunging, rolling catch to rob **Daniel Murphy** of a hit to end the 11th.

Looking for deals: Scouts for some contenders have checked out the A's lately, and along with the expected interest in **Josh Willingham** (Philadelphia) and **Mark Ellis** (Giants), left-handed relievers **Craig Breslow** and **Brian Fuentes** are drawing interest.

Fuentes, who is in the first year of a two-year, \$10.5 million deal, might be the kind of piece the team would consider moving, whereas Breslow is arbitration-eligible the next two seasons.

Briefly: David DeJesus has started just five of 12 games since **Bob Melvin** took over as A's manager June 9, and the New Jersey native, who is batting .233, has not started either of the first two games in this series. He pinch-hit in the 10th inning, singled, stole second and went to third on an error. ... The start of the game was delayed 1 hour, 3 minutes by rain. ... Mets starter **R.A. Dickey** allowed three hits and one run, walked one and struck out nine in eight innings.

Leading off

Cal pride: Former UC Berkeley player Conor Jackson is trying to watch every pitch of the College World Series, with the nearly disbanded Bears playing No. 1 Virginia today. "You can't write it, you can't movie-script this," Jackson said of Cal's season. "It's been phenomenal."

Drumbeat: Mark Ellis becomes a backup for A's, and he's OK with that

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Citi Field, 6/22/2011, 3:12pm

Mark Ellis told me this afternoon that he'll now be playing some first base and some third base - and he might even start at first base tomorrow night. Ellis, who came off the DL today, isn't in the lineup at his longtime second-base spot; rookie Jemile Weeks has supplanted him, which a .362 average and helping spark a six-game winning streak will do. Ellis is batting .211.

This is Ellis' 10th season with the A's, and he's beloved in the clubhouse. He's taking the change in roles in stride, which is to be expected; there are few more stand-up guys in pro sports than Ellis. He told me that Weeks "is playing too well to take him out. He's provided a spark. You can't take him out. ... I hope he does well and that he plays for 10 years in Oakland."

Ellis told manager Bob Melvin "not to worry about me," Ellis said. "I told him to put me wherever he wants. If they need me, I'm there."

Ellis said he still sees himself as a second baseman, but he anticipates little trouble playing first or third. He's played both - third in college, first a bit in the majors. His surgically repaired right shoulder can handle the throw from third, Ellis said.

Ellis has heard the trade rumors involving, among others, the Giants, and he lives near AT&T Park in San Francisco, but he told me his loyalty remains with Oakland and he can't even begin to conceive of playing for another team after such a long time with the A's. "I've spent so much time around these guys, I can't even think about playing somewhere else."

But, Ellis said, he understands the reality of the situation, and, he said, "It's something I have zero control over."

Weeks told me that he didn't know how things were going to break down at second upon Ellis' return, but he did know that his relationship with Ellis is so good that it would be unaffected. He's glad that Ellis is back to help let him know what he's doing wrong and to give him pointers.

I've always thought that Ellis would make an excellent coach or manager some day - he knows the game inside and out and he's calm and steady and well-respected. He's only grown in everyone's estimation today; most of you know the numerous players who have come through here (and everywhere else, really) who kick up a fuss whenever their circumstances change. Ellis is as gracious and professional as they come, and he's also smart enough to know that things can change quickly at this level. Manager Bob Melvin said he expected that Ellis would handle this decision well, but he said Ellis' response "was off the charts. He said, 'You've got to play him.' "

Personally, I believe there's a strong chance Ellis will get traded in the next few weeks, but if that happens, I wouldn't be shocked if he returns to the organization down the road in some capacity - coach, player development - and fares extremely well. That's well in the future, of course.

Here's the lineup: Weeks 2b, Pennington ss, Crisp cf, Matsui lf, Jackson 1b, Sweeney rf, Suzuki c, Sizemore 3b, Gonzalez p.

David DeJesus remains the odd man out, and he told me, "It's new. It's different." He's prepared to play when called upon, but this is not the way an everyday player who was among the hot trade targets last summer was expecting for things to go this season. Melvin said again today that it's a difficult situation with DeJesus, getting him playing time, especially now with Hideki Matsui playing left field. Melvin said he knows he hasn't given DeJesus many opportunities.

There's no doubt that the team's other outfielders are outperforming DeJesus, but he is a much better player than he has shown this year.

A's outlasted by Mets on hit-by-pitch in 13th

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

NEW YORK -- And on the seventh day, the gold jerseys were put to rest.

That will likely be the overwhelming decision in the A's clubhouse following a 3-2 loss to the Mets just after midnight on Thursday morning in New York that snapped a six-game winning streak despite another appearance by the loyal gold.

The lengthy four-hour affair, which followed a rain delay spanning just over an hour, was anticlimactically brought to an end when righty Brad Ziegler hit Justin Turner with the bases loaded to force in the winning run in the 13th inning.

Coupled with a Rangers loss to the Astros, the unexpected turn of events in the confines of Citi Field kept the A's 5 1/2 games back of Texas in the American League West.

"It's tough," Ziegler said, "because the team battled hard tonight."

After pitching a scoreless 12th with the help of a handful of key defensive plays, Ziegler allowed a one-out single to Lucas Duda in the 13th. Daniel Murphy followed with another base hit before Angel Pagan recorded out No. 2 to bring Jose Reyes to the plate. Ziegler compiled a 3-0 count against Reyes before intentionally walking him, paving the way for Turner's entrance.

What was meant to be a first-pitch slider instead grazed Turner -- not from a lack of focus following the intentional walk to Reyes, but rather "just a pitch that got away from me a little bit," Ziegler said.

"I knew we were going to pitch around Reyes and try to get the matchup against the righty unless Reyes got himself out on one of the other pitches, so mentally I was prepared for that," he explained. "I figured he'd be up there aggressive, so I wanted to go with my best out pitch, and I let it go a little too early."

Ziegler had not seen the replay of the pitch before talking to media, but he relayed a sense of curiosity about whether Turner may have helped himself out by leaning into the pitch.

"I didn't hear it hit him just because of the noise in the stadium," he said. "[Kurt Suzuki] caught it, which means if it hit him, it grazed him, because otherwise it would have deflected away from him. My initial reaction was I thought he leaned into it, and to me, if he did lean into it -- I haven't seen the replay, so I'm not going to say he did -- but if he did, that's kind of a cheap way to end the game.

"But I know the pitch was inside, so one way or another, I knew it got away from me, and [it's] just not how you want to end the game. If I'm going to lose it, I'd rather be beaten with a base hit."

Asked where the ball hit him, Turner simply grinned.

"In the uniform," he said. "Maybe."

Four innings prior to the strange ending, Conor Jackson had erased a 2-1 Mets lead by bringing home Coco Crisp with a game-tying single in the ninth despite facing two strikes and two outs. It marked the club's lone successful attempt with runners in scoring position, as the A's went 1-for-8 in such situations on the night.

"We can't feel bad about our effort," manager Bob Melvin said. "We just keep trying to stay close, because we felt like we're going to score some runs late. Down to a pitch, we end up tying the game and just couldn't push another one across. Certainly can't blame the effort. The guys played hard all night, and like I said, if we don't get a big hit late in the game, we don't play extra innings."

The dramatics followed a lengthy pitchers' duel between Gio Gonzalez and R.A. Dickey, which was quickly put to rest upon both hurlers' departures.

Reyes was to blame, as the Mets' speedy shortstop led off the bottom of the eighth against righty Joey Devine with his Major League-leading 13th triple and scored the go-ahead run on Turner's RBI single to turn a knotted game into a 2-1 affair.

It marked a rare display of offense on an otherwise quiet night, as both teams had combined for just seven hits beforehand.

Strangled by Dickey's knuckleball, the A's put just five runners on base through the first eight innings. Only one of them scored, as Suzuki represented the lone run of the night off the righty courtesy of his fifth homer of the season, a solo shot to left field in the fifth.

Dickey, who entered the day with a 1-4 record and 6.49 ERA against the A's in 11 career games -- seven starts -- as a member of the Rangers and Mariners, fanned nine in eight innings of work. He surrendered just three hits and walked one.

Gonzalez, meanwhile, was equally impressive, tossing seven innings of one-run ball, his only form of trouble coming in the second, when the Mets tallied three consecutive hits, the last being a run-scoring knock from Duda.

The A's lefty retired 15 of his final 17 batters and exited the game having struck out eight while walking just one, all the while lowering his ERA to 2.59.

"I battled all the way, just trying to keep the team in the game," Gonzalez said. "It's unfortunate to have that kind of inning, but it was an exciting game, just because of the way we kept going out there."

Mets' Capuano, A's Godfrey face off in rubber match

By Jesse Sanchez / MLB.com

Mets starter Chris Capuano and A's right-hander Graham Godfrey will be the center of the attention when they take the hill Thursday in the series finale between the two clubs.

However, the spotlight will also shine on the infielders behind them, specifically, Oakland's Mark Ellis and New York's Ruben Tejada.

Ellis, who has entered a utility role for the first time in his career, could make his first career start at first base Thursday.

"Wherever [manager Bob Melvin] puts me is where I'm gonna go," Ellis said. "An infielder is an infielder. Everything's a little different, but it's still catching a ground ball and throwing a ground ball."

Ellis will be needed at first base if Josh Willingham (sore Achilles tendon) is unable to play in left field and Conor Jackson is put there. Ellis has made three appearances at first base in his career but will likely play all around the infield with the emergence of young second baseman Jemile Weeks.

As for Tejada, he continues to develop as a Major League player. He went 0-for-3 with two strikeouts in Wednesday's 3-2 extra-innings victory against the A's and is hitting .152 in his last 10 games. He's hitting .272 with 11 RBIs for the season.

"A lot of it comes down to reports are starting to be spread," Mets manager Terry Collins said. "Scouts are talking to scouts. This is a great learning experience for Ruben Tejada. He's got to understand that now that he's been up here, now that people are pitching him a little differently, he's got to be a little more disciplined at the plate and not expand too much and stay within himself."

Athletics: DeJesus struggling at the plate

- David DeJesus has three hits in his last 30 at-bats and is hitting .151 in his last 18 contests. He was out of the starting lineup for the second consecutive game Wednesday but got a single as a pinch-hitter in the 10th inning. It is unclear how much playing time he will receive moving forward.

- Godfrey pitched seven innings and surrendered one earned run -- a solo home run to Cody Ross -- against the Giants in a winning effort in his last outing. He struck out three and walked none in the game, only his second big league start.

"He was focused the whole game," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said. "You really watch for a young player like that, how he responds. We get a lead and then Ross hits the homer, and now how is he going to respond? We saw him in Chicago get a little bit out of sorts, but this time you could see him compose himself."

Mets: Dickey gives starters a lift

- Mets starters had an MLB-best 2.53 ERA over a 17-game stretch from late May to mid June. The starting pitching struggled Sunday and Tuesday, going just four innings in each game, but R.A. Dickey responded Wednesday, allowing one run on three hits in eight innings.

"I certainly think our starting pitching has to be one of the positives if we're going to hang in there," Collins said. "We're not going to outslug people, we just don't have that kind of club. Without Ike [Davis] and David [Wright] in the lineup, our power is at a minimum right now. Our execution side on the offensive end has to be to advance runners, to situational hit as best we can. Therefore, our starting pitching [has to keep] us in games."

- Jason Bay was moved to the cleanup spot Wednesday and went 0-for-5 with three strikeouts. He is 12-for-39 (.308) in his last 10 games and has four multihit efforts in his last seven contests.

Worth noting

- A's pitchers are hitless in nine at-bats in Interleague Play this season.
- Mets shortstop Jose Reyes leads the Major Leagues with 13 triples. He also has 36 multihit games this season.
- The A's are 4-4 in Interleague Play this season and 140-116 all-time.

Off DL, Ellis says A's need to play Weeks

Veteran will be used as a utility infielder for the time being

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

NEW YORK -- Fresh off the disabled list, Mark Ellis walked into manager Bob Melvin's office on Wednesday to talk about a second-base situation that has seemingly been made complicated given rookie Jemile Weeks' sudden success.

Except there wasn't much to discuss. At least not in Ellis' opinion.

"He made it very easy on me," Melvin said. "You would, to an extent, expect that, but to the extent and the level he went, for me, was off the charts. The first thing I said to him was, 'OK, the second-base situation,' and he said, 'That's an easy one, you gotta play him.'"

So Weeks will play, and Ellis will watch -- maybe even from first or third base as a utility infielder. He has two years worth of college experience at the hot corner and also played seven games there for the A's in 2007. First base is less familiar to Ellis, but the club's longest-tenured player is ready to embrace any role.

"It's different, I'm not going to lie, but Jemile has played great," Ellis said. "He's played unbelievable. He's created a spark for this team, and I think it's obvious. I still see myself playing second base every day, so we'll see what happens there, but he's played too good to be out of the lineup."

"Coming from someone who is real coveted in this organization, it's a great feeling to be able to have his support given the situation we're in," Weeks said. "I'm glad he's happy for me, I'm glad to be a part of the team with him and we'll work from there -- team up to help this team win."

Ellis, 34, is coming off his sixth career DL stint and looking to improve upon the numbers he left behind two weeks ago -- a .211 average and a .245 on-base percentage, which was fourth lowest in the American League at the time of his injury. However, he has just two errors to his name this season for a .994 fielding percentage and boasts a .990 career mark.

Ellis' defensive resume is matched only by his professionalism, and both give Weeks a respected model to copy.

"It's very rare, and it's very tough to be a leader when you're not in the lineup every day, but there are certain guys that can do that, and Mark Ellis is one of those guys," Melvin said. "He's respected just as much whether he's on the field, whether he's on the bench, whether he's playing a different position. The respect comes from what he's done and what he stands for and how he is as a person."

Given Ellis' understandable desire to continue his career as an everyday second baseman, the veteran was questioned about trade rumors that have circulated in recent weeks. Currently earning \$6 million in the final year of a three-year contract worth \$16.5 million, Ellis said it's "out of my control," but mentioned he can't imagine putting on another uniform.

"Obviously I think about it a little and I still see myself playing second base every day, but my loyalties run so deep in this organization that it's hard to even think about being somewhere else," he said. "That will all play itself out."

Ellis has a partial no-trade clause in his contract and said he can veto a trade to six teams. In the meantime, though, his focus remains on the field, no matter the position. He could draw a start at first base as early as Thursday, depending on the club's need for Conor Jackson in the outfield if Josh Willingham (sore Achilles tendon) remains out of the mix.

"Wherever [Melvin] puts me is where I'm gonna go," Ellis said. "An infielder is an infielder. Everything's a little different, but it's still catching a ground ball and throwing a ground ball."

"Watching [Weeks] play, I'm proud of him. He's done a great job. He's my teammate. I'm doing nothing but rooting for him and for this organization really, to tell you the truth. It's the only place I've ever known, and it's not a bad thing to have too many good players."

Waiting his turn, DeJesus gets another day off

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

NEW YORK -- David DeJesus sat out for the second straight game on Wednesday, creating more speculation about his role in a shuffling A's outfield.

"That's a very difficult one right now," manager Bob Melvin said. "It's tough. He's waiting his time, staying ready and staying positive. For a guy that's used to being an everyday player, this is a different situation for him, and I realize that. But he's upbeat and preparing, and that's all you can ask."

DeJesus has collected just two hits in his last 29 at-bats and is 7-for-52 (.135) spanning his last 17 contests. Melvin insists there's nothing more he can ask of him, though, knowing full well that the only way for him to snap out of the funk is through consistent playing time.

"It's difficult unless I give him the opportunity, and I haven't really given him the opportunity multiple days in a row," Melvin said. "All I can ask is for him to stay ready, and he's doing exactly that."

With DeJesus on the bench, Ryan Sweeney received a start in right field on Wednesday, while Hideki Matsui started in left field for a second straight day.

Worth noting

- Josh Willingham was expected to run on his sore Achilles tendon on Wednesday, at which point the A's will decide whether he's ready to return to the starting lineup for Thursday's series finale in New York.
- A's pitchers entered Wednesday 0-for-8 with two strikeouts and a sacrifice this season and have a .089 average with four doubles, seven RBIs, eight walks and 113 strikeouts since the inception of Interleague Play in 1997.

Mets end A's 6-game winning streak in 13th inning

By HOWIE RUMBERG, ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Brad Ziegler hit Justin Turner with a pitch with two outs in the 13th inning to force in the winning run and the New York Mets ended the Oakland Athletics' six-game winning streak, 3-2 Wednesday night.

Lucas Duda had a one-out single in the 13th off Ziegler (2-1). Daniel Murphy, who entered as a pinch-hitter in the 11th, singled to left. One out later, Jose Reyes was intentionally walked.

Turner then was grazed on the left thigh with Ziegler's first pitch. He turned to home plate umpire Alan Porter, looking for the call that gave the Mets their first walk-off win of the season.

Bobby Parnell (2-1) pitched one inning in a rain-delayed game that took 4 hours and ended after midnight.

Turner gave the Mets a lead in the eighth inning with an RBI single after Reyes hit his major league-leading 13th triple, but Francisco Rodriguez blew his second straight save opportunity in the ninth, giving up an RBI single to Conor Jackson with two outs to tie it.

Rodriguez gave up two runs in a loss to Atlanta last Thursday and he has allowed 11 runs in his last 9 2-3 innings.

The Mets had the bases loaded in the 12th but failed to capitalize against Ziegler.

Hideki Matsui made a tumbling shoestring catch in left field to end the 11th with a runner on first. The A's regular designated hitter has made several nice catches in two games against the Mets, his first two in the outfield since last September.

The Athletics had runners on first and second with one out in the 11th but Pedro Beato entered in a double-switch that removed Jason Bay from the game and held the A's.

Reyes' triple to right-center off Joey Devine was the first hit for one of the top four batters for either team in a game that was dominated by a duel between R.A. Dickey and Gio Gonzalez for seven innings.

Dickey's knuckleball was particularly effective on a sticky night that began with a downpour that delayed the start for 1 hour, 3 minutes. He went eight innings for the third time in four outings and allowed three hits and a homer to Kurt Suzuki.

The light-hitting Athletics mustered just three hits through eight innings while trying to match their longest winning streak since 2009, all while wearing their alternative brilliant gold jerseys.

Gonzalez allowed four hits and a second-inning run over seven innings. He was pinch-hit for in the eighth and Devine took over.

With one out, Reyes, the NL's leading hitter, snapped a 2-for-20 rut with a drive to right-center that appeared to go just under the glove of right fielder Ryan Sweeney as he crashed into the wall. Reyes scored on Turner's hit to left for a 2-1 lead.

Kurt Suzuki snapped an 0-for-13 skid with a one-out homer in the fifth to tie it.

Duda had given the Mets an early lead with an RBI single in the second.

After Duda's hit, Gonzalez retired 17 of 19 before being pinch-hit for by Mark Ellis in the eighth. Ellis was activated from the disabled list before the game only to find that surprising rookie Jemile Weeks has secured the second base job.

NOTES: Oakland's RHP Tyson Ross (oblique) pitched to minor leaguers Tuesday. Manager Bob Melvin said, "I heard it went well." ... Melvin said Ellis will work out at first, second and third base. ... Mets 3B David Wright (back) will be reevaluated by a doctor Thursday. He's been out since May 16. 1B Ike Davis (ankle) might face season-ending surgery if he does not show improvement over the next three weeks. ... David DeJesus stole his first base of the season in the 10th. ... Mets OF Willie Harris had a pinch-hit single in the ninth on his 33rd birthday. ... Matsui struck out four times and walked twice.

Gutierrez: Gio making case for A's All-Star bid

Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com

Random observations from the A's 13-inning, 63-minute rain-delayed, 3-2 interleague loss to the New York Mets Tuesday at CitiField...

- Through the first month of the season, it appeared as though Trevor Cahill was in line to not only be an All Star, but start the Midsummer Classic for the American League. When he cooled off, you could have made a case for Coco Crisp and then, Josh Willingham. But now, Gio Gonzalez has appeared to become the A's front-runner to represent Oakland in Arizona on July 12. Gonzalez's strong outing against the Mets - one run, four hits, eight strikeouts and one walk in seven innings - continued an upward tick for the left hander. Over his last 13 innings, Gonzalez has 18 strikeouts and just three walks.
- There had been much concern over Hideki Matsui manning left field in National League parks during interleague play. After all, he was last a regular left fielder in 2007, for the New York Yankees. But, like riding a bike, Matsui has not seemed to lose a step. he went into the stands to catch a foul ball, tracked a fly over his head and made a diving catch of Daniel Murphy's sinking liner to end the 11th.
- The A's struck out 16 times. Is it a concern that six of them were looking?
- Consider: on the day that Mark Ellis was activated off the disabled list, Jemile Weeks went 0-for-6 in the leadoff spot. Just sayin'.
- Kurt Suzuki's fifth-inning home run had to feel good. It was his first long ball since May 8, at Kansas City.
- Is there any pitch in baseball more frustrating than the flittering, fluttering knuckleball? Mets starter R.A. Dickey made A's batters look downright silly at times in giving up only three hits while striking out nine in eight innings. His only mistake was the 71-mph knucksie he left up to Suzuki.
- Will be extremely interesting to see Bob Melvin's lineup card for Thursday morning's rubber match, and to see if "Moonlight" Graham Godfrey chooses to wear the lucky gold jerseys. Especially since they lost some mojo in their six-game winning streak coming to an end.

Problem for Rays and A's? MLB greed

By Howard Bryant, ESPN.com

For the first 10 years of their existence, the Tampa Bay (Devil) Rays provided the standard laugh track for big league baseball. Teams that had mismanaged their clubs or complained about the public refusing to build them a ballpark could always point to Tampa Bay and feel better.

Since the club's first winning season in 2008, however, the Rays have won a pennant and two American League East titles, have drafted tremendously, and, after stockpiling 10 first-round picks at this month's amateur draft, are being applauded for their fiscal responsibility and talent evaluation in a division in which the two dominant franchises, Boston and New York, share great advantages over every other team in baseball.

Three thousand miles away, the A's have captured six pennants since arriving in Oakland in 1968, second only to the Yankees in that time frame. Five players -- Reggie Jackson, Catfish Hunter, Rollie Fingers, Dennis Eckersley and Rickey Henderson -- built their Hall of Fame cases in Oakland. The A's franchise, since its inception as the Philadelphia entry of the newly formed American League in 1901, has won the pennant 15 times, again second only to the Yankees.

Yet to baseball, Oakland and Tampa Bay -- not the financially challenged New York Mets and Los Angeles Dodgers -- are the game's two most troubled franchises.

Both are certainly in trouble. The A's could be homeless when their stadium lease expires next season, and no one comes to see the Rays play even as they've begun to do everything right.

Baseball blames the public, a predictable response. But the nation's two "Bay Area"s are infamously linked by a quagmire of greed with roots dating back 20 years.

In 1992, National League owners blocked the San Francisco Giants from moving to St. Petersburg. Ten days later, local ownership led by Walter Shorenstein and Peter Magowan purchased the Giants and signed Barry Bonds to the richest contract in baseball history even before they actually took control of the club. Now, the Giants are on the verge of becoming one of the richest teams in the game.

The romantic tale behind that blocked move to St. Pete in '92 is that the NL preserved the Giants in San Francisco for posterity and gastronomy: Owners loved San Francisco's restaurants. The actual story is that baseball's owners were fighting among themselves over money and were just months from ousting commissioner Fay Vincent and forcing a devastating strike, and they wanted to keep the Tampa Bay market open to expansion and the lucrative fees that followed. In the five-year period from 1992 to 1997, baseball extracted more than \$500 million in expansion fees from Colorado, Florida, Tampa Bay and Arizona.

The chain reaction in Tampa Bay still resonates. Fans are being blamed for not embracing a ballpark that was never attractive; but, from geography issues to fan interest, baseball has never believed in the Tampa Bay market. Landing the Giants might have resonated with the aging, nostalgic New York transplant element in Florida; but it wouldn't have mattered in the long run. Playing in that ballpark would have been as much of a disaster for the Giants as it has been for the Rays.

At any rate, the 1992 failure to bring the Giants to town was the seventh time in seven chances that Tampa Bay lost on attracting a team. Baseball knew the problems, and chose the short-term windfall (\$155 million in expansion fees) over long-term health.

Thus, the expansion Rays were doomed to play in a facility unsuitable for baseball and -- surprise! -- attendance (or lack of it) has proved that stadium atmosphere (or lack of it) might be a stronger negative than the positive of a winning team.

Three years after Tampa Bay debuted, an executive summary written by HOK, baseball's exclusive architecture firm, declared, "We believe site location is the most critical issue to the success of a ballpark," in reference to a potential new ballpark for the A's. Tropicana Field (then the Suncoast Dome) had -- and has -- the worst ambience in baseball and is situated in the worst location in baseball.

Baseball knew this, and still took the money.

A year after winning the pennant in 2008, the Rays were 11th out of the 14 American League teams in attendance. In 13 full seasons, Tampa Bay has finished higher than 10th in attendance only twice (seventh in its inaugural season and ninth last year) and was dead last for seven straight years from 2001 through 2007.

Meanwhile, in the San Francisco Bay Area, the move to block the Giants from leaving for Florida was made without clarifying the game's convoluted territory rules -- greed of another sort. MLB excluded San Jose, which has become one of the 10 largest cities in the country, from acquiring a big league team. Baseball considers San Jose to be Giants territory, meaning it is unavailable to the A's.

Stuck in Oakland, owner Lew Wolff is cornered by a city leadership that has never shown the requisite passion to commit to the team, and Wolff, in turn, hasn't grounded the team as an indispensable part of the community.

Baseball has been here before. Talk to the people in Montreal who witnessed a careful succession of curious decisions that led to the depression and ultimate relocation of the Expos to Washington. Listen to the stories of how ownership did not

market the club, how the team went as far as not providing street signage and directions to the ballpark in English as a way of discouraging attendance -- an indirect strategy designed to facilitate a departure from town. An impressive lineup of ex-Expos who found their way into the World Series with other teams (Pedro Martinez, Randy Johnson, Larry Walker, John Wetteland, for example) should make the Rays think of their best players (Carl Crawford and Dan Wheeler in Boston, Rafael Soriano with the Yankees, Matt Garza and Carlos Pena with the Cubs) now playing for big-market clubs.

A's fans will nod, too. Despite Wolff's protestations that he is not purposely burying his club, the A's appear to be following the Montreal narrative. Wolff is correct that Oakland has lacked the political leadership to give him optimism -- with the brief exception of city manager Robert Bobb. No mayor, from Elihu Harris to Jerry Brown to Ron Dellums to Jean Quan, has used significant muscle to make the A's a priority.

Wolff has no reason to trust Oakland politicians, not after the city and Alameda County leadership all but ruined the fan experience at the Oakland Coliseum to accommodate the disastrous return of the Oakland Raiders.

But there is another truth Wolff must face: Oakland doesn't have much reason to trust him, either. Since Walter Haas sold the team in 1995, A's owners have done everything in their power to leave Oakland, physically and emotionally.

The commissioner's office, too, is complicit in the sabotaging of Oakland. Bud Selig rightfully lauds his three-person committee assigned to the daunting and thankless task of assessing the feasibility of baseball in the San Francisco Bay Area. But although he interprets the length of time the committee has taken to reach a finding -- two years and counting since March 2009 -- as evidence of its diligence, Selig is selling a false timetable, for he has actually had the A's-San Jose relocation question on his desk for *14 years*.

The city of San Jose made its first overtures to then-owners Steve Schott and Ken Hofmann to lure the A's from Oakland back in 1997. In 1998, Schott and Hofmann began in earnest to cultivate Santa Clara County regarding a site near the Great America theme park. Selig could have answered the question of territorial rights then, long before Wolff purchased the team, just as the Giants' Pacific Bell Park was under construction. Schott and Hofmann continued to insult Oakland by trying to make inroads in Portland, Ore.; Las Vegas; and Sacramento, Calif., in addition to San Jose.

Now, while Wolff and Oakland's civic leaders snarl at one another (or worse, fail to sit down and meet), Selig's committee, as well as the city, appears intrigued by a parcel of land in Oakland called Victory Court, which is located on the waterfront, close to public transportation.

The problem is that Wolff has known about this site for years, and Victory Court underscores just how much distance exists between Wolff and the city. A decade ago, when Schott and Hofmann owned the club, the city commissioned HOK to conduct a confidential study of seven potential ballpark sites in Oakland and elsewhere in Alameda County. They concluded that, of the seven, a site quite near to Victory Court referred to in the study as the "Oak to 9th Plan" was the *least* feasible, with an estimated cost of \$565 million.

Deals don't get done by convincing people they can't work. Wolff knows this. He has made a living in the building business. He knows that the combination of civic energy, passion, creativity, perseverance and *belief* in a project -- along with friends in powerful positions who can green-light a project -- can turn a challenge into a success. AT&T Park (formerly Pacific Bell Park) provides the best example.

Wolff says he went into his research with the best, most positive intentions. But the energy he brings to Oakland, like that of Schott and Hofmann before him, is negative -- the conviction that baseball in Oakland is dead.

Maybe, ultimately, he is right. Maybe Oakland no longer can support big league baseball. Maybe the team belongs in San Jose or San Antonio. The problem is that Wolff has no option except the one he hasn't been willing to consider: to forge the kind of spirit and positive partnership with Oakland required for making a \$600 million project work. No trust exists between the two sides.

Wheels exist within wheels, and quite possibly the Giants and Rays continue to be linked. When the Giants foundered in Candlestick Park, executives pointed to weak attendance but strong television ratings as proof that the problem was not the market but the ballpark. The Rays' television data suggests, too, that the problem might not be the market, after all, but the lack of a nice place to watch a game. The Giants took a risk and built their own ballpark. If the Rays are to be taken seriously, they might need to do the same.

Baseball is a closed club. San Jose is finding that out the hard way. In Los Angeles, Frank McCourt has discovered the price of embarrassing the commissioner, and the only way to save the A's is for Selig to call everyone's bluff -- including his own -- by allowing his committee and the city to work out a deal with transparency and put it on the table to find out once and for all whether Oakland can create a workable stadium deal. Wolff clearly does not want to be in Oakland. If he did, his top executives wouldn't be trashing the city's potential.

McCourt is finished in baseball. Wolff is already based in Los Angeles and has resources. If he isn't already, Selig should begin negotiating the exit plan for McCourt and install Wolff as the new owner of the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Removing Wolff from Oakland and installing him in Los Angeles solves two key issues: (1) It opens the door for a clean slate of negotiations between a new A's ownership group and the city of Oakland; and (2) by awarding Wolff one of the four most important franchises in baseball (the Yankees, Cardinals and Red Sox are the other three), it compensates him for blocking him from San Jose.

A fresh start in Oakland calls the city's bluff to produce the comprehensive plan for a legitimate new stadium for the A's -- a plan Wolff says does not exist -- and will put the issue of whether the San Francisco Bay Area is truly a one-team market to the test. If Oakland succeeds, both sides win.

If the city fails, Oakland would have no one to blame but itself. Baseball's next move for the franchise would be either contraction or relocation to San Antonio; New York City; Charlotte, N.C., or some other location. Selig and Wolff would be vindicated after all. But nothing gets done without dialogue. The worst-case scenario might not be ideal for the A's in Oakland; but at least it finally would be honest.

Mets stop A's streak with 13th-inning run to win, 3-2

Sam McPherson, examiner.com

Nothing like a knuckleballer to ruin a team's momentum, although a faulty bullpen is also often a culprit.

The Oakland Athletics lost in 13 innings tonight in New York, as Brad Ziegler put on six base runners in less than two innings of work to take the loss in the 3-2 game.

Ziegler's loss was the 15th for the A's bullpen this year, tops in the American League -- and with the Texas Rangers and the Seattle Mariners losing, Oakland lost a chance to gain ground in the AL West division race.

Earlier in the night, knuckleballer Robert Allen Dickey held the A's to three hits and one walk in eighth innings. He also struck out nine A's hitters in the process.

Dickey's flutterballs couldn't have come at a worse time for the A's, as they had won six straight -- scoring an average of 4.67 runs a contest, well above their season average of 3.68 per game.

Only time will tell if Oakland can forget this game, but the knuckleball is never a good thing for an offensive team on a roll.

It was also a shame tonight to waste Gio Gonzalez' effort: he matched Dickey for seven innings, giving up only four hits and one run while striking out eight batters.

The A's only run off Dickey came on Kurt Suzuki's solo home run in the fifth inning, as Conor Jackson and Ryan Sweeney had the only other Oakland hits on the night

The Mets scored the go-ahead run in the bottom of the eighth, as Joe Reyes tripled off A's reliever Joey Devine with one out. He scored when Justin Turner delivered a single to left.

However, New York closer Francisco Rodriguez -- who has years of experience closing out Oakland, thanks to his tenure in Los Angeles with the Angels from 2002-08 -- couldn't shut the door on the A's in the ninth inning for his 29th career save against Oakland.

Coco Crisp doubled with one out in the ninth inning, and Hideki Matsui struck out before Conor Jackson delivered the game-tying single.

But Ziegler's follies cost the A's a game, and now they have to start building a new winning streak from the bottom up

Oakland walks all over New York in 7-3 victory, runs win streak to six straight

Sam McPherson, examiner.com

The Oakland Athletics are on a roll, winners of six straight games now.

Bob Melvin might be the new savior of the ballclub.

And the team's health could be returning soon.

In fact, after Tuesday night's 7-3 win over the New York Mets at Citi Field in Queens, things are looking quite bright for the A's.

Sure, they're still 5.5 games out of first place, but they've recovered momentum lost during the last days of the Bob Geren Era. Second baseman Mark Ellis came off the disabled list today, and the A's did the right thing by sending down struggling first baseman Daric Barton (the official Oakland press release even referred to Ellis as an "infielder" -- signifying perhaps his potential new role as a backup).

And Rich Harden -- perhaps the Oakland organization's pitcher with the best raw stuff -- might actually come back to the A's rotation soon.

What a weird world and such prime examples how fast things can change.

Of course, it all went downhill so quickly, too -- so it's great to see the team back on the upswing so suddenly as well.

The proactive action is a start, and the players need to keep it going.

All signs point to that being a distinct possibility, although the A's have certainly demonstrated -- for better and for worse -- how quickly momentum can change in this sport.

But for now, let it ride, Oakland: just like you did last night in New York.

The A's ripped ten hits off Mets pitching last night and handed New York's Dillon Gee his first loss of the year in the process. They also drew nine walks while only striking out three times as a team. Josh Outman gave up one earned run in six innings of work for Oakland.

All was not perfect, as Brian Fuentes gave up a run late in the game, and another A's error led to another unearned run.

But it's hard to argue with six straight wins.

A few days, it was noted that Oakland needed a 16-6 run in the last three weeks before the All-Star break on July 11 to get back to .500, and don't look now, but the A's now only need 12 more wins to achieve that mark.

The way things are going, who will count them out?

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Taylor's single gives Cats extra-inning victory

By Cassie Kolas / Sacramento River Cats

Michael Taylor's two-out single in the tenth inning put Sacramento over the Tucson Padres 4-3 on Tuesday night at Kino Veterans Memorial Stadium.

Sacramento remains undefeated (4-0) in extra innings this season and has a season-high seven-game lead over second-place Las Vegas in the Pacific Coast League's Southern Division.

Josh Donaldson didn't waste time getting Sacramento on the board in the first inning. The catcher doubled, Matt Carson singled and Chris Carter hit a sacrifice fly to score Donaldson.

Sacramento was back at it again in the second inning. With Taylor on third and Wes Timmons at first, the two executed a flawless double steal for a 2-0 lead. Tucson catcher Rocky Gale attempted to throw out Timmons at second, allowing Taylor to trot home.

This was the first time the River Cats have played in Tucson since 2008, and the Padres lineup featured a familiar faces.

Three of the nine players in Tucson's starting lineup were former River Cats. In the Padres' outfield were Aaron Cunningham and Eric Patterson (No. 21 on www.rivercats.com's Top-25 All-Time River Cats list), and infielder Steve Tolleson who was traded to Tucson earlier this season.

The Padres had their answer in the second inning as left fielder Kyle Blanks had a lead off triple, and Cunningham grounded out to score Blanks and make the score 2-1 Cats.

Doug Mathis made his Sacramento River Cat debut Tuesday night. He pitched 6.0 innings and received a no-decision. He allowed eight hits and three runs (all earned), while allowing one walk and dealing two strikeouts.

Mathis, who was recently released by the Fresno Grizzlies, was ranked fourth in the Pacific Coast League with a 3.60 ERA. This is Mathis' sixth professional season and his third professional organization. Mathis had a 3-3 record with a 4.84 ERA and 44 strikeouts with the Texas Rangers from 2008-2011.

The Padres took a 3-2 lead in the fourth inning. Cunningham singled, Jarrett Hoffpauir singled, and Patterson was hit by a Mathis pitch to load the bases. Gale singled on a ground ball to left field to bring home two runs. Mathis ended the inning by picking off Patterson as he attempted to steal third.

The lead didn't last long for Tucson as Sacramento came back in the fifth inning. Donaldson knocked his second double of the game, Carson answered with a double of his own, and Carter singled home Donaldson to tie the game.

Carter got the 10th inning going with a leadoff double. Taylor smacked a two-out RBI single to score Carter and bring the River Cats over the Padres.

Sacramento's bullpen only allowed a combined one hit over 4.0 innings, with Tucson facing Fautino De Los Santos, Trystan Magnunson (3-2) and Vinnie Chulk (third save).

The River Cats improve to 47-26, and are 23-9 on the road this season.

The series will continue in Tucson on Wednesday at 7 p.m. with Sacramento righty Yadel Marti (5-1, 4.58) taking on righty Matt Buschmann (3-3, 7.34).

Daley's more than a one-hit wonder

By John Parker / Special to MLB.com

RockHounds right-hander Gary Daley kicked off the second half of the Texas League season with a gem Wednesday night, pitching eight innings of one-hit ball in Double-A Midland's 3-1 win at Frisco.

A third-round pick by the Cardinals in the 2006 Draft, Daley allowed one unearned run while fanning six, walking three and hitting one batter. He threw 102 pitches -- two shy of his season high -- and induced a remarkable 17 groundball outs without a flyout.

"I can't remember having a better outing than tonight's," Daley said. "Frisco has a lot of good, aggressive hitters, so I tried to go after them and be aggressive myself.

"The game plan was to attack the zone with my sinker. We stuck with it and it worked out well."

Daley didn't get off to a smooth start, however. He walked Davis Stoneburner to open the first inning. After Renny Osuna grounded out, Daley plunked Tommy Mendonca. But the A's farmhand then settled in to retire the next nine RoughRiders before walking Mendonca to start the fourth.

Mendonca was quickly erased when Mike Bianucci grounded into a double play -- one of two that Midland turned behind Daley.

Frisco's only hit came when Jonathan Greene led off the fifth by looping a 1-1 pitch to right. Daley later issued a one-out walk to Jose Felix, but got out of the jam when Guilder Rodriguez bounced into an inning-ending double play.

"I thought I made a good pitch, but he got enough of it to get it over our second baseman's head," Daley said. "That's the way baseball goes."

The RoughRiders got on the board in the sixth when Stoneburner reached on a fielding error by Midland third baseman Stephen Parker. Osuna followed by grounding into a fielder's choice to erase Stoneburner. The Frisco second baseman stole second, moved to third on catcher Petey Paramore's throwing error and scored on a Mendonca groundout.

Daley (2-1) cruised through perfect seventh and eighth frames. His eight innings marked the longest outing of the 25-year-old's career, spanning 130 games -- 84 starts.

"The A's are pretty stringent about pitch counts and I was close to mine," he said. "It would have great to try and finish the game, but I'm really happy with it either way."

Closer Neil Wagner needed just eight pitches to record his fourth save with a flawless ninth.

Midland's bats were nearly as quiet as Frisco's, generating just three hits. Two of them -- and two of the RockHounds' runs -- were shortstop Grant Green's.

The 13th overall pick in the 2009 Draft, Green singled and scored on an Adam Heether single in the fourth and slugged his fourth homer of the season, a solo shot, with two out in the fifth. The 23-year-old also drew a pair of walks.

RoughRiders starter Martin Perez fell to 4-2 after giving up three runs -- two earned -- on three hits and two walks over six innings. The southpaw struck out five.

Daley's gem stopped two Frisco streaks cold. Mendonca entered the game with a 13-game hitting streak, while Bianucci had collected multiple hits in his previous four contests.

The RockHounds had gone 10-24 on the road in the first half of the season -- second-worst in the league.

Daley Fires One Hitter To Start 2nd Half

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

Frisco's starter Wednesday was Martin Perez, the Texas Rangers' # 1 prospect. Perez was outstanding in the second half opener (as he has been all season), going 6.0 innings and allowing just two earned runs on three hits. His opponent, however, was better.

Gary Daley went 8.0 innings, allowing one hit and one (unearned run), recording his fourth consecutive quality start. Daley walked three and hit one batter, but struck out six and induced 18 ground ball outs (he did not allow a fly ball out). In his last four starts, the right-hander is 2-0, with a 1.27 ERA, going 28.1 innings, allowing 18 hits and seven walks while whiffing 23.

Grant Green homered off Perez (each is his organization's # 1 prospect) in the fifth, and Adam Heether had the 'Hounds other RBI. Both clubs scored a run by way of an error (Frisco's lone run came in the sixth on an error, a stolen base compounded by a throwing error and a groundout RBI).

Pitching was outstanding all the way around, and there were more errors (five) than hits (four) in the game.

BATS Green had two of the 'Hounds' three hits and walked twice (reaching base 4-of-4) and Heether had the other hit. Each extended a hit streak in the process, Green to six games (12-25, .480) and Heether to nine (12-34, .353). Heether now has 36 RBI in 30 games with the RockHounds.

ARMS - Neil Wagner retired Renny Osuna, Tommy Mendonca and Mike Bianucci, the heart of the Frisco order, in the ninth to complete the 1-hitter. Osuna's fly ball to right was the first fly ball out of the game for 'Hounds pitching. The only other would be Bianucci's pop out to first base to end the game.

HALFTIME - No marching bands were involved, but Tuesday marked the end of the Texas League first half, with the Arkansas Travelers (36-31) and San Antonio Missions (49-21) winning the North and South Division half-season pennants, respectively. The RockHounds finished 27-43, while Frisco compiled the league's second-best mark at 40-30 (nine games behind San Antonio). All eight Texas League teams returned to 0-0 to open the second half Wednesday. Each half-season is 70 games.

ROAD 'HOUNDS - Wednesday was game seven of the club's 12-game road trip (3-4). The RockHounds and Frisco conclude their series Thursday, with the 'Hounds then returning to San Antonio (where the road trip opened) Friday- Monday.

WELCOME, PETE - Outfielder Shane Peterson has returned to the RockHounds from (Triple-A) Sacramento, giving the 'Hounds a full, 24-man, roster for the first time on the road trip. Shane opened the season with the 'Hounds, hitting .278 with one home run, five doubles and five RBI in 14 games. "Pete" returns, but not because of any shortcomings at the AAA level. The recent reassignments of Kevin Kouzmanoff and Daric Barton and the activation of Chris Carter from the disabled list have added to the Sacramento roster (Barton and Carter are former RockHounds). In 46 games with the RiverCats,

Shane hit .293 with seven doubles, three triples, six HR and 32 RBI. He was back with the 'Hounds Wednesday, batting third and playing center field, as the RockHounds opened the second half.

RADIO NOTE - We apologize for there being no radio broadcast of Wednesday's game. The main server at ICA Broadcasting (which includes My Country, 96.1-FM) went down early in the day, making a "live" broadcast impossible. ICA is working feverishly (almost literally) to install a new server. We hope to be back for the finalé of the Frisco series, Thursday night (broadcast time scheduled for 6:50).

ROCKY TOWN - The RockHounds' current road trip ends Monday (June 27), followed by the two day break for the Texas League All-Star Game (in San Antonio, June 29). The 'Hounds then open a 6-game home stand, hosting the Arkansas Travelers and Springfield Cardinals, June 30n through July 5. The 6-gamer opens with a Thirsty Thursday (featuring Breakin' B-Boy McCoy) and also includes Cap Night (Friday, July 1) and three fireworks shows celebrating Independence Day weekend. Check out all the details at www.midlandrockhounds.org.

Leyja unlikely hero for West All-Stars

By Don Doxsie / Special to MLB.com

DAVENPORT, Iowa -- On the face of it, Nino Leyja doesn't really look like All-Star material.

The A's farmhand is hitting .234 for the Burlington Bees, has not homered during the regular season and has committed 18 errors at second base.

But there he was playing in the Midwest League All-Star Game on Tuesday night. And producing.

Leyja slugged a two-run homer in the sixth inning and Western Division pitchers dominated Eastern Division hitters most of the night en route to an 8-3 victory at scenic Modern Woodmen Park.

Leyja was the unlikely winner of the Top Star Award. And while he said it wasn't quite "absolutely amazing, it definitely was gratifying. "It means a lot," he admitted, moments before West Division teammate Mike Walker of the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers mashed a shaving cream pie into his face.

"I just went up there to have some fun," Leyja said of his homer. "It's my first of the year, but it doesn't count [in the stats]."

A 15th-round pick in the 2008 Draft, Leyja has hit only five homers in three-plus Minor League seasons. And he wasn't really trying to hit one when he faced South Bend Silver Hawks southpaw David Holmberg with one out and one on and the West clinging to a 1-0 lead in the sixth.

"Really, there wasn't too much thought at all put into that at-bat," Leyja said. "I don't swing for the fences. I'm not a power hitter."

One thing the West did have was power pitchers. Fourteen hurlers combined for 14 strikeouts, including nine over the first five innings. The West did not encounter any trouble until the seventh.

"I've faced all these pitchers all season, so I knew what we had," said West manager Johnny Rodriguez of the Quad Cities River Bandits. "I knew we had an awful lot of really good pitchers."

"We didn't really talk too much about what we were going to do," added Clinton LumberKings left-hander James Paxton, who fanned two of the three batters he faced in a scoreless third. "We were just all going to go out there and throw our stuff."

The West hit just one ball out of the infield until the fourth, when Timber Rattlers designated hitter Chris Dennis went the opposite way with a pitch from Dayton's Daniel Corcino and deposited it onto the grassy berm beyond the left-field fence to make it 1-0.

The West reserves padded that lead in the sixth as the 175-pound Leyja hammered his two-run shot to almost the same spot as Dennis' blast. Walker singled, advanced when Peoria Chiefs catcher Micah Gibbs was hit by a pitch and scored on a fielder's choice by Quad Cities' Starlin Rodriguez.

The East avoided the shutout in the seventh as Argenis Martinez of the Lake County Captains singled home Michael Crouse of the Lansing Lugnuts, who doubled off the left-field fence. Rymer Liriano of the Fort Wayne TinCaps came home moments later when Leyja, playing the relatively unfamiliar position of third base, booted his slow grounder.

The West responded in the eighth against Bowling Green Hot Rods righty Eliazor Suero. After Walker walked, Gibbs, Rodriguez and Burlington's Douglas Landaeta singled. One out later, Peoria's Elliot Soto delivered a two-run single to make it 8-2.

The West reserves, who entered the game en masse in the sixth, ended up accounting for seven of the team's eight runs.

"I think we all were kind of antsy to get out there and play," Soto said. "When we finally got our chance, we had gotten the jitters out."

The East added a run in the ninth when Liriano singled, stole second and third and scored on a base hit by South Bend's Ender Inciarte.