

Pinch single in bottom of the ninth gives Philadelphia Phillies a 1-0 win over the A's

By Joe Stiglich

Guillermo Moscoso should have been the center of attention Friday night after the A's right-hander tossed the best outing of his major league career.

Instead, all was quiet in the visiting clubhouse at Citizens Bank Park.

The A's lost a 1-0 heartbreaker to open a three-game series against the Philadelphia Phillies, and their offensive ineptitude is looking familiar.

Pinch hitter Ben Francisco chopped a two-out RBI single to left field off A's reliever Brian Fuentes, scoring Shane Victorino with two outs in the bottom of the ninth and sending a crowd of 45,685 into a roar.

"When it's 0-0 like that, it comes down to one hit," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "And they got it."

That hit sealed Oakland's fate and left Fuentes with an ugly 1-8 record. The left-hander leads all American League relievers in losses.

But the bigger concern for the A's is their offensive silence since their six-game winning streak ended Wednesday. They have lost three straight and have scored just three runs over their past 34 innings.

They are seven games behind first-place Texas and face Cole Hamels and Roy Halladay to finish their six-game trip. Both pitchers are 9-3 with a 2.51 ERA.

The A's averaged 4.67 runs during their winning streak. That isn't eye-popping, but they managed to string hits and rallies together.

Now they have reverted to their old ways and didn't advance a runner past second base Friday.

"I couldn't tell you," A's third baseman Scott Sizemore said in explaining the hitting woes. "Everybody goes through highs and lows. We'll pull it together."

Guillermo and Phillies right-hander Vance Worley both took no-hitters into the sixth inning.

Hideki Matsui notched the game's first hit off Worley. With two outs in the top of the sixth, he lined a ball to center that was out of the reach of a diving Victorino and went for a double.

Guillermo lost his no-hit bid in the bottom half, surrendering Placido Polanco's soft single to center with one out.

Guillermo, making just his sixth major league start, gave up two hits over a career-high seven innings. He didn't allow a runner past first base.

Moscoso has been a valuable piece in the rotation since stepping in for the injured Tyson Ross on May 24. He has posted a 2.65 ERA over his six starts.

Brandon McCarthy is on a rehab assignment for a shoulder injury and might return to the rotation soon. Rich Harden, out all year with a side muscle injury, appears close to coming off the disabled list and could join the rotation.

Trevor Cahill and Gio Gonzalez aren't going anywhere, and Josh Outman is making his case to stick. Moscoso is putting a strong foot forward too, with Graham Godfrey currently the fifth starter.

"I'm trying to pitch to stay in the rotation all year," Moscoso said. "Those guys are coming back soon. We'll see what happens."

Fuentes entered to start the bottom of the ninth. He walked Victorino but got Raul Ibañez to fly out. Domic Brown singled to right, and Brian Schneider's grounder moved runners to second and third with two outs.

Sizemore was playing in at third to prevent a bunt single, and Francisco chopped a 2-0 pitch over his head and into left field.

Fuentes said his lopsided record wasn't his main concern.

"It's frustrating to lose, period," he said. "We've been doing more losing than winning, and that's going to be frustrating."

Oakland A's update: Big homecoming for former Philadelphia Phillies fan Andrew Bailey

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

PHILADELPHIA -- The stands will be packed with Andrew Bailey's family and friends this weekend at Citizens Bank Park.

He might be staring down hitters he idolized while growing up in nearby Haddon Heights, N.J.

So when the A's closer says he has to treat this three-game series against the Philadelphia Phillies as if it's just another opponent, that's easier said than done.

"I've got a job to do, and no matter who's in the box, my job is to get them out," Bailey said before Friday's 1-0 A's loss.

This weekend is a homecoming for Bailey, who grew up going to Veterans Stadium with his father, Bill, to root for the Phillies and Eagles.

His favorite team of all?

The 1993 Phillies squad that went 97-65 and advanced to the World Series before losing to the Toronto Blue Jays.

"Joe Carter played a big role in my childhood," Bailey said, "not in a good way. He ruined it, actually."

Bailey rattled off Darren Daulton, Len Dykstra and Mitch Williams among his favorite Phillies as a youngster. While in high school Bailey was a big fan of current Phillies shortstop Jimmy Rollins.

Second baseman Chase Utley was another favorite.

Bailey estimates he'll have a "couple hundred" people at each game this weekend based on the text messages he's received leading up to the series.

The rest of the crowd may not greet him so kindly considering he's wearing an opposing uniform, and Bailey would expect nothing less.

"The fans in Philadelphia are great," he said. "They love you if you're doing good and definitely let you know when you're not."

Center fielder Coco Crisp, nursing a sore heel and other various physical ailments, did not start Friday. A's manager Bob Melvin didn't specify what else was bothering Crisp besides his heel.

"It's important we keep him healthy," Melvin said.

Crisp did enter in the ninth as a defensive replacement.

Ryan Sweeney started in center and made a sliding catch to rob Rollins in the third.

Catcher Kurt Suzuki has endured a miserable month hitting-wise. He had one of the A's two hits Friday but is batting .158 (9 for 57) overall in June.

Chin Music: Will Citizens Bank Park live up to its reputation?

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 6/24/2011 3:55pm

This has been an enjoyable road trip from the standpoint of getting to see different ballparks for the first time. The first thing that comes to mind about Citizens Bank Park, here in Philadelphia, is home runs of course. It has a reputation of being a launching pad because the air is often so warm, and I'm interested to see how well the ball really carries. A regular Phillies

observer told me during batting practice that on particularly cold nights, the wind sometimes blows in and it can be tough clearing the fence. But it was warm today and should be a pleasant night. A's manager Bob Melvin said he doesn't want his pitchers getting too caught up in worrying about home runs. "You keep the ball down, it (is effective) anywhere," Melvin said.

The lineups:

A's – Weeks 2B, Pennington SS, Sweeney CF, Matsui LF, Jackson 1B, DeJesus RF, Suzuki C, Sizemore 3B, Moscoso RHP.

Phillies – Rollins SS, Polanco 3B, Uteley 2B, Howard 1B, Victorino CF, Ibanez LF, Brown RF, Schneider C, Worley RHP.

–Coco Crisp is getting a day off to rest his sore heel and other physical ailments that have accumulated, Melvin said, without specifying what else was bothering Crisp.

–Might Hideki Matsui connect for his 500th professional homer here? He certainly has good memories of Citizens Bank Park. He hit a pinch-hit homer off Brett Myers in Game 3 of the 2009 World Series, on his way to winning MVP honors for the series. Matsui is playing left field tonight and Melvin said he'll also play left on Saturday. But Melvin is undecided about Sunday. Roy Halladay will start Sunday for the Phillies, and though Matsui is hitting just .237 against him, he's hit more homers against Halladay (four) than any other pitcher in his major league career.

A's lose unlikely pitchers' duel to Phillies

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Pitching figured to be the highlight of this series between the Phillies, with the National League's best staff, and the A's, who have the lowest ERA in the American League.

And right from the get-go, the first game of the series was all pitching and defense. Friday night's game was scoreless until, with two outs in the ninth, Ben Francisco provided a two-out, pinch-hit RBI single off Brian Fuentes that bounced over third baseman Scott Sizemore and sent in Shane Victorino from third, giving the Phillies a 1-0 victory at Citizens Bank Park.

"I was in a little more than I would have been because you can't give them any opportunity to bunt," Sizemore said. "It just didn't bounce our way."

"Both teams pitched very well," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "It came down to one hit, and they got it."

Oakland has scored just three runs over the past three games, and Friday's game was reminiscent of the strong pitching performances the A's wasted when the original rotation was still together.

Since then, the team has seen three starters go down. With Brandon McCarthy, Rich Harden and Tyson Ross expected back soon, though, Guillermo Moscoso is pitching to keep his spot - and he helped himself in a big way against the Phillies, a perennial playoff team. Moscoso, changing speeds with his breaking ball and using his changeup effectively, worked seven scoreless innings and gave up just two hits and three walks, lowering his ERA to 2.68.

"I'm trying to push to stay in the rotation," Moscoso said. "Those guys are coming back from the (disabled list) soon, and it will be a tough decision. I want to stick."

Friday's matchup wasn't supposed to be the marquee event, with Phillies rookie right-hander Vance Worley opposing Moscoso; neither started the season in the big leagues, but they had dueling no-hitters through the first five innings.

Oakland's first hit came courtesy of Hideki Matsui, who doubled with two outs in the sixth.

Matsui played well in left field again, making a running catch in the gap in the fifth. The A's got terrific defense from center fielder Ryan Sweeney, who made a diving, backhanded catch to rob Jimmy Rollins of a hit, and shortstop Cliff Pennington, who dived to his left to snare a liner by Rollins.

Phillies first baseman Ryan Howard plunged to his right for a sharp grounder by Jemile Weeks in the sixth, and from the ground, he made a backhand flip to Worley, who hit the bag on a dead run as he caught the ball.

Placido Polanco recorded the Phillies' first hit, a one-out single in the sixth. He entered the game with a lifetime .376 mark against the A's. Francisco is 12-for-19 lifetime against the A's with four RBIs in seven games.

Sonny Gray, A's top pick, throws 132-pitch game

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

The A's top pick in this month's draft, Vanderbilt right-hander **Sonny Gray**, threw 132 pitches in a loss to Florida at the College World Series on Friday - and high pitch counts are often frowned upon by teams that draft collegians.

Oakland wasn't entirely pleased in 2004 when draft pick **Jason Windsor** threw 145 pitches in one Series game for Cal State Fullerton and 322 pitches in the Series; as it turned out, shoulder injuries ended Windsor's career before he could become an established big-leaguer. Another Series Most Outstanding Player whose pro career was shortened after a high college postseason workload: Stanford's **John Hudgins**, who threw 131 pitches in the last of his three Series appearances in 2003.

Oakland's front office was not upset about Gray's long day of work, though. A's assistant general manager **David Forst** said the team likes the way Vanderbilt head coach **Tim Corbin** handles his pitching staff.

"Coach Corbin has done a good job of taking care of his guys all year long, and in this case, they were playing for their lives," Forst said of Friday's elimination game. "So we're not going to second-guess him. He's got a great reputation. I can't fault him for one time."

Gray appeared in two games in Omaha and threw 99 pitches in the first.

Local boy: Closer **Andrew Bailey** is from nearby Voorhees, N.J., and he was expecting about 100 friends and family members at the game. "You'll hear 'em," Bailey said.

Bailey grew up a Phillies fan ("**Joe Carter** ruined my childhood," he said of Toronto's World Series win over Philadelphia), but now he just roots for the city's other three pro teams.

Reliever **Craig Breslow** said Bailey turned into "Mr. Philadelphia" as soon as the team bus arrived. "The metamorphosis happened right away," Breslow said with a smile. "'Bro, Pat's and Geno's' are the only things he's capable of saying."

Briefly: **Brandon McCarthy** is expected to make one more rehab start, at Triple-A Sacramento on Tuesday, before rejoining the rotation next weekend. ... Forst said 2007 draft pick **Sean Doolittle**, a first baseman sidelined by knee trouble much of his career, is about two weeks from baseball activity after missing nearly two months with a sprained wrist.

Leading off

Same old team: The Philadelphia Inquirer compared the current A's to the 1954 Philadelphia A's because they "are dogged by a lack of financial resources, an outmoded stadium, an apathetic fan base, the rise of the NL team that shares their market," among other things.

Drumbeat: A's return to their original city; Coco Crisp gets day off

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Citizens Bank Park 6/24/2011 3:18pm

The A's have returned to Philadelphia, the franchise's first home, for the second time since leaving the town after the 1954 season to go to Kansas City. The storyline here in the Philadelphia papers is that this Oakland A's team is in similar straits to the Philadelphia A's team that left - poor attendance, inadequate stadium, a more popular National League team in the same town, an inability to retain star players.

The 1954 Philadelphia A's were in much worse shape, really: They finished 60 games out. That's right, 60. They won 51 games. Their attendance for the season was just over 300,000. So any comparison is an extreme stretch, really.

The A's have a storied past in Philadelphia, where legendary Connie Mack was their manager for 50 years and where the team won five championships. I'm looking forward to seeing one of the Philadelphia A's most interesting players, tiny left-hander Bobby Shantz - who was the 1952 American League MVP - throw out the first pitch on Sunday.

Here's tonight's lineup: Weeks 2b, Pennington ss, Sweeney cf, Matsui lf, Jackson 1b, DeJesus rf, Suzuki c, Sizemore 3b, Moscoso P.

It's just a day off for Coco Crisp; manager Bob Melvin said he is being "proactive" because the team had some long delays and some long games in New York and Crisp has had a few little nagging things, including a bruised right heel.

Guillermo Moscoso is on the mound, and as I mentioned the other day, he has power from both sides of the plate. He told me that he plans to bat only right-handed today, though - he has better bat control from that side, and he might be called upon to bunt.

Brandon McCarthy is next scheduled to start on Tuesday as his rehab assignment continues; he told me last week that appearance will be with Triple-A Sacramento.

Closer Andrew Bailey is from nearby south New Jersey, and he is expecting 100 family members and friends. "Oh, you'll hear them all right," he said. Bailey was getting lots of grief from the rest of the bullpen for turning very Philly when the team got here. "'Bro, Pat's and Geno's' are the only thing he's capable of saying all of a sudden," reliever Craig Breslow said with a grin. Breslow believes that as a good host, Bailey should provide his teammates of a sampling of Pat's cheesesteaks, and he's disappointed that hasn't happened yet.

In pitchers' duel, A's lose on walk-off hit

Moscoso's solid effort goes unrewarded in shutout loss to Phils

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHILADELPHIA -- Upon release of the 2011 Major League schedule more than nine months ago, intrigue grew out of the possible pitching matchups that could arise at the end of June between the A's and Phillies.

Oakland's youthful trio of Trevor Cahill, Gio Gonzalez and Brett Anderson, it seemed, could potentially find counterparts in the veteran Philadelphia bunch of Roy Halladay, Roy Oswalt, Cliff Lee and Cole Hamels.

So on Friday, when the two teams finally met for the first of a three-game Interleague set, it was seemingly of no surprise that a pitchers' duel quickly formed.

Except it was surprising, as the two hurlers involved weren't of the advertised type. Rather, it was Oakland's Guillermo Moscoso and Philadelphia's Vance Worley -- boasting all of a combined 12 Major League starts -- who engaged in a no-hit battle for five innings.

It meant another close game for the A's, who ultimately came out on the losing end of a 1-0 contest -- their third straight defeat following a season-high six-game winning streak -- courtesy of Ben Francisco's walk-off single against lefty Brian Fuentes in the bottom of the ninth.

It marked Oakland's 27th one-run game of the season and its 17th loss in such contests.

"They're equally frustrating," manager Bob Melvin said. "We just couldn't push anything across."

A scuffling A's offense has scored just three runs in their last 34 innings, while magnifying the pitching staff's mistakes.

Following eight shutout innings from Moscoso and Joey Devine, Fuentes entered the ninth hoping to keep the game knotted. But he issued a leadoff walk to Shane Victorino and one out later, surrendered a single to Domonic Brown. Brian Schneider's ground-ball out to first base advanced the runners for Francisco, whose chopper bounced once before sailing over third baseman Scott Sizemore's head for the game-winner.

"I was in a little more than I normally would have been," Sizemore said. "Given the situation, you can't give him the opportunity to lay down a bunt and win the game that way. You've got to take away one or the other. It just didn't bounce our way tonight. It went over my head, and I couldn't do anything about it."

"That was pretty much it," Fuentes said. "He hit a chopper over our guy's head. Runner scored."

Francisco knew a simple contact approach wasn't going to get the job done.

"You have to try to get a hit there," he said. "Luckily, I got over the head there and we win.",

It wiped away Moscoso's most impressive performance to date in his short starting career -- a sterling effort spanning a career-high seven innings. The righty, who replaced the injured Tyson Ross in the rotation on May 25, surrendered just two hits with three walks and two strikeouts.

"I'm trying to push myself into the rotation to stay all year," Moscoso said. "The guys on the [disabled list] are coming very soon, and that's going to be a tough decision. I wish I can stay here, so we'll see what happens."

The Venezuelan hurler held the Phillies hitless through 5 1/3 innings before Placido Polanco reached on a bloop single to center field. Brown accounted for the only other hit off Moscoso -- a seventh-inning ground-ball single, while Oakland's defense provided more than a couple of gems, including an impressive diving catch in right-center by Ryan Sweeney.

"[Moscoso] used his breaking ball and changeup better than we've seen in the past," Melvin said. "The command of his fastball has always been good on both sides. I've seen him three times now and he's been good every time, but that was really good, especially against a lineup that's heavy with left-handers and especially in this ballpark."

Worley, meanwhile, waited just as long to give up a hit, the first of which came with two outs in the sixth from Hideki Matsui, who notched a line-drive double to center field. But the Phillies right-hander was haunted by a high pitch count and wasn't allowed to go much further, as he exited after six with 105 pitches and four walks attached to his name.

Philadelphia's bullpen trio of David Herndon, Juan Perez and Michael Stutes proceeded to combine for three scoreless frames of one-hit ball against a tranquil A's lineup.

"Everyone goes through highs and lows," Sizemore said. "It just seems like we're struggling as a team right now, but we'll pull it together. Everyone's still battling at-bats, no one's giving at-bats away, so we've just got to keep working and get those clutch hits when we need them."

In a proactive effort to accomplish that, Melvin noted after the loss he'll consider shuffling the lineup for Saturday's matchup against tough southpaw Cole Hamels.

"You'll see a lot of right-handers," he said.

Sweeney gets start in center field over Crisp

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHILADELPHIA -- A's manager Bob Melvin, taking a proactive approach with his players, handed outfielder Coco Crisp a day off on Friday for the club's series opener in Philadelphia, instead giving a start in center field to Ryan Sweeney.

"We had a couple long ones in New York and some late nights and early days," Melvin said. "We're just trying to be proactive, not get it to a point where we have to take him out of the lineup for a reason."

Crisp has endured a handful of minor injuries this season, most recently a bruised heel, and is coming off a 2010 campaign that was interrupted by injury three times.

Even more, the A's took part in a 13-inning affair with the Mets on Saturday that ended past midnight and then took to the field less than 10 hours later for a matinee, only to suffer a rain delay lasting more than two hours.

Crisp, whom Melvin said was available off the bench Friday, is scheduled to return to the lineup Saturday. He had hit third in each of the club's previous five games, going 5-for-20.

Batting third Friday was Sweeney, who entered the game against Phillies right-hander Vance Worley hitting .307 off righties. David DeJesus drew the start in right field.

"I just feel Sweeney is a little more versatile at this point and a little more comfortable in center," Melvin said. "With DeJesus, I'd rather keep him at the corners right now."

Pennington emerging as young leader

PHILADELPHIA -- The sudden sensation that is rookie second baseman Jemile Weeks -- the flash, the flair, the spark he offers -- has been well documented. But the effect he's had on his infield neighbor has gone a bit unnoticed.

In just his second full year in Oakland, shortstop Cliff Pennington has benefited greatly from Weeks' presence by honing his leadership skills.

"As much as Pennington is helping Weeks, Weeks is helping Pennington in the long run," Oakland infield coach Mike Gallego said.

Not that Pennington lacked any leadership skills beforehand. Those have gradually progressed under the watch of not only Gallego, but veteran infielder Mark Ellis, whom Pennington relied upon for almost everything -- understanding the game and the position -- in his initial months in the big leagues.

"You have to be the quarterback of the infield," Pennington said. "I've had to find my own comfort zone out there. I was in Weeks' same position before, and I know it's difficult adjusting up here, especially with the speed of the game being so much quicker. Hopefully I can help him out as much as possible."

Gallego knows he can.

"Cliffy's enjoying himself right now," he said. "I told him, 'Hey, you gotta help this kid out.' And he's taking it to heart. He realizes that at third, he's got [Scott] Sizemore, who hasn't played much there. And then there's Weeks, a rookie. If Penny doesn't calm things down out there when it's needed, if he shows any anxiousness out there, these guys are going to feel that.

"He's a type of guy who is making his teammates better, and you want those types of guys."

Worth noting

- Rehabbing hurler Brandon McCarthy (shoulder) didn't allow an earned run through four innings in his first rehab start with Class A Stockton on Thursday, striking out four and walking none. The A's right-hander is scheduled to make another start on Tuesday, likely at Triple-A Sacramento.
- Entering Friday, the A's had hit one home run or fewer in each of the last 27 games, which is the second-longest streak in Oakland history. The record is 31 games from July 21-August 19, 1978. They have 40 home runs for the season, which is the fewest in the Majors.

Runs likely scarce as Hamels, Cahill square off

By Doug Miller / MLB.com

If you can bank on anything Saturday night at Citizens Bank Park, it's that the Interleague matchup between the A's and Phillies will feature top-quality starting pitching.

The A's 23-year-old right-hander, Trevor Cahill, is building off his Cy Young Award-contending breakout 2010 season with another year to be proud of, and the Phillies' veteran lefty, Cole Hamels, has been one of the best in baseball. This might not mean a lot of runs will be scored Saturday, but it could lead to compelling theater.

For the young A's, playing on the road against a playoff-tested team is a great test, but it's one that manager Bob Melvin said is not worth putting above any other in this long season.

"Any time you play a club like this, it's easy to get up for a team that's been to the postseason so often recently," Melvin said. "We just want to try to play our game, play hard and try to come out with a win. I don't think we put that much pressure on ourselves to say if we don't play well against this team, then we don't measure up, but they're certainly one of the class teams in baseball."

Part of that class is Hamels, who is coming off just his third loss of the year in his last start against Seattle, even though that effort could easily have been a victory. That game, which he lost, 2-0, despite pitching 6 1/3 innings following an early exit in his previous start because of a knot in his back, showed that Hamels is still strong.

And Saturday, he'll be trying to become the first pitcher to reach the 10-win mark this season.

"What can you say?" Phillies catcher Brian Schneider said. "I mean, he's been big for us. He showed toward the second half of last year what kind of pitcher he can be and he's picked it up this year. To have that in our rotation is a big surprise, not to us, but just by the way he's been doing it night after night."

A's: Cahill back on the beam

- Cahill is one of several Oakland players who has said he's fed off of the energy that Melvin has brought since taking over for Bob Geren. And in his last start, Cahill beat the cross-town rival Giants to sweep the three-game Bay Bridge Series over the defending World Series champions.

It came at a good time, too, because after starting the season 6-0 with a 1.72 ERA, the former All-Star had dropped his last five decisions. Undaunted, Cahill pitched eight innings of one-run ball on five hits for his first quality start since May 25.

"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."

- The A's have hit one home run or fewer in each of the last 28 games, which is the second-longest such streak in Oakland history. The record is 31 games from July 21-Aug. 19, 1978. The A's have 40 home runs, which is the fewest in the Major Leagues, and are on pace to hit 84. The Oakland record for fewest homers in a season is 94 in 1968.
- Outfielder Coco Crisp will return to the lineup Saturday after receiving a day off Friday. Also, Hideki Matsui is expected to draw another start in left field, marking his fourth outfield start of the season.

Phillies: Bastardo continues to dominate

- The Phils have found a burgeoning star in left-handed reliever Antonio Bastardo, who ranks first in the National League in opponents average (.120) and second in ERA (0.96). He has made 12 straight scoreless appearances (10 innings) and has allowed one hit in 30 at-bats (.033 average) in that span. His last run allowed came May 25 vs. Cincinnati. Bastardo has posted a 0.56 ERA (one earned run in 16 innings) over his last 19 appearances and has allowed runs in only three of his 31 appearances this season.
- Outfielder Domonic Brown has been the definition of the word streaky. He began the season 1-for-14 (.071) overall before hitting .406 (13-32) over a 10-game span from May 26-June 5. He was 5-for-47 (.106) since those 10 games until he went 2-for-2 with two walks Friday night.
- First baseman Ryan Howard's streak of reaching base in 19 straight Interleague games ended Friday, but he remains tied with Alex Rodriguez of the Yankees for the most homers (27) among all Major Leaguers in Interleague games over the last six seasons (2006-11).

Worth noting

- The A's have committed one or more errors in 12 of their past 14 games (16 errors total) and have a Major League-leading 61 errors. The miscues have led to 42 unearned runs, which is tied with Houston for the most in the Majors.
- At 14-8 this June, the Phillies have guaranteed their first June record above .500 since 2007, when they finished 15-13 (.536). Last June, they were 13-13 (.500), after going 11-15 (.423) in '09 and 12-14 (.462) in '08.

Phils beat A's, 1-0

ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHILADELPHIA — Pinch-hitter Ben Francisco's RBI single with two outs in the bottom of the ninth lifted the Philadelphia Phillies to a 1-0 victory over the Oakland Athletics on Friday night.

In a game in which rookie starters Vance Worley and Guillermo Moscoso took no-hitters into the sixth, neither team got a runner to third until the ninth.

Shane Victorino walked to start the inning against Brian Fuentes (1-8). He went to second on Domonic Brown's one-out single to right. Both runners advanced on Brian Schneider's grounder to first. Francisco then hit a high bouncer over third baseman Scott Sizemore's head to drive in Victorino.

Michael Stutes (3-0) pitched a perfect ninth to get the win for the major league-leading Phillies (48-29). Four pitchers combined on the two-hitter.

Philadelphia's Worley allowed one hit and walked four in six innings, tying for the longest of his eight career starts.

Moscoso gave up two hits and walked three in a career-high seven innings.

Hideki Matsui lined a double to left-center with two outs in the sixth for the first hit of the game. Victorino made a diving attempt for the ball, but it was way out of his reach.

A disappointed Worley slumped off the mound as fans gave him a nice ovation.

Placido Polanco lined a single to center for Philadelphia's first hit with one out in the bottom half.

The last time both starting pitchers took a no-hitter into the sixth inning of the same game was June 13, 2010, according to STATS, LLC. Chicago Cubs lefty Ted Lilly lost his no-hitter in the ninth and White Sox righty Gavin Floyd lost his bid in the seventh.

The Phillies helped Worley with two outstanding defensive plays in the fifth. Kurt Suzuki led off with a slow bouncer to third. Polanco charged hard, barehanded the ball and just beat Suzuki with a strong, off-balance throw.

With two outs and a runner on second, first baseman Ryan Howard made a diving stop going to his right on a hard grounder by Jemile Weeks. His toss to first was wide, but Worley made the grab and kept his foot on the base.

Moscoso got help in the third from center fielder Ryan Sweeney, who robbed Jimmy Rollins of extra bases with a diving grab on a drive to right-center.

This was the A's first visit to Philadelphia since playing at Veterans Stadium in 2003.

The teams have split 10 meetings.

The A's — not the Phillies — are the most successful baseball team to play in Philadelphia. They spent 54 seasons here from 1901-54 before moving to Kansas City, and won five World Series titles in that span. The Phillies have won just two World Series championships in their first 128 seasons.

NOTES: The Phillies clinched their first winning June since 2007, the year they won the first of four straight NL East titles. ... A crowd of 45,685 was the 177th consecutive sellout at Citizens Bank Park, including postseason play. ... The Mariners are the only team that hasn't played in the Phillies' 8-year-old ballpark. ... Phillies manager Charlie Manuel flip-flopped Polanco and Victorino in the Nos. 2 and 5 spots.

Polanco didn't hit well behind Howard, so he's back in his familiar two-spot in the lineup. He was 1 for 19 before his single in the sixth. ... The A's have hit one home run or fewer in each of the last 28 games, which is the second-longest streak in team history. The record is 31 games from July 21-August 19, 1978. They have 40 home runs for the season, which is the fewest in the majors.

South Jersey native Andrew Bailey returns to area with Oakland A's

By Matt Chando/South Jersey Newspapers

PHILADELPHIA — Joe Carter broke 9-year-old Andrew Bailey's heart.

Now, the Oakland Athletics closer is looking to break some Philadelphia fans hearts of his own.

"I think being able to have people that supported me all my life be able to come watch me play, guys that I played Little League with, that's the most special thing for me this weekend," Bailey said. "You know how it is, growing up a Phillies fan. You live and die with them and wanting to play for the Phillies, but the ultimate goal is to play big-league baseball.

"I think once you're in the clubhouse, you see that lineups and teams change all the time. So it's just being in the clubhouse, and it's another big-league team you have to pitch against."

The Haddon Heights native and Paul VI High School product has had plenty of bright spots in his first two seasons as a major leaguer.

There was the 2009 Rookie of the Year award; the consecutive all-star game selections in his first two seasons; the 51 career saves over two seasons; the sub-2.00 career ERA (1.67).

But the Oakland closer got to fulfill another, albeit completely different, lifelong dream Friday night at Citizens Bank Park — to play against his hometown team, in his hometown ballpark, in front all his friends and family.

“It’s definitely exciting to be here, to play against the Phillies,” Bailey said. “We came down from (playing the) Mets yesterday and driving through Cherry Hill, off (New Jersey Turnpike) Exit 4 was surreal, being on a big-league bus and going to a big-league hotel.

“I think everybody knows who the Phillies are now. Growing up they weren’t a great team, especially through the late ‘90s. But their success over the last couple years garnered a lot of attention among all major leaguers. Growing up here doesn’t make me more (attuned) to their success, because I think all big leaguers know who the Phillies are.”

Bailey, who did not enter Friday’s game, will have plenty of support in the stands this weekend. His mom, dad, cousins, grandmother, wife and large contingent of friends from Paul VI and Haddon Heights were and are planning to be in attendance. He stayed at his parents’ house in Cherry Hill Friday night and will host a brunch for family and friends this morning.

But this time last month, Bailey’s triumphant homecoming was in doubt to say the least.

In fact, the 2011 season couldn’t have started much worse. The Athletics’ closer doubled over in pain, clutched his pitching arm and let out a loud scream during a March exhibition game against the Indians. A visit to world-renowned Dr. James Andrews elicited a sigh of relief — just a strained right forearm, no damage to the right elbow that required Tommy John surgery while at Wagner College.

Eight and a half weeks on the DL and four rehab outings later, Bailey was back in the majors May 29.

He’s made six appearances since his return from the DL, but never on consecutive days. Heading into Friday’s game, he’s converted four consecutive saves after blowing his first opportunity of the season June 4 at Boston. His ERA sits at 1.13 and he’s averaged a strikeout per inning. Leadoff batters are 0-for-8 against him.

A return to his spot as one of the American League’s most dominating closers was seemingly cemented after converting saves on back-to-back days against the Giants June 17-18. Clearing that last hurdle was the final indication the third-year pro needed that he’s back to normal.

"You want to be pitching with no thoughts of any injuries," Bailey said. "And having a couple injuries so far (in my career), you know you have to trust the rehab and trust the trainers and your body will take care of itself. I'm going out there right now with no thoughts about being injured.

"I think I'll back-to-back a couple more times before I go three days in a row. But right now I feel great."

And now, that long road back has earned him another signature big-league moment.

"Going into the rehab, I knew what it would take and I knew it'd be 8-10 weeks, and I'd be lying if I didn't say I looked at the schedule and felt relieved that I'd be back for this," Bailey said. "That's how strongly I feel about having people around me come to see me play."

Breslow has clearly arrived on major league level

William S. Paxton, Connecticut Post

NEW YORK -- By Yale standards, graduate Craig Breslow reaching a million-dollar salary at age 30 might make him an underachiever.

But by major league baseball standards, it means the southpaw from Trumbull has arrived.

In his third season in Oakland, Breslow has become a reliable, steady contributor in the A's bullpen -- and one worthy of a one-year, \$1.4 million contract, which he signed in the off-season.

"Yeah, I caught up to my classmates," Breslow said with a grin this week inside the visitor's clubhouse at Citi Field. "I don't think there's anybody in here (A's locker room) that will tell you they're motivated by money, but obviously it's a nice reward.

"It's more a testimony to accomplishment than it is a blanket price tag that's attached to the service."

After breaking into the major leagues with the San Diego Padres and making stops in Boston, Cleveland and Minnesota, Breslow has settled into his middle relief role with the A's.

"I like to think I can make myself comfortable anywhere," said Breslow, who was drafted back in 2002 by the Milwaukee Brewers in the 26th round. "I understand coming up in Boston, it's a hard place to establish yourself. You're not given the leash like you would be here. † I'm really comfortable in Oakland. I think it's a mutual relationship."

Offered an opportunity after being waived by the Twins in May 2009, Breslow has thrived with the A's working as a lefty specialist, setup man and even a closer at times.

Through Wednesday, he has appeared in 167 games with an 11-11 record, five saves and a 2.96 ERA in Oakland.

This season, both Breslow and the A's got off to a rough start, though things have begun to turn around for both of them.

"I started throwing a little bit later, took a little more time off," said Breslow, who was further set back during spring training with a pulled hamstring. "In retrospect, maybe it wasn't the greatest idea. I was a little behind coming out of spring. I've been for whatever reason traditionally a slow starter and kind of catch my wind late May, early June, which is kind of what's going on again this year.

"If I had it to do over again, I'd probably keep the same offseason as opposed to alternating my schedule and trying to throw later."

In April, Breslow went 0-1 with a 4.00 ERA in 11 games. In his last 10 outings, though, he has a 2.08 ERA.

However, he has struggled to get lefties out, allowing them to hit at a .404 clip while right-handers have hit just .230 through Wednesday's games.

The A's also have improved since making a managerial change during a 10-game skid, which cost Bob Geren his job after nine straight losses. Under interim skipper Bob Melvin, the team is 7-6 and had won six straight before falling to the Mets 3-2 in 13 innings Wednesday night.

"Things are definitely on the positive swing right now and there's a fresh perspective in the clubhouse, more energy, and guys are a little more motivated now," Breslow said. "It's definitely a good situation."

Breslow refused to blame Geren for the team's struggles, but said when the team hit rock-bottom, a fresh start was needed.

"When things are going bad, you need something to change and that was kind of the most obvious position because you can't replace 25 guys," he said. "I don't think it's my job to say if it was necessary or not. Our front office decided it was necessary, but I think right now the results have spoken for themselves."

Breslow believes his results, not just this season but throughout his career, will continue to open doors for the veteran down the road.

"In my role two, three years in one organization is typically what you can expect, but there's no reason why I can't stay here for a long time," said Breslow, who could be a target for contending teams before the trade deadline looking to add a left-hander.

"I like it here. I'm comfortable here and I think the results have spoken for themselves. If I end up somewhere else because of a need (I would go, too)." Entering his 10th year of professional baseball and sixth season with a major league club, Breslow realizes expectations of him have changed.

"I guess expectations are a little more," he said. "I'm not the young guy trying to make a name for myself. I'm expected to get guys out pretty consistently. I still feel young. I still try to keep myself in as great a shape as possible, and I take a lot of pride in being able to throw frequently, regularly."

He also loves to keep playing the game.

"As long as I wake up and I think about going to the field and that's what I want to do, then that's what I'm going to do, as long as someone allows me," he said.

Fuentes on pace for 17 losses this year after latest gaffes lead to 1-0 defeat

Sam McPherson, examiner.com

Brian Fuentes has been a one-man wrecking crew for the Oakland Athletics this year.

And not in a good way.

The \$5M free-agent bullpen acquisition lost his eighth game of the season Friday night, as the A's dropped a 1-0 decision on the road to the Philadelphia Phillies.

Fuentes entered in the ninth inning, and he promptly walked the leadoff batter who promptly scored a few batters later after the A's lefty gave up two hits.

And with that, Oakland now has a three-game losing streak, two of those losses courtesy of a leaky bullpen that doesn't seem to be getting any better with the return of Andrew Bailey or the guidance of new manager Bob Melvin.

The A's bullpen -- led by Fuentes, who is now on pace to lose a shocking 17 games this year as a reliever -- also has an American League-worst 16 losses on the year.

Which is absolutely stunning, of course.

And yet the bullpen issues wouldn't be that much of a problem if the A's offense could just score a few more runs.

Oakland had a mere two hits against the Phillies on Friday night: one hit off starter Vance Worley in the first six innings and one hit off three relievers combined in the final three innings.

Bullpen issues aside -- and many of these issues come from the zero relief the offense provides the pitching staff on most days -- the A's offense has to carry a lot of the blame.

So, it's the same ol' story for Oakland again: no offense puts a lot of pressure on the pitching staff, which loses another close game because it's not perfect.

Fuentes is an easy target for derision with his eight losses, and perhaps that's justified in most cases -- including Friday night's loss. You just can't come in to a tie game on the road and walk the leadoff batter.

But the pressure to be perfect can get to anyone, and the A's bullpen has certainly not handled that pressure well. It's not to say everyone else could -- or anyone else should.

Yet when the season is over later this year, and the Oakland organization looks back at what could have been, they'll see a terrible offense, a terrible defense and a pretty good pitching staff that simply buckled too often under repeatedly unfair circumstances.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

River Cats return to Raley Field with victory

By Max Lush / Sacramento River Cats

One swing of the bat changed the entire game Friday night at Kino Veterans Memorial Stadium in Tucson, as the River Cats squeaked by the Tucson Padres 8-7.

With the bases loaded in the third inning, Kevin Kouzmanoff got all of a 1-1 pitch, delivering a one-out grand slam over the center field fence. The third inning would prove to be the difference for Sacramento, sending 12 batters to the plate, seven of which would score.

The River Cats recorded seven hits, four for extra bases, and four walks in the inning. All three outfielders hit for extra bases: Matt Carson followed Kouzmanoff's slam with a double on the next pitch, Michael Taylor doubled off the wall in the center, and Jai Miller tripled off the wall in center.

The big inning has been fleeting for the River Cats lately. The club had failed to plate five or more runs in an inning since June 14 at Salt Lake when they had a six-run second inning.

The River Cats had 10 hits on the night. They recorded 10 or more hits in three of the four games played in Tucson.

Before the third-inning outburst, catcher Josh Donaldson followed a 12-minute delay for mud on the field with a one-out home run to center in the first. The Padres answered in the second inning with a leadoff home run from first baseman Matt Clark. Padres' second baseman Jarrett Hoffpauir later doubled in a second run in the inning.

Former River Cat Steve Tolleson got one run back for the Padres in the bottom of the third, doubling in a run off the wall in left field.

Kouzmanoff continued to hit the ball hard for the River Cats, doubling to left in the fourth and singling in the ninth. The third baseman went 3-for-4 on the night. He has 14 hits for Sacramento this season, 10 for extra bases.

Sacramento starter Carlos Hernandez followed his terrific 8.0-inning outing last week by throwing a solid five-plus innings Friday night. The left-hander allowed three runs on seven hits and a walk while striking out four.

The bullpen shut down the Padres for 3.0 innings as Justin Souza entered in relief to throw 2.0 innings, allowing two hits and striking out one batter. Trystan Magnuson pitched a scoreless eighth. The ninth inning was a different story for the normally stingy Magnuson. The right-hander gave up four runs on four hits before being replaced by Fernando Cabrera with two outs. Cabrera got the last out of the game on a fly ball to the warning track in left field. Cabrera earned his second save of the season.

One run has decided the last five River Cat wins, dating back to June 17 against Fresno.

The River Cats have ridden a balanced attack, solid starting pitching and a lights out bullpen to the best road record in all of baseball at 26-10, a half-game better than the San Jose Giants (the San Francisco Giants' single-A affiliate). Sacramento won its sixth road series of the year. They have yet to drop a series on the road; they have split three.

The River Cats return to Raley Field on Saturday to take on the Reno Aces. Sacramento right-hander Rich Harden (0-0, 0.00) will throw against Reno right-hander Gaby Hernandez (2-0, 3.75) at 7:05 p.m.

RockHounds get the hits, but not the runs in loss

Staff Reports, Midland Reporter-Telegram

SAN ANTONIO -- The Midland RockHounds got more hits against San Antonio, but couldn't push a run across in a 2-0 loss to the Missions Friday night at Nelson Wolff Stadium.

The RockHounds out-hit San Antonio, 7-4, and had a strong pitching performances from Jason Bergmann (0-4) and Fabian Williamson in the loss. Bergmann went 5 1/3 innings and allowed one run on four hits. Williamson allowed one run on no hits in 2 2/3 innings.

James Darnell had an RBI single in the sixth inning to give San Antonio a 1-0 lead. Then the Missions added an insurance run in the eighth when they took advantage of two walks and wild pitch, which allowed Daniel Robertson to score from third base.

The rest was left up to the Missions pitching staff as four pitchers combined on the shutout. Juan Oramas (3-0) got the win after scattering five hits over six innings. Brad Brach picked up his 20th save of the season.

The RockHounds and Missions meet in the second game of a four-game series at Nelson Wolff Stadium at 7:05 p.m. today.

Ports Stomp Giants 8-5 To Win 10th Straight

SAN JOSE, Calif. - After dropping 11 straight games to the San Jose Giants in the first half of the season, the Stockton Ports have won back-to-back games over their North Division rivals to open the second half. The Ports used terrific starting pitching and plenty of offense to earn their 10th straight victory, beating the Giants by a final of 8-5.

The game began as a pitcher's duel between starter's Murphy Smith (3-6) and Andy Reichard (4-1). Stockton, though, would break the ice in the 4th with a leadoff home run from Michael Gilmartin, his sixth home run of the season to give the Ports a 1-0 lead.

Stockton scored a second run in the 5th on a sac-fly from Mitch LeVier to take a 2-0 advantage.

Smith, Stockton's starter, got off to a tremendous start as he retired 14 of the first 15 batters he faced to start his outing, including 12 in a row after a two-out single from Ryan Cavan in the 1st. With two outs in the 5th, Smith walked Alex Burg. After Burg stole second, Wendell Fairley drove him in with a single to left-center to put the Giants on the board. Fairley would then steal second and score on an ensuing single from James Simmons to tie the game at 2-2.

Smith would finish the 5th inning and, with the Ports taking the lead in the 6th, would receive the win after one of his strongest starts of the season. Smith went five innings and allowed two runs on three hits while striking out three.

In the 6th, Stockton grabbed the lead and chased Reichard from the game. The inning began with back-to-back doubles from Myrio Richard and Gilmartin that put the Ports back in front 3-2. Two batters later, Ryan Ortiz laced an RBI single to left that scored Gilmartin and knocked Reichard from the game.

Chuck Lofgren came in from the bullpen and gave up an RBI double to Anthony Aliotti that made it a 5-2 game. Lofgren would get through the rest of the 6th without allowing a run of his own.

Reichard would take the loss, going 5.1 innings and allowing five runs on seven hits while striking out three.

The Ports broke it wide open in the 7th against Giants reliever Jose Valdez. With two down and the bases empty, Gilmartin singled to right and scored on an ensuing double from Michael Choice to make it 6-2. Ortiz followed with a towering home run to left that gave Stockton an 8-2 advantage.

Valdez pitched just the one inning and allowed three runs on three hits.

Stockton would survive some shaky defense down the stretch. In the 6th inning, Mike Benacka came on to pitch and worked around a fielding error made by shortstop Dusty Coleman.

After A.J. Huttenlocker tossed a scoreless 7th, Chris Mederos started the 8th. Bobby Haney reached to start the inning on an infield single, a play originally scored a throwing error on Coleman but changed after the game. Ryan Cavan drove him home with a double down the left field line to make it 8-3. Cavan would steal third and score on a groundout from Jarrett Parker to cut the Giants deficit to 8-4. Two batters later, with two down, Jose Flores doubled to right-center followed by a walk drawn by Burg to knock Mederos from the game.

Andrew Carignan (SV, 3), with two on and two out, got Fairley to hit a weak ground ball deep in the hole to short. Coleman fielded the ball and his throw to first was wide, a play that was ruled a hit and a throwing error that allowed Flores to score and make it an 8-5 game. Carignan, however, would strike out Simmons to end the frame and escape further trouble.

Mederos would allow three runs (two earned) in two-thirds of an inning.

Carignan came back out for the 9th and set the side down in order, striking out two batters and getting Cavan looking to end the ballgame.

Gilmartin, who went 3-for-5 with 2 RBI and three runs scored, fell a triple shy of what would've been the second Ports cycle of the season. Ortiz went 2-for-4 and drove in a team-high three runs.

The Ports will look to make it 11 straight wins when they take the field on Saturday at Municipal Stadium. Right-hander A.J. Griffin (2-2, 2.93 ERA) will head to the hill for Stockton, opposed by left-hander Kelvin Marte (5-4, 2.93 ERA) for San Jose. First pitch is set for 6 p.m. PDT.

LumberKings Club Their Way to First Win of 2nd Half

By Jon Versteeg, Burlington Bees

CLINTON, IA - The Clinton LumberKings (1-0) scored four runs in the eighth inning to earn a 5-4 win over the Burlington Bees (0-1) at Alliant Energy Field on Friday night.

The LumberKings scored a single run in the second inning when 2B Jetsy Extrano (1-4) hit a solo home run over the left field wall against Burlington RHP Sean Murphy for a 1-0 lead.

The Bees tied the game in the third inning. 2B Nino Leyja (0-4) reached base on a fielder's choice and 3B Tony Thompson (2-4) hit a ground ball to Clinton SS Anthony Phillips, who threw errantly to first base. Leyja, who advanced to second base on the single by Thompson, came in to score on the throwing error by Phillips for a 1-1 tied score.

Burlington took the lead in the fifth inning. CF Tyreace House (0-3) reached base on a fielder's choice and RF Royce Consigli (4-5) lined a double to center field. House scored all the way from first base for a 2-1 lead.

Consigli added an RBI double in the seventh inning to score SS Yordy Cabrera (1-4), who led off the inning with a double.

Murphy pitched five innings and allowed one run on four hits. He struck out six in a no decision. Pedro Vidal (5-2) struck out seven of the first nine hitters he faced before Clinton 3B Matt Browning reached base on an error. The next four hitters reached base as the LumberKings scored four runs to take a 5-3 lead.

Murphy, Vidal and Daniel Tenholder, who logged one-third of an inning of work, combined for 14 strikeouts.

Consigli hit an RBI double in the ninth inning to get the Bees within one run at 5-4. He drove in three of the four Burlington runs.

BEES BUZZINGS: The Bees added RHP Drew Tyson from SS-A Vermont before the game and placed RHP Matthew Thomson on the Disabled List retroactive to June 21.

The Bees and LumberKings continue their series on Saturday night at 6:00 p.m. RHP Nate Long (4-1, 2.45)/LHP Max Peterson (0-0, 0.00) will pitch for Burlington while RHP George Mieses (1-8, 6.03) gets the start for Clinton.

Homers Lead To 4-2 Vermont Win Friday

By Paul Stanfield / Vermont Lake Monsters

BURLINGTON, VT --- Home runs from Jordan Tripp and Diomedes Lopez along with six errors by the Connecticut defense helped lead the Vermont Lake Monsters to a 4-2 victory over the Tigers in New York-Penn League action Friday night at historic Centennial Field.

Tripp got the Lake Monsters on the scoreboard in the bottom of the first inning with a two-out, two-run homer to leftcenter field. It was Tripp's first home run of the season and also the 500th homer all-time for a Vermont player in the team's 18-year history.

The Tigers were able to tie the game in the fourth as Vermont starter Argenis Paez loaded the bases with two outs with a walk, hit batter and walk. Les Smith then tied the game at two with a two-run double to leftcenter.

After the Tripp home run in the first, the only Lake Monster batters to reach base through the sixth inning were on three walks and three errors before a Sean Jamieson one-out single in the seventh. Jamieson moved to second on a wild pitch and then to third on a throwing error by shortstop Jonathan Ogden. Chih-Fang Pan followed with a flyball to left that was dropped by Smith for an error, but Pan was still credited with a sacrifice fly as Jamieson scored with the tie-breaking run.

As he did on Monday in Vermont's 8-6 win in its home opener, Lopez gave the Lake Monsters an insurance run in the eighth with a solo home run for a two-run lead. Lopez lined a 1-0 pitch from reliever Fernando Celis off the leftfield foul pole for his second home run of the year.

After Vermont (5-2) took the lead in the seventh, reliever Tanner Peters came on to retire all six batters he faced including five by strikeout for his first save of the season. Paez allowed two runs on five hits over 4 2/3 innings, while Drew Bailey (1-0) tossed 2 1/3 hitless innings with one walk and four strikeouts for the win.

Tiger starter Wilsen Palacios was charged with two runs on three hits over four innings, while Ryan Woolley (0-1) gave up the unearned run in the seventh for his first loss for Connecticut (3-4).

The Lake Monsters will wrap up their five-game homestand on Saturday as they once again host Connecticut beginning at 6:05 pm. It is TD Bank Night at Centennial with right-hander J.C. Menna scheduled to start for Vermont.