

Oakland A's can't break through against Arizona Diamondbacks, Joe Saunders

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

Joe Saunders may have changed uniforms and leagues, but he still holds a firm leash on the A's.

The veteran left-hander, who routinely shut down Oakland as a member of the Los Angeles Angels before being traded to Arizona in July last season, reacquainted himself with his favorite whipping boys in a 4-2 Diamondbacks win Saturday night.

It was fireworks night for an unusually large crowd of 30,338 at O.co Coliseum, but the A's didn't generate much spark much against Saunders, who pitched seven scoreless innings to open the game before the A's finally chased him with a two-run rally in the eighth.

But it was too little, too late against Arizona, which jumped out to a 4-0 lead on the strength of Chris Young's three-hit night, which accounted for all of the visitors' runs. Young had a run-scoring single in the first, an RBI double in the third and a two-run homer in the fifth, all against Oakland starter and loser Josh Outman (3-3).

The real story, however, was Saunders (5-7). He upped his career record to 12-4 against the A's, quite impressive for a pitcher with just 62 career victories. For his part, he hopes Oakland never moves to a new park, because he relishes pitching in this one.

"Even at the start of my career, it fit my eye nice," he said. "There's a lot of foul ground, and it's definitely a pitcher's park. I don't know what it is about this place, but I love pitching here."

Before he was traded to Arizona in 2010, Saunders pitched back-to-back complete-game victories against the A's in which he allowed just one run total. He appeared to be heading toward a third straight route-going performance until he ran out of gas starting the eighth inning. He allowed a walk and a single to open the inning, and Scott Sizemore and Hideki Matsui drove in runs against reliever Yhency Brazoban. But that's all Oakland got, and David Hernandez saved it with a 1-2-3 ninth.

A's manager Bob Melvin was well aware of Saunders' abilities from his managing days in Seattle.

"He did what he does when he's pitching well -- he throws all his pitches, and he works both sides of the plate," Melvin said.

The same couldn't be said of Outman, who lost his second straight start, giving up seven hits and three walks over six innings.

"I got beat on some pitches where I just wasn't thinking," said Outman. "I didn't throw the ball very well at all. The leadoff walk, the two-out walk, pick and choose which one. Anytime you walk hitters, bad things happen. They always bite you."

With the A's weighing the strengths and weaknesses of their current six-man rotation (pending Brandon McCarthy's return Monday), it remains to be seen if Outman stays in the mix long-term.

"It just wasn't the kind of performance I expect out of myself," he said. "I'm better than a .500 pitcher."

Oakland A's update: Outfielder Josh Willingham is still ailing, will not come off disabled list Sunday

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

Josh Willingham is eligible to come off the 15-day disabled list Sunday, but that's not going to happen.

The outfielder's left Achilles tendon strain is still troubling him after he made rehab starts with Triple-A Sacramento on Thursday and Friday.

"It's not progressing the way I thought it would," he said Saturday night. "It was sore after I played in the two games and a bit tight during the games. I'm pretty bummed out about it."

Willingham isn't sure when he'll be able to return because he thought he'd be ready by now.

"Hopefully before the All-Star break sometime, but if I need more time, I guess I'll take it," he said.

The All-Star Game is July 12 in Phoenix.

Willingham didn't even play in the outfield in his two rehab starts, getting all of his at-bats as a designated hitter. He was 1-for-5 with a home run and two RBIs.

Once his injury is healed, he believes he can get back in the swing of it quickly because he can continue to take batting practice.

"It only affects me when I'm running, not when I'm hitting," he said. "I'll just try to stay sharp in that area and try to get better running."

One of the players adversely affected by the A's managerial change has been outfielder David DeJesus. In the first 16 games under Bob Melvin, DeJesus did not play at all and in four other games was limited to pinch-hitting or pinch-running duties.

Not coincidentally, DeJesus languished through one of the worst offensive months of his major league career during June. He hit just .148 (8 for 54) and didn't drive in a single run. He had just one extra-base hit, a double on the first day of the month.

But Melvin has recommitted to DeJesus by starting him, banking that his offensive track record can provide additional punch to Oakland's anemic lineup.

"In a situation like we are offensively, you need a guy like that to be productive," Melvin said. "So it's my job to give him some time and consistent at-bats to work through it."

DeJesus made his fifth consecutive start Saturday against Arizona after collecting two hits in consecutive games.

"I would certainly like him to continue this type of thing where I didn't have to worry about right field, that's his spot," Melvin said.

Cliff Pennington got the day off and Adam Rosales started at shortstop.

Chin Music: Willingham to remain on DL, possibly through the break

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune, 7/2/2011 5:32pm

In for Joe Stiglich tonight ...

Josh Willingham is eligible to come off the disabled list Sunday, but that's not going to happen because the outfielder's left Achilles tendinitis is still troubling him after he made two rehab starts with Triple-A Sacramento Thursday and Friday.

"It's not progressing the way I thought it would," he said Saturday night. "It was sore after I played in the two games and a bit tight during the games. I'm pretty bummed out about it."

Willingham, who was placed on the 15-day DL June 23 retroactive to June 18, isn't sure when he'll be able to return because he thought he'd be ready by now.

"Hopefully before the All-Star break sometime, but if I need more time, I guess I'll take it," he said, adding that he believed if he rests through the break, he'll almost certainly be ready coming out of it.

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DeJesus made his fifth straight start after collecting two hits in consecutive games. Heading into tonight's game, he has reached base in seven consecutive plate appearances (four hits, three walks).

"I would certainly like him to continue this type of thing where I didn't have to worry about right field, that's his spot," the manager said.

Tonight's lineups:

OAK: 2B Weeks, 3B Sizemore, CF Crisp, DH Matsui, 1B Carter, LF Jackson, C Suzuki, RF DeJesus, SS Rosales. P Outman

AZ: SS Bloomquist, 2B Johnson, RF Upton, CF Young, DH Pena, C Montero, 1B Nady, 3B Roberts, LF Parra. P Saunders

A's shut down by D'backs' Joe Saunders, lose 4-2

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

When the A's don't get excellent work on the mound, they don't have much of a fighting chance.

A pitcher's so-so outing can be a killer, because the team's offense is just not that impressive. Saturday evening at the Coliseum, starter Josh Outman made a few mistakes, and that was enough for Arizona to come away with a 4-2 victory.

"If I throw better, we're that much closer," Outman said, disgust in his voice. "I'm not happy with my performance."

Outman allowed singles to three of the first four batters he faced, and the last of those, Chris Young's single to right, scored Willie Bloomquist from second base. A good throw probably would have gotten Bloomquist, but David DeJesus' throw was several feet up the first-base line and catcher Kurt Suzuki couldn't get back to put the tag down in time.

In the third, Outman walked leadoff batter Kelly Johnson, and he scored on a one-out double into the corner by Young. It was just the second time this season that Outman had walked a left-handed hitter.

Another walk, this one with two outs in the fifth, really hurt Outman. He put Justin Upton aboard, and Young walloped a homer to left on the next pitch.

"I fell behind too many guys," Outman said. "I just wasn't thinking. ... Two-out walk, leadoff walk, pick and choose which one is worse. Any time you issue free passes, it's a bad thing."

Manager Bob Melvin said he'll announce today whether Outman (3-3) will make another start before the All-Star break or if he'll be the man to come out of the current six-man rotation.

"I enjoy every start I make up here," Outman said. "I hope I can stick, but it's been a long time since I lost two in a row. And that's not the performance I expect from myself. I'm not a .500 pitcher."

Oakland's good talking points Saturday: nice defense, especially a 3-6-1 double play in the fourth started by Chris Carter with a strong throw to second base, and a diving catch in left center by Conor Jackson in the seventh. Carter had his first multi-hit game of the season. He'll be the designated hitter today, and Hideki Matsui will be in left.

Also: Fautino De Los Santos, called up one day earlier, worked two hitless innings, struck out four and walked one.

The A's had runners in every inning but two, but they didn't get a man past second base until the eighth.

The A's runs came in the eighth, when Adam Rosales led off with a walk and went to second on a hit by Jemile Weeks. A strange balk by reliever Yhency Brazoban, who dropped the ball, moved the runners up, and Rosales scored on a groundout by Scott Sizemore. Matsui sent in Weeks with a two-out single to right.

Arizona left-hander Joe Saunders, a former member of the Angels rotation, improved to 12-4 lifetime against Oakland.

Josh Willingham's return to A's delayed

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

-- **Josh Willingham's** Achilles tendinitis is still biting him, and the A's outfielder will not come off the disabled list today, as had been planned.

In fact, Willingham told The Chronicle, he is likely to be out of action through the All-Star break.

"I'm bummed out," he said. "It's just very, very nagging."

Willingham, who leads the team in RBIs despite missing more than two weeks, said there is no exact timetable for his return. After he played in two rehab games for Triple-A Sacramento, the discomfort cropped up again. Asked what causes him trouble in particular, Willingham said "activity."

If he had to, Willingham said, he could play on sort of a day-to-day basis, a day on and a day or two off, but the preference is to knock the tendinitis out entirely. Cortisone shots are not given in the Achilles tendon area.

With Willingham likely to miss another week-plus, first baseman/designated hitter **Chris Carter** remains on the roster.

Willingham is considered the A's top potential piece to move before the trade deadline, and even though the Achilles tendinitis might lessen his trade value, it might not scare off the Phillies, a team that has tried to get him in previous seasons.

Possible pitching plans: If the A's continue to use a six-man rotation until the All-Star break, All-Star candidate **Gio Gonzalez** would start at Texas on Saturday, three days before the All-Star Game.

If the team goes back to the usual five starters after **Guillermo Moscoso's** start Wednesday, Gonzalez would go on Friday at Texas.

Manager **Bob Melvin** said he will discuss the future rotation plans today.

Briefly: Kurt Suzuki will get the day off today, Melvin said. ... Shortstop **Cliff Pennington** got a day off Saturday, with **Adam Rosales** stepping in. ... **Daric Barton**, who went 0-for-his-first-16 after being sent down to Sacramento, had his first hits Saturday, going 2-for-4 with a double and a single. ... Oakland's bullpen catcher, **Casey Chavez**, is away after the birth of his first child, a daughter, **Samantha Belle**, on Thursday.

Leading off

Best bet: The All-Star teams will be named today, and the likely selection for the A's is today's starting pitcher, left-hander Gio Gonzalez. Gonzalez's 2.38 ERA and 8.74 strikeouts per nine innings are the fourth best in the league.

Drumbeat: Josh Willingham will remain on A's DL - updated

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 7/2/2011 3:42pm

It sounds as if Josh Willingham won't quite be ready to come off the DL tomorrow, with some continued stiffness in his left Achilles tendon. Willingham and manager Bob Melvin will confer later, Melvin said, but from what I'm hearing, I don't think Willingham will come off the DL tomorrow, as originally had been planned.

UPDATE: Willingham confirms he won't come off the DL tomorrow: The Achilles tendinitis is still barking at him, and while he hasn't been shut down entirely, he is cutting back on baseball activity. The plan is still to try to knock the problem out entirely, but if that isn't possible, Willingham could probably go back to playing one or two days on, a day off.

"I'm pretty bummed out," he said.

There's no precise timetable for his return; below, I'd speculated it could be just a few days, but after speaking to Willingham, I believe it could be quite a bit longer - perhaps through the All-Star break, if that's what it takes to get the discomfort out. But, Willingham said, he could come in one day and just feel fine, and then he'd be good to go.

Willingham has asked about cortisone, but the Achilles tendon isn't an area where cortisone shots are given, he said, and platelet rich injection treatment would keep him out eight weeks.

If Willingham stays on the DL, that does simplify things from a roster standpoint. The A's are going with six starters at least through Wednesday, meaning there are 13 pitchers on the roster right now. The A's almost always go with the standard 12.

Should Willingham be ready to come off the DL when the A's are finished with their six-man rotation whirl, then, perhaps, Chris Carter could stick on the big-league roster. So this next day or two, or however long it is until Willingham comes back, could be important for Carter: If he plays a decent first base and makes some offensive contributions, why not keep him and send out whichever extra starter (Outman? Moscoso?) comes out of the current half dozen? (Graham Godfrey and Fautino De Los Santos are also possibilities to come off the roster when Brandon McCarthy comes off the DL Monday and whenever Willingham returns.)

If Willingham just need another day or two, waiting until after McCarthy goes - it'll be his first start after missing six weeks with a stress reaction in his right shoulder - makes sense. The A's need more fresh arms when they have a starter on a pitch count. So Tuesday might work well as a day to send out an extra pitcher, if Willingham is ready by then.

If Carter proves he can handle duties at first on an everyday basis, there's no reason not to keep him, but Hideki Matsui is going to stay the primary DH, and the A's need to have a regular spot for Carter - they do want him playing every day if he's going to stay here more than two weeks.

The A's need Willingham back in the lineup. He's not having the greatest season, but he still drives in runs, and his presence in the cleanup spot puts other guys in better spots in the order. I wouldn't mind seeing Coco Crisp back in the leadoff spot and Jemile Weeks back hitting ninth - his numbers were better there, and I do believe he'll be a good leadoff hitter in the big leagues, he's been in the majors less than a month, and the ninth spot is less of a focal point. I know the whole "it's just the first time up" argument about how little lineup spots actually mean, but Weeks is hitting .406 in the ninth spot and .241 batting leadoff.

Here's tonight's lineup: Weeks 2b, Sizemore 3b, Crisp cf, Matsui dh, Carter 1b, Jackson lf, Suzuki c, DeJesus rf, Rosales ss

It's just a day off for Pennington. Kurt Suzuki will get tomorrow off, Melvin says.

SCOTT OSTLER: SUNDAY PUNCH

Selig shouldn't be able to dodge mess

Scott Ostler, San Francisco Chronicle

Rumor has it that **Bud Selig** formed a blue-ribbon committee to investigate the 2004 sale of the Dodgers and find out what boob was responsible for persuading team owners to allow **Frank** and **Jamie McCourt** to buy the team without any real cash and with a terrible business reputation.

When Selig gets the report, hoo-boy, will his face be red!

Yes, it was Selig who foisted the McCourts on baseball, when a much more solid offer was on the table. Some say Selig backed the McCourts in order to solidify his power base (the grateful McCourts could be counted on to be Bud's BFF) and to kiss up to media mogul **Rupert Murdoch**.

The Dodger situation will work just fine as a last straw. Yo (as the kids say), it's time for Selig to step down as commissioner. And no, he should not form a blue-ribbon committee to advise him on whether he should resign.

We'll send off Bud with a golf clap, saluting his contributions to the game, such as interleague play and the wild card ... even though your grandmother would have brought the wild card to baseball, once the NFL gave the concept a 25-year trial run.

With Selig, baseball is not getting much bang for its \$20 million-per-year salary buck. His treatment of the A's is a bad running joke. Glacier Bud is waiting for an environmental- impact report on a potential ballpark site in the Sea of Tranquillity.

Glacier Bud never made a definitive call on Pete Rose, and it's old news how the commish arrived years late to the antisteroid party. If you point out how the game has grown financially under Selig's watch, then you also have to salute Frank McCourt, because the Dodgers have shot up in value since he bought the team.

Maybe Selig was dynamic once upon a time, but he has lost his spitball.

Vin Scully's checks are bouncing and Bud Selig's are clearing? When it's time for a change, think Speedee Oil Change.

A 3-of-a-kind look back at season's 1st half

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

Three strikes per at-bat, three outs per inning, three divisions per league and three measly runs usually is all it takes for the offensively challenged Giants and A's to win a game.

It's the sport of trifectas. As we launch into the season's second half, here are more:

Three teams that aren't as lousy as we expected:

1. Pirates: Amazing that it's July and their winning percentage begins with the number 5.

Well played, **Clint Hurdle**.

2. Indians: Can never see enough of **Asdrubal Cabrera** at shortstop.
3. Mets: Hold off on that **Jose Reyes**-to-the-Giants malarkey.

Three teams that are lousier than we expected 1. Dodgers: Minimal star power, no farm system, nonfactor for years to come.

2. A's: **Josh Willingham**, **David DeJesus** and **Hideki Matsui** — not exactly the Big Three.
3. Twins: Only 2010 division winner with a losing record.

Three on-field news items

1. **Derek Jeter**, who'll be activated Monday, will resume his pursuit for 3,000 hits while the Yankees resume their pursuit of

figuring how to replace him as the leadoff hitter.

2. No-hitters for ex-Giant farmhand **Francisco Liriano**

and **Justin Verlander**.

3. Padres bullpen coach **Darrel Akerfelds** is undergoing chemotherapy for pancreatic cancer while overseeing another outstanding collection of San Diego relievers.

Three off-field news items

1. Talk of two 15-team, division-less leagues was silly, but realignment and expanded playoffs are coming.

2. The Bay Area's gone Hollywood: Moneyball movie ("When the A's Used to Draw") to be released Sept. 23, and Showtime reality series (" **Brandon Belt**, We Hardly Knew Ye") resumes Wednesday.

3. Updates on perjury lads: Feds still deciding whether to retry **Barry Bonds**; trial for **Roger Clemens** opens Wednesday.

Three feel-good stories

1. Between wins as a starter, **Ryan Vogelsong** took 2,412 days. Now he's a good bet every fifth day.

2. **Jack McKeon**, baseball's best storyteller, back in uniform at 80.

3. The Cal Bears' triumph over administrative lunacy.

Three feel-bad stories

1. Continued prayers for **Bryan Stow**. For the first time in history, Candlestick Park is nicer to visit than Dodger Stadium.

2. **Manny Ramirez** got popped for performance-enhancing drugs and went home in shame.

3. Major League Baseball completely forgot — or simply doesn't care — about the A's.

Three players who need to get traded 1. **Heath Bell**. No reason for an All-Star closer on a team in transition, especially as he approaches free agency. Padres might be on the verge of a fire sale.

2. **Carlos Zambrano** needs a change of scenery. If only the Cub didn't mess up his back fielding **Brandon Crawford's** bunt.

3. Pick a Met, most any Met.

Carlos Beltran? Sure. **Francisco**

Rodriguez? Of course.

Three players who don't need to get traded

1. Not this Met: Reyes. Ponzi scheme or no Ponzi scheme, New York's too big of a market to dump a guy producing like an MVP. Plus, the Mets are hot and might challenge for the wild card.

2. **Jonathan Sanchez**. You deal him, you dent a pitching staff that was the reason you won it all last year.

3. **Jorge Posada** rediscovered his stroke and actually is a Yankee asset, not liability, after hitting .403 in his last 20 games in June.

Three early leaders for National League awards

1. **Prince Fielder** over Reyes for MVP.

2. **Roy Halladay**, **Cliff Lee** and **Cole Hamels** (one-third of the plaque apiece, speaking of trifectas) for Cy Young Award.

3. **Dillon Gee** for Rookie of the Year.

Three early leaders for American League awards

1. **Adrian Gonzalez** over **Jose Bautista** for MVP.

2. Verlander for Cy Young Award.

3. **Michael Pineda** for Rookie of the Year.

SHEA HEY

Giants gain, rivals falter under Selig

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

Is **Bud Selig** a Giants fan?

The image of Selig with his hands in his pockets as **Barry Bonds** ties **Hank Aaron's**

home record has been replaced by an image of Selig holding up one of those orange foam fingers.

The commissioner seems to be in the champs' corner.

Consider the disparity between the Giants and the rivals that once overshadowed them.

Selig oversaw a unanimous vote of owners seven years ago to approve **Frank** and

Jamie McCourt's purchase of the Dodgers and also called for that three-man committee 28 months ago to investigate the A's ballpark dilemma.

The results? Both teams are suspended in time and waiting for third-party interests to dictate their futures while the Giants reign as kings of California.

Before last year, the Dodgers and A's had out-championshiped the Giants 9-0 since the teams moved to California. Now the Giants are showcasing their own hardware, hauling in record revenue and rattling off sellout crowds while the Dodgers and A's are at the mercy of the commissioner's office, which either has no power to act on the teams' behalf or simply won't.

The Boston Globe's **Dan Shaughnessy** called Frank McCourt a "smooth-talking, nicely dressed, well-mannered guy with parking lots and delusions of grandeur," adding that McCourt's bid to buy the Red Sox in 2001 wasn't taken seriously "because he didn't have enough of his own money."

So he bought the Dodgers.

Unlike the McCourts, the A's owners neither lack funds nor appear in gossip columns.

They've got other issues, which Selig's men are putting off indefinitely.

Conveniently for the Giants, the commish's darlings.

THE BULL PEN

By John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

Matt Cain's not the only high-profile pitcher on target to start next Sunday, making him ineligible to appear in the All-Star Game or be on the active All-Star roster. **Justin Verlander** and **CC Sabathia**, the AL's first 10-game winners, also could pitch that Sunday, meaning the AL starter could be **Jered Weaver**.

By the way, does Sabathia really get an average of 8.19 runs of support per nine innings? Indeed.

Angels manager **Mike Scioscia** likened **Mark Trumbo's** power to **Jose Canseco's**, **Mark McGwire's** and **Mike Piazza's**. Is that a politically correct thing to say anymore?

How valuable would **Lance Berkman** have been to the A's had he accepted their offer? In June, the Cardinal had three fewer homers than the entire Oakland roster.

The week that **Jemile Weeks** became Oakland's undisputed second baseman with the **Mark Ellis** trade, **Rickie Weeks** took over the lead in All-Star voting among NL second basemen. That's a lot of texting between brothers.

Johnny Damon caught **Ted Williams** in career hits and doesn't mind Bostonians playing down the feat, saying, "Obviously, people up there are probably going to say, 'Oh, he's no Teddy Ballgame.' We all know that. He was tremendous. But the one thing I do have is a championship." Ouch.

Classy move by the Tigers, scheduling the ceremony to retire **Sparky Anderson's** No. 11 for when the Diamondbacks were in Detroit so that ex-Tigers **Kirk Gibson** and **Alan Trammell** (Gibson's bench coach) could participate.

Too little, too late for A's in loss

By Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's manager Bob Melvin has hoped his team would find some consistency heading into the All-Star break.

The A's will have to keep on looking after falling, 4-2, to the D-backs on Saturday in front of 30,338 fans at the Coliseum. So, too, will A's starter Josh Outman.

The southpaw dropped his second straight decision, and had his second worst outing of the season since returning from Tommy John surgery. Outman (3-3, 3.47 ERA) was tagged for four runs on seven hits over six innings and struggled with his location throughout the night.

"Terrible," Outman said. "I fell behind too much. I got beat on pitches that I just wasn't thinking. I threw the wrong pitch. Four innings in a row I got two outs and let a runner get on with two outs. I didn't have any quick innings. I didn't throw the ball very well at all."

In his first non-quality start in nearly a month, all of the damage against Outman came at the hands of D-backs center fielder Chris Young.

Young went 3-for-3 against Outman, and the right-handed hitter was just a triple shy of the cycle on the night as he finished 3-for-4 with four RBIs. Young knocked in the game's first run in the first after Outman led off the game by giving up back-to-back base hits to put runners on first and second for the D-backs slugger.

Young then doubled in a run in the third after Outman gave up a leadoff walk. He then made the lefty pay in the fifth, when the A's southpaw allowed a two-out walk before Young came to the plate. Young launched the first pitch he saw from Outman, an inside fastball, for a two-run home run to left-center field to put the D-backs on top 4-0.

"I had been a little passive on the first pitch the first few at-bats, and I had a feeling he was going to try to sneak one in there, so I tried to find a way to be aggressive. Controlled aggressiveness," Young said. "It was a pretty good pitch to hit and I got it good."

"He was just ready for it," Outman said. "It got in on his two previous at-bats. It's just not me thinking, letting myself fall into patterns and that's just not something that should happen out there."

The A's had their chances to cut into the lead, but came up empty with runners in scoring position in the first, third, fourth and sixth innings against D-backs starter Joe Saunders (5-7, 4.04 ERA) -- who improved to 12-4 in his career against Oakland -- before putting together a pair of runs in the eighth.

Scott Sizemore picked up an RBI on a groundout to short to score Adam Rosales before Hideki Matsui singled in Jemile Weeks from second. But that rally was cut short when Conor Jackson struck out looking with the potential tying run on first.

"We had some opportunities early on that we didn't take advantage of and they did," Melvin said. "There's always going to be calls over the course of a game that one team thinks goes one way and the other team thinks it goes the other way. You just move on and try to get more opportunities and take advantage of them."

Oakland finished the night 2-for-9 with runners in scoring position and stranded seven men on base as it fell to 2-3 on the current nine-game homestand.

"That doesn't run through my mind at all," Outman said of the lack of run support. "I go out there and try to give the team a chance to win every time out. If I throw better, we're much closer there. Win, lose or draw, it doesn't matter. I'm just not happy with my performance."

Whether or not Saturday's outing will be Outman's last in the A's rotation remains to be seen. With the return of righty Rich Harden a day earlier and right-hander Brandon McCarthy set to make his return from the disabled list on Monday, Melvin is experimenting with a six-man rotation for one turn. But the A's skipper said he would address the status of the rotation again before Sunday's series finale, leaving Outman's next start up in the air until then.

"I enjoy every start I get up here, and hopefully I can stick for another one," Outman said. "It's been a long time since I've lost two in a row and that's just not the type of performance I expect out of myself. I'm better than a .500 pitcher."

Return for Willingham pushed back indefinitely

By Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Left fielder Josh Willingham won't return from the disabled list Sunday, as was originally planned. In fact, the A's slugger isn't sure of when he will return.

Sidelined with a strained left Achilles tendon since June 18, Willingham was slated to return from the 15-day disabled list for Sunday's series finale against the D-backs. But after a pair of rehab appearances for Triple-A Sacramento, Willingham said the tendon isn't where it needs to be for him to return to the A's lineup.

"If I came off [Sunday] I could probably play the game, but then you're going to have to take the next day off and that's really no way to go," Willingham said.

Earlier in the week, A's manager Bob Melvin was optimistic that Willingham, who leads the A's with 10 home runs this season, would be activated from the disabled list when he became eligible Sunday. But the skipper's tune changed before Saturday's game.

"If we have to give it another day, if we have to give it a couple more days, we'll do that," Melvin said.

That may not be enough for Willingham, who said the more activity he did the worse the tendon felt the following day. The left fielder inquired about getting a cortisone shot to help with the nagging injury, but was told the Achilles tendon isn't capable of taking an injection.

The slugger also ruled out a platelet-rich plasma injection, like the one pitcher Brett Anderson had, because it would sideline him for about two months.

Although the soreness persisted after his two rehab outings, leaving Willingham bummed about the situation, he said he isn't about to just shut things down for the time being. Instead, he will sit down with the doctors on Sunday and see how the tendon responds to some other treatments.

"I'd like to knock it out, but if you can't knock it out you want to get it to where you can manage it on a day-to-day basis and play with it," Willingham said. "If I can take the necessary time off to get it fixed and get it healed and get it back to where I can play every day and not have to worry about it -- because this game is hard enough to play when you're 100 percent -- that's our goal. If we can't then we're just going to have to manage it."

With Willingham -- who was hitting .231 with 42 RBIs -- sidelined, the A's have used four different players to fill the void in left field. Hideki Matsui, Ryan Sweeney, Adam Rosales and Conor Jackson have all seen time at the position.

Without his team's home run leader, Melvin has also had to shuffle the lineup during Willingham's stint on the disabled list to try to make up for the loss of power on a team that has hit the fewest home runs in the Majors, moving Coco Crisp to the three-hole and having Matsui bat cleanup.

DeJesus starting to turn it on at the plate

OAKLAND -- A's manager Bob Melvin has said time and time again that he believes some of his struggling players will work their way out of slumps. Right fielder David DeJesus is trying to prove his skipper right.

After notching just six hits through the first 29 days of June, DeJesus successfully reached base in seven straight appearances entering Saturday's game against the D-backs.

"You look at a guy with a track record like he has, and it's not like he's 40 years old, and if we're in the situation where we are offensively, we need a guy like that to be productive," Melvin said. "It's my job to give him some time, some consistent at-bats out there to work through it. He has the last two days been great."

Melvin said the key to getting DeJesus out of his June swoon, during which the ninth-year veteran hit just .148 and reached base at a .270 clip, was to continue to show confidence in him despite the dismal numbers.

"These guys are proven players, and they do have track records, and you need to show them some confidence," Melvin said.

Melvin did just that again on Saturday, when he slotted DeJesus in the lineup against Arizona lefty Joe Saunders despite the fact that DeJesus is hitting a mere .123 against southpaws entering the game. Melvin hopes the move pays off, and DeJesus continues to heat up as the A's move toward the All-Star break and into the second half of the season.

"I'd certainly like him to continue this thing, where I don't have to worry about right field," Melvin said. "That's his spot. That's kind of been the goal here for these last four days and moving forward, to get him going."

"He can be a very productive guy, and with the limitations we've had here offensively recently, we could use a guy like that playing to the capabilities he has."

Worth noting

- Athletics manager Bob Melvin said before the game that catcher Kurt Suzuki would have the day off for Sunday's series finale.
- Shortstop Cliff Pennington, who on Friday recorded his first multi-hit game since June 21, was given the day off on Saturday. In Pennington's place, Adam Rosales got the nod at shortstop, his second start there this season.

D-backs, A's look to settle score in rubber game

By Anthony Fenech / MLB.com

The rubber game of a three-game series could pit a pair of All-Star bound pitchers in Arizona's Ian Kennedy and Oakland's Gio Gonzalez.

They will know their fate before the first pitch at 4:05 p.m. ET, but each is more focused on delivering their team a series victory.

"I just put my head down and do my job," Gonzalez said. "The rest is up to the fans and everyone else. We have plenty of guys on this team that are definitely All-Stars in my opinion."

The left-hander is 7-5 with a 2.38 ERA, 99 strikeouts and in all likelihood, will be the A's only representative in Phoenix a week from Tuesday.

Kennedy could be selected by Giants manager Bruce Bochy after putting together a solid first half that to date includes an 8-2 record, a 3.01 ERA. The right-hander has struck out 97 in 116 2/3 innings as the anchor of the D-backs rotation.

"He's been the perfect ace so far this year," Chris Young said about Kennedy, who ranks third in the National League in innings pitched.

Kennedy looks to continue the trend of D-backs starters pitching well and going deep into games while the team fights an offensive lull.

"We just need to get as much as we can out of everybody, pitching and offense," D-backs manager Kirk Gibson said. "You'd like to see us go through a nice offensive surge here. That would help. We just need to play better."

Joe Saunders and Chris Young did their best to follow Gibson's orders. On Saturday, Saunders pitched seven innings of two-run baseball and Young recorded three hits, including a two-run home run.

The D-backs are three games out in the NL West, while the A's sit seven games back in the American League West.

D-backs: Wily Mo working in the field

- Designated hitter Wily Mo Pena hit his fourth home run of the season on Friday, a line-drive shot into the upper deck and was working in the outfield on Saturday.

Pena, who played in the outfield for Triple-A Reno, is trying to find a spot on the diamond with the D-backs.

"I just have to keep working," he said. "That's the only way to get better is to just keep working, working and working."

- David Hernandez picked up his third save of the season on Saturday, and first since closer J.J. Putz was forced to the disabled list with an elbow injury on Friday. He retired the A's in order in the ninth inning.

A's: Sizemore making strides

- Since being traded from the Tigers on May 27, Scott Sizemore has looked to Oakland as home sweet home.

Compared to the .222 he was hitting in Detroit, Sizemore is batting .318 with the A's and has improved his overall season average to .271 while learning a new position at third base.

"Every day that he's out there he seems to be more and more comfortable," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "The offense is what it is, and sometimes it can weigh on you a bit playing a different position, but it hasn't."

- Outfielder Coco Crisp has batted in the No. 3 hole in each of his last 12 starts, and is hitting .318 (14-for-44) in that span.

A's lose to D'backs, 4-2

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Jemile Weeks and Scott Sizemore had a better offensive nights than their Arizona counterparts.

Oakland's top two hitters combined for four hits and drove in a run. They just didn't score enough.

The Athletics outhit the Diamondbacks but never got the key hit in a 4-2 loss Saturday night before a fireworks crowd of 30,338.

"They just did more with their hits than we did with ours," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "We weren't able to take advantage of our scoring opportunities."

The A's also faced an old nemesis in Joe Saunders, who carved out his 12th win in 16 decisions against Oakland, most of them with the Los Angeles Angels.

"I just like pitching here," Saunders said. "There's something about this place that kind of fits my eye."

Chris Carter and Conor Jackson also had two hits for the A's.

"You can see the confidence growing in him," Melvin said of Carter. "He has good, strong hands."

Saunders (5-7) pitched seven-plus innings for Arizona, yielding two runs and eight hits while improving to 12-4 with a 3.44 ERA in 18 career starts against Oakland. That's his most wins against any single team.

Sizemore and Hideki Matsui each has an RBI for the A's, who have dropped seven of 10.

Josh Outman (3-3) lost his second straight start and was upset with himself.

"I'm better than a .500 pitcher," he said. "I was terrible. I fell behind too much and got beat on pitches where I wasn't thinking."

After Outman retired the first two batters in the fifth, Justin Upton walked and Chris Young followed with his 16th homer of the season. Young drove in all four runs for Arizona with three hits.

Outman allowed seven hits and walked three in six innings.

"The two-out walk, the leadoff walk, take your pick," Outman said. "When you give up free passes bad things happen."

The offensive surge was all Saunders needed to continue his career-long dominance of the A's. David Hernandez, working in the closer role while J.J. Putz is on the disabled list, pitched the ninth for his third save in four chances.

Saunders, the former Los Angeles Angels pitcher who joined the Diamondbacks in a trade last July, pitched with runners on base in all but one inning but kept the damage to a minimum. He also helped start a 1-4-3 double play in the seventh.

The A's, who had a mini-surge of their own with nine runs in their previous two games, hit into two double plays and left seven runners on base.

Oakland chased Saunders when Adam Rosales walked and Weeks singled to begin the eighth. Yhency Brazoban came in and was called for a balk when he tried stopping his motion, then tossed the ball to the ground.

Sizemore's groundout drove in Rosales. After Coco Crisp struck out looking, Matsui hit a soft single to right to score Weeks. Carter also singled before Brazoban struck out Jackson to end the inning.

NOTES: Diamondbacks LF Gerardo Parra appeared to jam his right hand while making a sliding catch on Chris Carter's fly ball in the fourth but stayed in the game. ... Arizona SS Stephen Drew was given the day off but should be back in the lineup Sunday. ... Gibson is resisting moving RHP Josh Collmenter to the bullpen after the rookie lost his fourth consecutive decision on Friday. "I don't care what people think," Gibson said. "We'll try to get him on track. What he did early wasn't a fluke. He just needs to make quality pitches." ... Oakland OF Josh Willingham (Achilles' strain) is eligible to come off the disabled list Sunday but there has been no timetable set for his return. ... The game was delayed briefly in the first inning when the grounds crew had to replace second base.

Gutierrez: Gibson's return picks at A's old scab

Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com

OAKLAND - It was about the third inning on Oct. 15, 1988 when Steve Vucinich made his way to the Dodgers clubhouse, deep in the bowels of Chavez Ravine.

The A's had a 4-2 lead in Game 1 of the 1988 World Series after Jose Canseco's second-inning grand slam that dented the center-field camera and Vucinich, then Oakland's visiting clubhouse manager, needed some logistics for the Dodgers' impending trip to the East Bay for Games 3, 4 and 5.

That's when he saw him. A battle-worn Kirk Gibson hobbling and lounging about in little more than a cut-off T-shirt and his underwear.

"He couldn't move," Vucinich, now the A's equipment manager, recalled Friday. "He couldn't hardly walk. There was no way he was playing."

In his role running the visiting clubhouse at the Coliseum, Vucinich had gotten chummy with Gibson, who had been with Detroit until 1988. They chatted briefly about Gibson's free agency the previous winter, and how he believed collusion had kept him from a better free-agent deal before signing with the Dodgers. And, of course, they talked about living in LaLa Land.

Then, Vucinich left. There was still a World Series game going on, after all, and nothing in his clubhouse encounter with Gibson had changed his opinion. There was no way, no way at all, Gibson was playing.

Then came the fateful ninth inning.

You all know what happened next -- Dennis Eckersley quickly retired Mike Scioscia and Jeff Hamilton before former A's outfielder Mike Davis stepped into the box.

Mike Thalburn, the A's current visiting clubhouse manager, was then an A's bat boy who would shave down Jose Canseco's bat handle to his liking in the dugout.

"I just remember someone, before he even walked Mike Davis, saying, 'Eckersley doesn't have it tonight,'" Thalburn said. "I was like, Don't say that.' Then, sure enough ... "

Thalburn's voice trailed off.

"Why did we walk Mike Davis?" Vucinich wondered aloud. "Eck never walked anybody."

Gibson strode to the plate as a pinch hitter and now Vucinich nearly had to pinch himself.

"I can't believe he's in the game," Vucinich said. "I don't know what kind of pain killers they gave him, or what they shot him up with."

After falling behind 0-and-2, Gibson worked a full count, and the rest was, well, history, as immortalized on television by Vin Scully and on the radio by Jack Buck.

"I didn't think he could put enough in it to hit a home run," Vucinich said. "I knew all about his other big home runs -- the 1984 World Series. I didn't believe it. It was just, Ugh. The worst."

Wait, the worst?

"Worst moment of my life," Vucinich said with a Cheshire cat grin. "I was happier when my first wife left me."

Yes, nearly 23 years after the fact, the Gibson home run still cuts deep on the A's and their fans. With Gibson in Oakland this weekend as manager of the Arizona Diamondbacks for an interleague series, the Green and Gold scar gets picked at like some decades-old scab.

Even on those not at Dodger Stadium that night.

A's interim manager Bob Melvin had just finished his third and final season with the Giants and said the Gibson home run was one of those moments in sports history when you know exactly where you were when it happened.

In fact, Melvin said he still gets goosebumps watching Gibson step out of the box with the count full to remind himself of the impending back-door slider.

Good stuff, but I had to ask Melvin where *he* was when Gibson made dozens of departing cars' brake lights in the Dodger Stadium parking lot suddenly burn to life on the walk-off job.

"I was at a bachelor party," Melvin admitted while laughing and blushing, even 20-plus years later. "But everybody stopped to watch."

A clubhouse away, the Diamondbacks manager and A's arch-villain smiled.

"I'm sure he didn't give you all the details," Gibson chuckled.

After the laughter died down, Gibson grew nostalgic. Memories came flooding back. Of course, a million times of course, he knew the questions would come with Arizona's visit to Oakland.

"I won a championship in this room," he said, reminding anyone within ear shot of the Dodgers winning the Fall Classic in five games and, picking at the scab some more, on the Coliseum grass.

Any time he came back to face the A's, he heard about it.

"The fans here have always been *honest* with opponents," he said.

But in his last season as a player, in 1995, peace was brokered.

"It's part of what it all is," Gibson said. "It was fantastic to beat the A's in 1988. It was a dream come true that just proves that anything is possible. Which is why teams should push through."

Try telling that to A's fans who still feel the sting of 1988.

All these years later, Vucnich still plays that World Series over in his head. What if the A's had capitalized after Canseco's grand slam? What if they had won Game 4 to tie the Series? Who would the Dodgers throw at them outside of Orel Hershiser in Games 6 and 7 in Los Angeles? What if Eckersley had walked Gibson? Steve Sax, who was on deck, recently told me he would have had no chance against Eckersley.

"A couple of key hits, score some runs, that turns the series around," Vucnich said. "I still don't believe Gibby played. And that was his only at-bat of the series."

But one that still resonates and breaks hearts.

A's to use six-man rotation for at least one turn

Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com

OAKLAND – A's right-hander Brandon McCarthy will come off the disabled list to start Monday and Oakland will go to an unconventional six-man pitching rotation, beginning tonight and at least for one turn through the rotation, interim manager Bob Melvin told reporters in his pregame meeting Friday.

With Rich Harden making his 2011 season debut against Arizona in an interleague series opener tonight at the O.co Coliseum, Josh Outman will start Saturday against the Diamondbacks and seeming All-Star Gio Gonzalez gets the ball for the series finale on Sunday.

Brandon McCarthy will then come off the disabled list to start Monday against Seattle before Trevor Cahill goes on regular rest to start Tuesday against the Mariners and Guillermo Moscoso will get the ball Wednesday against the Mariners to finish the A's nine-game homestead.

That's when things get interesting as the A's then travel to Texas for a four-game series to close out the first half of the season and send the team into the All-Star break.

Melvin said the A's would then make a decision on whether to stick with a six-man rotation or cut it down.

Because presumably, if Harden is ineffective tonight or is unable to make another start, which would be on Thursday in Arlington, the A's would then be able to throw Outman, Gonzalez, McCarthy and Cahill at the Rangers on regular rest.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Sacramento drops fifth game in a row

By Alex Sadorf / Sacramento River Cats

An early lead wasn't enough for Sacramento as Tucson won its seventh consecutive game with a final score of 6-4 on Saturday night at Raley Field. Sacramento has lost five in a row.

With one out in the first inning, Daric Barton collected his first hit this season with the River Cats, a double hit to the right-center field warning track. Jai Miller followed with a two-run homer to give Sacramento a 2-0 lead in the first inning.

The Padres began their comeback right away with a double from Aaron Cunningham to score Kyle Blanks in the second. In the third, Blanks hit his seventh home run of the season, bringing Everth Cabrera home and bringing the score to 3-2 for the Padres.

Kevin Kouzmanoff evened the score in the bottom of the third with a hard-hit single up the middle that gave Anthony Recker time to run home. The RBI is Kouzmanoff's 23rd of the year.

It seemed like déjà vu at Raley Field in the fifth when Blanks hit a second two-run home run with Cabrera on base. The homer put the Padres ahead once more with a score of 5-3.

After scoring two of the Padres' five runs, Cabrera hit a sacrifice fly in the sixth that scored catcher Guillermo Quiroz.

The River Cats tried to stage a comeback in the seventh. With Recker in scoring position, Sogard hit the ball hard over the pitcher's head, allowing Recker to race home for the Cats' fourth run of the evening and the final run of the night for either team.

Sunday evening at 6:35 p.m. the River Cats will again face the Tucson Padres for the fourth and final game in the series.

Travelers cool off RockHounds

Jordan Mason, Midland Reporter-Telegram

The Midland RockHounds seemed to be cruising toward their first series sweep since the opening weekend of the season in the top of the seventh at Citibank Ballpark on Saturday.

The RockHounds were protecting a three-run lead thanks to a two-run blast to left by Ryan Ortiz in the sixth, and starting pitcher Shawn Haviland already had two men down in the seventh.

But the Arkansas Travelers had different ideas.

Arkansas reeled off five straight hits with two away to tie the game, then won it in the ninth when pinch runner Jon Townsend scored from third on a wild pitch by Jared Lansford in a 6-5 victory.

The RockHounds (32-47) got a stand-up double from Grant Green in the bottom of the ninth and two straight walks to load the bases, but Ryan Brasier whiffed Matt Sulentic on the next at-bat to end the game.

Midland was in great shape to close the game out in the seventh when Haviland had given them 6.2 innings and allowed just one earned run.

But Haviland had gotten into jams in the fourth and fifth innings after retiring the first two batters and the seventh wasn't any kinder to him.

Haviland gave up a single to Mike Trout and an RBI double to Darwin Perez before being replaced by Jonathan Ortiz.

Ortiz didn't fare any better, giving up three straight singles, the last being an RBI single by Roberto Jimenez, who was 0-for-3 at the point, which tied the game.

Arkansas (43-33) replaced starter Matt Shoemaker with 7-1 Loek Van Mil to start the seventh, and Van Mil proceeded to quiet the RockHound offense, allowing one hit and no runs over two innings while picking up the win for the night.

The Traveler bats, however, continued to produce, as they loaded the bases in the eighth before Chris Pettit went up 3-0 on Midland pitcher Jon Meloan.

The count went full, then Pettit fouled off six straight pitches before Meloan got the first baseman to fly out to center causing the crowd at Citibank Ballpark to erupt.

But that was the last time the crowd exploded Saturday as the RockHounds only got a single by Ortiz in the bottom of the eighth.

Roberto Lopez led off the ninth with a single off Lansford, and then Luis Jimenez moved Townsend to second on a sacrifice bunt.

Following a walk, Angel Castillo and Townsend moved to second and third on a 4-3 groundout by Matt Cusick before Townsend crossed home to win it on Lansford's wild pitch.

The loss by Midland halted its winning streak at four games, which matched its longest of the season.

The RockHounds open a three-game series against Springfield at 6 p.m. today at Citibank Ballpark.

Jordan Mason can be reached at jmason@mrt.com

'HOUND BITES: Arkansas pitcher Matt Shoemaker entered the game with a Texas League-best ERA (2.64) and WHIP (1.02) but wasn't treated nicely by the RockHounds bats Saturday. Shoemaker went six innings but gave up five runs, four earned, on eight hits, including a home run. ... Ryan Ortiz hit his first home run in Double-A play Saturday on a sixth inning blast to left off Shoemaker. Ortiz was playing in his second game since being promoted from Single-A Stockton on Thursday. ... Postgame fireworks will follow Sunday for the second consecutive game as part of July Celebration at Citibank Ballpark.

TODAY'S PROBABLES: RockHounds left-hander Polin Trinidad (2-2, 7.04) is expected to open the series against Springfield today while the Cardinals are expected to start Michael Blazek (8-3, 5.31)

Streak Stops at Seventeen

Stockton Ports

The Ports put up a valiant effort on Saturday evening, but could not keep the streak alive, falling to the San Jose Giants by a final total of 8-4. The Giants surged ahead in the late innings, putting up seven runs in the final four frames of the game.

Stockton got on the board first, thanks to a two-out home run by Michael Choice, his 18th of the season. After two quick outs by Myrio Richard, a pop out to first, and Michael Gilmartin, a fly out to left field, Choice drilled the first pitch of his at-bat over the Jackson Rancheria Back Porch. It looked as though the Ports might go on another two-out rally, as they had done many times over the 17-game streak, when Anthony Aliotti hit a single to left. Ryan Lipkin quickly quieted these thoughts as he struck out swinging to end the inning.

The Giants tied it up the very next inning. Ryan Cavan started the inning, reaching on a fielding error by Dusty Coleman. Tommy Joseph then stepped up and drilled a double to right field, advancing Cavan to third. Cavan scored on a sac fly by Jose Flores, before the next two batters for the Giants would go down quietly.

Things would be quiet until the fourth inning, when the Ports would once again take the lead. Lipkin started the rally with a single to left field, which Rashun Dixon quickly followed with a single to center. Both runners then advanced 90 feet as Mitch Levier grounded out. Then Dusty Coleman hit a long double down the right field line, allowing both runs to score.

It might have been easy to forget that Brandon Belt, the San Francisco Giants starting first baseman from opening day was in Stockton on a rehab assignment until the sixth inning. While he made several routine plays at first, Belt made his presence truly felt in the sixth, when he led it off with a single to right field. Alex Burg then stepped up and whacked a home run over the left field wall, tying the game up. The Giants would not be done yet as one out later, Joseph hit a solo shot to left field.

The Ports made their first pitching change in the top of the seventh, as newly called-up Mike Hart came in to relieve starter Jake Brown. Hart quickly felt the wrath of the Giants bats, giving up a solo home run to James Simmons (of the Giants, not the Ports starting pitcher). Hart would have more difficulties in the inning, as Gary Brown singled. Fortunately, a strange play allowed the Ports to quickly get the speedy Brown off the bases. Nick Liles stepped up and smacked a ball to left field, which had Brown moving towards second. It appeared that Richard had caught the ball, and Brown turned to return to first. However, the umpires ruled that the ball had not been caught and that made for an easy out of Brown at second, who was left standing at first with Liles. Belt would get his second single of the evening, but Hart would pitch out of the jam to end the inning with just the one run scored.

The Ports pulled within one run in the seventh. Coleman singled up the middle to get on base, bringing Conner Crumbliss to the plate. With Crumbliss batting, Dusty stole second and then advanced to third on a wild pitch. Crumbliss then singled through the hole at shortstop, allowing Coleman to score. Unfortunately for the Ports, Richard grounded into a double play to end the inning.

While the Ports would be unable to muster anymore runs in the game, the Giants were able to muster three more runs before the night was over. The Ports brought in reliever Connor Hoehn to start the eighth inning. This would be the first appearance for Hoehn after being activated from the DL on Thursday. Hoehn made quick work of the first two batters he faced, ending a groundout and getting a strikeout. Hoehn hit some trouble with Ehire Adrianza at the plate, giving up a double to the shortstop. Simmons drove Adrianza home on a hit to right field, before Hoehn got Brown to groundout to end the inning.

Hoehn came back in to start the ninth inning. Despite getting Liles to strike out swinging, Liles advanced to first on a wild pitch. Luke Anders, who had come in to replace Belt in the eighth inning, reached on an error by Coleman, before Hoehn got back on track, freezing Burg for his third strikeout of the night. This ended the evening for Hoehn, as Ports lefty AJ Huttenlocker came in to finish the game for Stockton.

Huttenlocker had an equally rough outing, starting with a Cavan single to score Liles. Huttenlocker got Joseph to fly out to center for the second out of the inning, but followed it up with a walk to Jose Flores to load the bases. Adrianza singles to Coleman, who bobbled the ball and was unable to get a throw off, allowing Anders to score. Simmons, who had been a problem for Ports pitchers all night, went down swinging to end the Giants rally.

The Ports went down quickly in the bottom of the ninth, as Dixon flew out, Levier struck out looking, and Coleman struck out swinging. Jake Brown took the loss and fell to 1-3 while Craig Westcott earned his ninth win of the season. Mitch Lively earned his fourth save of the season.

The Ports look to return to their winning ways on Sunday as they close out the series against the Giants at 6:05 p.m. Dan Straily will get the start for the Boys of Banner Island.

Kirby-Jones 7th Inning Homer Leads Bees Past Chiefs

By Matthew Wheaton, Burlington Bees

BURLINGTON, IA- The Burlington Bees (3-4) used a three-run seventh inning to defeat the Peoria Chiefs (2-5) by a score of 4-2 before 565 fans at Community Field Thursday night.

Peoria started the scoring in the top of the second inning after DH Richard Jones (0-2) drew a lead-off walk. Jones advanced to second base on a single to left field from C Micah Gibbs (1-4). A single by 1B Ryan Cuneo (1-2) moved Jones over to third base. An RBI single from LF Anthony Giansanti (2-4) plated Jones. Cuneo scored from second base on an RBI single from SS Arismendy Alcantara (2-3) to put the Chiefs up 2-0.

In the bottom of the seventh inning, Bees 3B Tony Thompson (0-3) drew a lead-off walk and 1B A.J. Kirby-Jones (2-3) hit a two-run home run to left field. RF Douglas Landaeta (0-3) reached third base on a throwing error by Alcantara. With CF Jose Rivero (0-3) at the plate, Peoria RHP Daniel Berlind (0-1) threw a wild pitch and Landaeta scored for a 3-2 Burlington lead.

Burlington C Beau Taylor (1-3) hit a triple to lead off the bottom of the eighth inning and later scored on a sacrifice fly from 2B Ryan Pineda (0-3) to make the score 4-2.

Bees RHP Nate Long allowed two runs on five hits, walked three and struck out four in six innings of work in a no decision. LHP Max Peterson earned the win by throwing the final three innings, striking out five and allowing two hits.

BEES BUZZINGS: OF Jose Rivero came off the disabled list and OF Tyreece House was transferred to the disabled list before Thursday night's game.

The Bees and the Chiefs play game two of their three-game series Friday night at 6:30 p.m. It's "Big Fun Friday" Fans can enjoy 16 oz. cans of Bud Light and Busch Light for just \$3.25 sponsored by Budweiser, Today's Hit Music Hot 97.3, and Your Hometown Station, Big Country 103.1. Fans can also enjoy a fireworks show after the game sponsored by Catfish Bend Casino and J&M Displays. RHP Hayden Simpson (1-5, 4.98) gets the start for Peoria against RHP Josh Bowman (5-2, 3.06) for Burlington. Pre-game coverage begins at 6:10 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at www.gobees.com.

2011 Bees tickets are on sale now! To purchase season tickets, bonus books or single game tickets, please give the Bees a call at (319) 754-5705, go online to www.gobees.com, or stop by the box office at Community Field during normal business hours.

Vermont Beats Tri-City 7-4 On Saturday

By Paul Stanfield / Vermont Lake Monsters

BURLINGTON, VT --- Sean Jamieson went 4-for-5 with three runs scored as the Vermont Lake Monsters scored three times in the bottom of the fifth to erase a 4-2 deficit and went on to beat the Tri-City ValleyCats 7-4 in New York-Penn League action Saturday night at historic Centennial Field for the franchise's 600th win all-time.

Tri-City scored three unearned runs in the top of the fourth to take the 4-2 lead, but the Lake Monsters rallied for the sixth time in nine wins this season as they took the lead 5-4 with RBI singles from Jordan Tripp and Chad Lewis followed by a Jacob Tanis RBI groundout. The Lake Monsters added single runs in the sixth and eighth innings for the three-run victory.

Jamieson, an 11th round pick in the 2011 draft out of Canisius, doubled to leadoff the first inning before singling and scoring in the third, fifth and eighth innings. The shortstop is now 8-for-19 (.421) in his last four games after starting the season 2-for-17. Jordan Tripp was 3-for-4 with two runs, a double and two RBI, increasing his league-lead in runs to 15 for the season.

T.J. Walz (1-0) struckout two and allowed a hit in one scoreless inning for the win in relief of starter Brent Powers, who allowed four runs (one earned) on six hits over the first four innings. Kurt Wunderlich, who entered the game with a 19.64 ERA in 3 2/3 innings over three appearances, struckout three in three scoreless innings before Tanner Peters tossed a scoreless ninth for his third save.

Former University of Vermont standout Matt Duffy went 2-for-3 in his return to Centennial, where he played for the UVM baseball team in 2008 and 2009 (America East Player of the Year as Sophomore). Justin Gominsky went 2-for-5 with a pair of RBI, while reliever Kristian Bueno (1-1) gave up four runs (two earned) in two innings for the loss.

The win was the fourth in the last five games for Vermont (9-5), while the victory was also the 600th all-time in the Lake Monsters 18-year history. Vermont is now 600-685 all-time since they began in the New York-Penn League back in the 1994.

Vermont and Tri-City will wrap up the quick two-game series (and the two-game homestand for the Lake Monsters) on Sunday beginning at 1:05 pm. There is a post-game "Have A Catch" for fans to have a chance to play catch in the Centennial outfield before heading out for their Fourth of July festivities.