

Oakland A's stagger into All-Star break on heels of sweep by Texas Rangers

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

ARLINGTON, Texas -- The A's talked Sunday of getting away from baseball for a few days, flushing a disappointing first half out of their system and starting anew after the All-Star break.

The reality that awaits them upon their return will not paint a rosy picture.

A 2-0 loss to the Texas Rangers completed a four-game sweep and left the A's 12 games out of first place in the American League West, matching their largest deficit at the break over the past 10 years.

"We have to put this half behind us and start playing better baseball," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "We have some guys that can do some damage. They just haven't done it to this point. Coming here and having lost four in a row, it's probably good to distance ourselves from that."

Given the A's season-long hitting struggles, it's tough imagining this team rattling off the kind of second-half run needed to jump back into contention.

And considering how far back the A's are in the standings, general manager Billy Beane seems more likely to start trading some of his marketable veterans, as opposed to upgrading for this season.

Oakland has gone 1-6 during this 11-game stretch against A.L. West opponents.

Their 39-53 mark is their worst at the break since 1997, when they were 37-52. Sunday's shutout loss was their 11th of the season, most in the American League.

"I don't think anybody is going to say they're out of it until they're mathematically out of it," starting pitcher Trevor Cahill said.

But Cahill (8-7), who pitched well but took Sunday's loss, added that the All-Star break comes at a much needed time. The A's resume play Friday with a four-game home series against the Angels.

"We have four days to relax and get our minds off baseball," he said. "Some guys are banged up, some guys just need a mental break."

The A's began the season with division title aspirations, believing the additions of designated hitter Hideki Matsui and outfielders Josh Willingham and David DeJesus would help improve their offense enough to take advantage of superior pitching.

Their 3.14 ERA leads the American League, but the A's have experienced an offensive funk that has stretched the entire season.

Of their starting position players who have been with the team all season, only center fielder Coco Crisp (.267) is hitting above .250.

Matsui sits at .209 with just six homers. DeJesus is hitting .220, and Kurt Suzuki -- counted on to produce in the bottom third of the order -- is at .225.

As a team, the A's rank third-worst in the majors in batting average (.233) and slugging percentage (.337). They are second-to-last in on-base percentage (.299).

Oakland managed just six hits Sunday and advanced not a runner past second base.

If there's one hope the A's cling to for the second half, it's that career numbers dictate that some of their veterans have to heat up at the plate.

"Usually, the numbers sort of even out," said Willingham, who leads the team with 11 homers and 44 RBIs.

Sunday's game turned on a single pitch.

After walking Josh Hamilton with two outs in the sixth, Cahill elevated a 1-0 fastball that Adrian Beltre belted for a two-run homer. It was the third homer in three days for Beltre, who spurned the A's pursuits each of the past two offseasons.

A's Update: Shortstop prospect Grant Green named MVP of MLB Futures Game

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

ARLINGTON, Texas -- A's shortstop prospect Grant Green won Most Valuable Player honors Sunday at the Futures Game, which pits the major leagues' best American prospects against an international squad.

Green, the A's first-round draft choice in 2009 and currently playing for Double-A Midland, doubled twice, scored a run and had an RBI as the United States beat the World team 6-4 at Chase Field in Phoenix.

Green, 23, was ranked by Baseball America as the A's top prospect entering the season.

It's unclear whether Green will remain a shortstop or if a move to third or second base is in his future.

Hosting a live chat during the game, ESPN analyst Jim Bowden was asked if Green or Orioles shortstop prospect Manny Machado was more likely to stick at shortstop.

"I think both," Bowden responded. " ... Remember, Cal Ripken didn't have phenomenal range either and he's a Hall of Famer."

Trevor Cahill was strong in the A's 2-0 loss to the Rangers, tossing 7 2/3 innings and allowing two runs on five hits. Cahill takes an 8-7 record and 3.12 ERA into the All-Star break. After a hot start to the season, he endured a rough patch before finding his form again. Cahill has given up just three earned runs combined over his past two starts (14 2/3 innings).

Brandon McCarthy will start the A's first game out of the break Friday against the Angels. Cahill and Rich Harden will start in Saturday's doubleheader (who starts which game hasn't been decided), and Gio Gonzalez goes Sunday.

A fifth starter won't be needed until July 19, with Guillermo Moscoso still the front-runner. Tyson Ross (strained oblique) is a candidate but has struggled in his rehab starts.

The A's suspended minor league pitcher Ian Krol indefinitely for violating club policy with "inflammatory and derogatory comments on Twitter" on Sunday, according to a team release. Krol's comments included a homosexual slur.

The left-hander was the A's Minor League Pitcher of the Year in 2010 while at Single-A.

Krol, 20, was suspended from his high school team as a senior reportedly for an alcohol-related incident before the A's selected him in the seventh round in 2009.

First baseman Conor Jackson was nursing sore ribs after his Saturday night collision at first with Texas' Elvis Andrus. He didn't play Sunday.

"It's just like I took a Mike Tyson jab," Jackson said.

Chin Music: Starting rotation plans and other pregame A's notes

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 7/10/2011 11:25am

This weekend certainly hasn't gone according to plan for the A's, and it's doubtful how much salvaging a win today will mean in the big picture. But certainly, the A's need something positive to draw on as they disperse for the All-Star break. Here's the pregame news coming out of the clubhouse:

—The starting rotation coming out of the break will go Brandon McCarthy against the Angels on Friday, Rich Harden and Trevor Cahill in Saturday's doubleheader and Gio Gonzalez on Sunday. The fifth spot is still up for grabs, but the A's won't need that fifth starter until July 19 at Detroit, thanks to off-days. Guillermo Moscoso remains the favorite to return to the big league rotation and make that start. Tyson Ross (strained oblique) is still an option, but he's struggled in two rehab starts with Triple-A Sacramento, giving up 13 hits and eight runs in just 5 1/3 innings. Ross is pitching for Single-A Stockton today

(Sacramento is off). "You want a guy to have some success (in a rehab start), and I know he does as well," A's manager Bob Melvin said.

With this setup, Harden will get eight days' rest before his next start, as Melvin wants to make sure the right-hander is fresh and healthy (there's no indication that Harden isn't healthy). Trevor Cahill will get one extra day of rest for each of his next two starts (thanks to off-days), an idea Melvin also prefers.

—It's no surprise that Conor Jackson isn't in today's lineup after the shot he took at first base last night from Elvis Andrus. Jackson said he's "pretty sore in a bunch of places," including his ribs. "I've never had a rib issue so I don't know what to expect here," Jackson said. "They're not broken, otherwise I wouldn't be able to raise my arms. It's just like I took a Mike Tyson jab."

I've never been punched by Tyson, but I imagine it can't feel too good.

—Hideki Matsui is also out of the lineup, with Chris Carter as DH and Adam Rosales getting a rare start at first base. Melvin said he simply wanted to get Matsui a little extra rest with the All-Star break beginning Monday, and that Matsui will return to the No. 3 spot on Friday against the Angels. "He'll never say it, but I really do feel like I extended him too much by playing him in the outfield a lot," Melvin said. "He really wasn't conditioned for it, but I needed him so badly."

After the break, Melvin envisions Matsui drawing maybe two starts a week in left to allow Willingham to DH and get a bit of rest.

Today's lineups:

A's — Weeks 2B, DeJesus RF, Crisp CF, Willingham LF, Sizemore 3B, Carter DH, Suzuki C, Rosales 1B, Pennington SS; Cahill RHP.

Rangers —Kinsler 2B, Andrus SS, Hamilton CF, Beltre 3B, Young DH, Cruz RF, Moreland 1B, Napoli C, Murphy LF; Harrison LHP.

A's stumble into break, lose to Texas again, 2-0

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

In something of a show-and-tell first-half finale, the A's displayed exactly why their season to date is a failure.

After the A's came into 2011 with high expectations, their inability to hit and score has doomed them to last place and a record that keeps sliding. On Sunday, Oakland got its requisite strong pitching performance, this time from Trevor Cahill, but the A's fell 2-0 to division-leading Texas. The Rangers have won seven in a row.

It was the American League-leading 10th time that Oakland has been shut out this season. Cahill has received zero run support in each of his past three outings.

"If he pitches like he did today, he's going to win a lot of ballgames," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "He's an elite pitcher."

The Rangers swept the four-game series, pushing the A's 12 games back in the AL West, their largest deficit since finishing the 2009 season 22 games out. Oakland's record is 39-53, and it's the first time the team has been 14 games under .500 since Sept. 13, 2009.

Oakland had just two hits through the first five innings against Rangers starter Matt Harrison, and the team never managed an extra-base hit. Only two men made it past first base.

"The team got into some decent counts, but just didn't get any good swings," Melvin said. "We were in good counts but couldn't do anything with it."

"It's tough, but the guy over there threw better than I did," Cahill said. "Right away, I could tell his stuff was electric."

As a nifty, at-the-break primer of what's gone wrong, this was it. Oakland has hit .205 over the past 18 games and .233 for the season, the second-lowest average in the league. The A's also have the second-lowest slugging percentage (.337) and on-base percentage (.299) in the AL.

"Very frustrating," Oakland outfielder Josh Willingham said of the team's offensive performance in the first half. "We know we can play better than this."

Home runs have been few and far between: 50 in the first half, the fewest in the league. The team hasn't had a three-homer game since May 2.

Oakland's pitching, meanwhile, is first rate. The A's have the best ERA in the league, 3.14. The only runs Cahill allowed Sunday came on a two-out homer by Adrian Beltre, who has hit one out in each of the past three games. He rejected free-agent advances from the A's the past two winters.

Hideki Matsui, who is 0 for his past 14, wasn't in the lineup. Melvin said that the day off was planned, and he feels as if he's probably tired Matsui out with too much use in the outfield the past few weeks. After the break, Melvin said, Matsui is likely to play in left no more than twice a week, serving as designated hitter when Willingham is in left.

Willingham is the top candidate to be traded now that the team appears out of contention. He will be a free agent, he's been a target of the Phillies for years, and he leads the A's with 11 homers.

Coco Crisp, who had two of the A's hits Sunday, is a free-agent-to-be, and his 26 steals are second most in the American League.

Bob Melvin sets post-All-Star break rotation

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Oakland's post-break rotation is set, with **Brandon McCarthy** to pitch Friday against the Angels, **Rich Harden** and **Trevor Cahill** going in Saturday's double-header and **Gio Gonzalez** on Sunday.

Manager **Bob Melvin** took the opportunity to get Sunday's starter, Cahill, an extra day off. Harden, who spent the first three months of the season on the disabled list, will get eight days between starts. If Gonzalez doesn't get into the All-Star Game on Tuesday, he'll also get eight days off.

The fifth spot is almost assuredly still **Guillermo Moscoso's**. He'll start at Triple-A Sacramento on Thursday, putting him on turn for July 19 at Detroit.

The other possibility, right-hander **Tyson Ross**, is not precisely in line for that July 19 start; he made a rehab start at Class-A Stockton on Sunday, meaning his next turns would fall on Friday and then July 20. Ross pitched an inning, allowing two hits, a walk and a run. He struck out one batter.

Melvin said Sunday that he'd like to see Ross have success before he returns. In two starts with Triple-A Sacramento, Ross has allowed 13 hits and eight runs in 5 1/3 innings.

Jackson sore: **Conor Jackson** said he was OK after getting steamrolled by **Elvis Andrus** of the Rangers at first base the night before, but he said he felt as if he'd taken "a **Mike Tyson** punch" to the ribcage. Melvin said Jackson was unavailable.

Minor-leaguer suspended: **Ian Krol**, considered one of the A's top pitching prospects in the lower levels, was suspended indefinitely Sunday for a derogatory comment on Twitter that included a homophobic slur and offensive language.

Krol, a 20-year-old left-hander, was a seventh-round pick in 2009. He was suspended for his senior season of high school ball for violating team policy. Just back after an elbow injury, he has thrown five scoreless innings for the A's rookie team in Arizona, but last year, Krol had a standout season, going 10-4 with a 2.80 ERA at Class-A Kane County and Stockton.

A'S LEADING OFF

Tweet tidings: Left-hander Gio Gonzalez, heading to his first All-Star Game, will be tweeting from tonight's Home Run Derby. He's @GioGonzalez47. Gonzalez flew to Phoenix with the Rangers' large All-Star contingent after the game.

Drumbeat: A's postgame rotation plans; banged-up Jackson sits

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Rangers Ballpark 7/10/2011 10:53am

The A's post-break rotation features Brandon McCarthy starting against the Angels on Friday, Rich Harden and Trevor Cahill going in the Saturday doubleheader, and Gio Gonzalez on Sunday. Manager Bob Melvin hasn't decided whether Harden or Cahill will pitch first in the doubleheader.

The fifth-starter spot is still not a lock, though Guillermo Moscoso remains the frontrunner to go July 19 at Detroit. Tyson Ross, the other possibility, will start today for Class-A Stockton, with Triple-A Sacramento off the next few days.

Ross has allowed 13 hits and eight runs in 5 1/3 innings in two rehab outings with Sacramento, and Melvin said he'd like to see him have some success before considering bringing him back. Ross has been out since mid-May with a left oblique strain.

Melvin didn't want to start Cahill right out of the gate on Friday when he had the luxury of giving him an extra day, and he said it makes sense to give Harden more rest - he'll be going on eight days' rest in that doubleheader against the Angels.

Here's the lineup behind Cahill: Weeks 2b, Crisp cf, Matsui lf, Willingham dh, Sizemore 3b, DeJesus rf, Carter 1b, Powell c, Pennington ss.

Melvin said Conor Jackson, smoked at first base by Elvis Andrus last night, might be available to pinch hit. Jackson told me he feels OK today, but he described the collision with Andrus as a "Mike Tyson punch" to the ribs.

Melvin has Adam Rosales at first rather than Chris Carter because, Melvin said, Rosales has so much energy he needs to play in the field rather than DH.

I'm not sure Carter has made a strong impression with his glove, either. Well, actually, maybe it is a strong impression, but it's not a good one. He was replaced pretty quickly after failing to catch a foul pop that Melvin said pretty firmly was Carter's play last night.

The A's need a win today. As Melvin said last night, they don't want to be swept in four games going into the break by the division leader and then have to dwell on that for another four days.

A's Green wins XM Futures Game MVP Award

By Jonathan Mayo / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- Supposedly, familiarity breeds contempt. For A's prospect Grant Green, however, it helped him win the Larry Doby Award as the XM Futures Game MVP on Sunday.

Green went 2-for-2 with two doubles, an RBI and a run scored to earn the honor. His second double started a three-run, eighth-inning rally for the United States Team to allow it to come from behind and beat the World Team, 6-4. That one came

against the Royals' Kelvin Herrera, a reliever with nasty stuff who has gotten the better of Green in the Double-A Texas League when they've met in the past.

"I've faced him two or three times and I think I have two or three broken bats," said Green, who plays for the Midland RockHounds during the season. "It's about time I finally barrel something up on him."

He barreled it up and then some. Green got all of it, hitting it to straightaway center field, where he thought he had a home run. But thanks to the big wall at Chase Field, it landed just below the home run line and he had to stop at second.

"I thought it was gone," Green said. "I didn't know it was a 15-foot-high wall. I thought it was a normal wall. I even heard from people in the stands when I got to second base, telling me to hit the weight room. The shortstop [Jurickson Profar] was cracking up behind me. It's all fun and games. That wall's huge. They need to lower that thing, make me feel good about myself."

His first double came off the Rangers' Martin Perez, who also makes his living in the Texas League. That two-base hit brought home the Giants' Gary Brown to give the United States a 3-0 lead in the fifth inning. That, combined with this being his second straight time in the Futures Game, certainly didn't hurt Green's performance.

"[There were] a lot less nerves," Green said. "It helped that the two guys I faced, I've seen before in the Texas League. I've faced them numerous times, so I knew exactly what they wanted to do and what pitches they had. It made it a lot easier, and I was much more comfortable."

That's even with being out of his normal defensive comfort zone. While some scouts have said they are unsure if Green will be able to stay at shortstop long term, that's really the only place he's played as a pro after being taken as a first-round Draft pick in 2009. But he moved over to play second for the U.S. Team on Sunday, though A's fans shouldn't get too used to seeing him on that side of second base.

"Jemile [Weeks] is a hell of a second baseman," Green said. "He's not going to be moving off that position any time soon. They came up before the game and asked if I could play second. We had Manny [Machado] and Tim [Beckham], two excellent and very young shortstops. I said, 'Yeah, sure, if that's where you need me to play.'"

After Green's second double kicked off that eighth-inning rally, it was Beckham who doubled him home to tie the score. He, too, narrowly missed leaving the yard, with about three feet keeping the Rays' prospect from laying claim to the MVP Award.

"You come into the game just wanting to have a good game, man," Beckham said. "If you get the MVP, you get the MVP. But that's a great honor, and I'm happy for Grant over there. He's a great ballplayer."

The way the game began, it looked like the U.S. Team's starting second baseman, Jason Kipnis, would be the Larry Doby Award winner. The Indians prospect hit a leadoff homer off Braves prospect Julio Teheran to give the U.S. a 1-0 lead in the first inning, automatically becoming the early front-runner. But Kipnis was just fine with how things turned out.

"That would've been sweet," Kipnis said with a smile. "But the guy who replaced me did a great job and deserved it."

Green got off to a slow start to the 2011 season, but started putting up the numbers most have come to expect from the offensive-minded shortstop. To be able to keep it going here, in front of scouts and team executives, is nothing but a good thing for the 23-year-old, and he's the first to admit it will give him a nice boost as he heads back to the Texas League, right after he gets the chance to celebrate with those who were here to watch him play.

"I think, to them, it shows you can compete against the cream of the crop of other organizations," Green said of the executives on hand to watch the game. "For us, too, it's the type of thing you want to do well."

"It was a nice breath of fresh air after being in that Midland heat. This is like my All-Star break. I'm going to go out with my family again tonight, and I have a 6 a.m. flight back to Springfield."

Cahill handed hard-luck loss as bats scuffle

Offense manages six singles, squandering righty's solid start

By Todd Wills / Special to MLB.com | 7/10/2011 7:17 PM ET

ARLINGTON -- Josh Willingham stood by his locker after another loss to the Rangers and answered a flurry of questions he didn't appear crazy about, because that's what baseball players do sometimes.

Is he frustrated? Yes, very. Is he looking forward to the All-Star break? Yes. Will the A's turn it around on offense in the second half? As a team, he said, they have to believe they can.

The latter was probably the toughest question after the A's pieced together six singles and didn't get a runner past second base in a 2-0 loss to the American League West-leading Rangers on Sunday afternoon, as Major League Baseball hit its All-Star break.

That was enough to hand Trevor Cahill a loss on a day when he had his sinker going, except for one pitch he left up to Rangers cleanup hitter Adrian Beltre. That fastball stayed up and over the middle of the plate, and Beltre sent it over the center-field fence for a two-out, two-run home run in the sixth inning.

The A's got three runners on base in the last three innings, one on an error. They had two singles in the eighth inning, but one of those runners was erased on a double play, and another was caught stealing.

The A's reached the break with a league-low 50 home runs. They were shut out for the 11th time on the season, the most in the American League. Those are tough numbers, but Willingham said the A's can turn things around because several starters are having seasons well below their career numbers.

"If I didn't have confidence, I wouldn't be playing the game," Willingham said. "You have to have confidence in yourself."

The break could serve the A's well. They were swept in four games in Texas and limped into the All-Star break with a 39-53 record, 12 games out of first place.

Cahill certainly didn't deserve to lose. He allowed five hits on a sweltering day at Rangers Ballpark in Arlington. He had 5 2/3 shutout innings under his belt before he walked Josh Hamilton. Cahill then fell behind Beltre with a 1-0 count before leaving a fastball up over the middle of the plate. Beltre crushed it for for a 2-0 lead.

"Trevor pitched great," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "The one pitch he got beat on he was trying to throw a backdoor sinker, and he got it up and over the plate. One swing ended up costing us."

Cahill was cruising before the walk and two-run home run, retiring nine Rangers in a row. He kept the ball down and induced 14 ground-ball outs in 7 2/3 innings.

But Rangers starter Matt Harrison also had good stuff on Sunday, and Cahill said he knew right away that one mistake could get him beaten.

"It's tough, but the guy over there threw better than I did," Cahill said. "You could tell right away his stuff was electric. His velocity was up higher than I've seen it. He came out and wowed us."

The A's offense -- minus Conor Jackson and Hideki Matsui, one out with sore ribs, the other appearing as a pinch-hitter in the ninth -- had two innings where it had runners on first and second and didn't capitalize. Adam Rosales grounded into a fielder's choice in the second inning; Willingham struck out and Scott Sizemore grounded out in the fifth.

"I knew I had to keep attacking the zone and make them put the ball in play," Harrison said. "With a team like that, when you walk the guys, you're giving them a chance. You don't want to make a mistake, but you still got to make them swing the bats."

The A's have lost 22 of their past 28 road games heading into the All-Star break. They are 3-7 in July and go into the All-Star break with a losing record for the third consecutive season. Their 39-53 record is their worst record at the break since they were 37-52 in 1997.

"Luckily, we have four days to relax and get our minds off of baseball and come in like it's a new half," Cahill said. "It will do good for us. We have a couple of guys banged up and a couple of guys need a mental break."

Can the bats match the A's solid pitching staff?

"The numbers usually even out," Willingham said. "That's what we have to hope for."

Shortstop prospect Green primed to make mark

Former A's first-round pick wins MVP award at 2011 Futures Game

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- A quick peek at Grant Green's numbers one month into the 2011 season didn't exactly suggest a second straight selection to the XM All-Star Futures Game.

But the 23-year-old Green, one of Oakland's top prospects, has since progressed offensively and, as a result, was found preparing for that game on Sunday at Chase Field in Phoenix with a handful of family members in tow.

Less than five hours later, Green was named Most Valuable Player of the contest after going 2-for-2 with two doubles, an RBI, a run and a steal, while helping the U.S. Team to a 6-4 victory over the World Team.

"It's great being here again," he said. "Knowing the A's selected me to come again, even though I'm not having the best season, and that they still see me in high regards -- it's a good feeling."

Green is hitting .288 with just four home runs through 76 games with Double-A Midland, and while those numbers aren't overwhelming, considering he compiled a .318 average with 20 homers last year, it's worth considering the fact he struggled to hit .200 in his first month in the hitter-friendly Texas League.

"It's a new challenge, hitting in that league," he said. "It's difficult. I'm not used to the weather yet. Since I didn't have a very good start at first, I tried to go back to my college swing, stay inside balls and go the other way with it. I said, 'Forget the power numbers because I'd rather get my average up.'

"I'm happy getting doubles. It's the type of thing where I know I'm not going to be a 20-homer guy in Oakland. Not in that ballpark."

Green, a 2009 first-round Draft pick by the A's, used to put a time line on his journey to the Majors. Last year, he told himself he'd be in Midland by the middle of the season but, instead, finished with Class-A Stockton.

"You just can't let that get into your head," he said. "As long as I get to the big leagues, that's all that really matters. And I want to be the type of player that gets there and stays there. I don't want to go up for a bit and then wait a year in Sacramento before I get called back up."

The A's are seemingly ready for the future, as evidenced by Jemile Weeks' everyday presence at second base. Green, considered a possible long-term answer at shortstop if he can continue to improve defensively, hopes he's next in line to make a quick mark on the big stage.

"I was stoked for him, especially with all the injuries he's had," Green said of Weeks. "I think the people in the organization finally got to see what he's capable of when he stays healthy. Everyone knew it. And when he got called up, he made the best of the situation."

"Hopefully, I can do what he did, and we can play together. I'm looking forward to it. My time will come, and it will just depend on not only when I want it to but when they want it to."

Melvin designs rotation to rest Cahill, Harden

By Todd Wills / Special to MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- A's manager Bob Melvin announced his post-All-Star break rotation before Sunday's game in Texas, naming Brandon McCarthy as Friday's starter against the Angels in the second-half opener.

The move was designed to give ace Trevor Cahill an extra day of rest after starting Sunday against the Rangers, and to give Rich Harden some extra time before his next start. Cahill and Harden will start Saturday's doubleheader against the Angels, and Gio Gonzalez, the A's lone All-Star representative, will start Sunday.

Melvin said he was still unsure of the A's fifth starter coming out of the break. The A's have two off-days on June 18 and 21, so they could go with four starters until a fifth one is needed.

Melvin did say he wants to make sure Cahill gets two starts with an extra day's rest and he also wants to be careful with Harden, thus the decision to bring McCarthy back first after the break.

"It will be hot today [in Texas]," Melvin said. "You want to make sure when [Cahill] comes back he's able to play catch the next day and therefore I gave him an extra day and then with the off-day that's two starts with an extra day."

Harden hasn't thrown 100 pitches yet through the first half, and with his injury history, Melvin also wants to play it safe.

"I want to make sure he's fully rested when he goes out there to pitch," Melvin said.

Jackson out of lineup to rest sore ribs

ARLINGTON -- The A's Conor Jackson was out of the lineup on Sunday with sore ribs after a collision at first base in the ninth inning on Saturday with Rangers shortstop Elvis Andrus.

Jackson hadn't hit in the batting cages when he talked to the media before the game, so he was unsure whether he would be available as a pinch-hitter. But he does expect to be back in the starting lineup after the four-day All-Star break.

"There are a million things that could have happened there," Jackson said. "I got out of it pretty fortunate. I took a good shot to the ribs. I've never had a rib issue. It's not broken. Just took a Mike Tyson jab."

Jackson was reaching for the ball up the left-field line and had to come off the bag for a lofted throw from second baseman Jemile Weeks. Andrus crashed into Jackson and fell on top of him. Both players were able to remain in the game.

Worth noting

- Right-hander Tyson Ross (strained left oblique) has one more rehab start scheduled, and how that goes will determine if he returns as the A's fifth starter.

"You want a guy to have some success and I know he wants to as well," manager Bob Melvin said.

- Outfielder/DH Hideki Matsui was given Sunday's game off after a long stretch of playing in 26 of the A's past 28 games. Matsui played eight games in left field because of Josh Willingham's injury, and Melvin said that might have taken its toll. Matsui is hitless in 14 at-bats and 5-for-41 over his past 12 games. Matsui now gets Sunday off plus the four-day All-Star break.

"He'll never admit it or say it, but I feel like I extended him too much by playing him in the outfield a lot," Melvin said. "And it's not like he's not prepared for that, but at that point, he wasn't really conditioned for it. He'll be back hitting third the first game after the break."

- The A's likely will go into the break with the fewest home runs in the American League. The A's had 50 homers entering Sunday. Minnesota had 54 and Seattle had 55.

A's try to find momentum against surging Angels

By Tom Green / MLB.com | 7/10/2011 6:39 PM ET

The A's will have a chance to rebound from a tumultuous first half when they open a set of four games in three days at home against the Angels on Friday.

Oakland missed a golden opportunity to make waves in the American League West before the break, getting swept in four games by the Rangers, but will try to right the ship against another division foe to start the second half.

Following a sweep at the hands of the Rangers to close the first half, the A's dropped to 14 games below .500 for the first time since Sept. 13, 2009. Right-hander Brandon McCarthy will try to right the ship after returning from the disabled list (shoulder) shortly before the break.

He will have a tough task, though, trying to slow the streaking Angels. Entering the break, the Angels were the hottest team in baseball and won 11 of their final 13. Since June 13, their 19-6 record is best in the Majors.

"This is the team that I thought we should have," Torii Hunter said.

That team has also come to life at the plate recently, which has helped during its recent tear. The Angels hit 16 home runs during their 13-game homestand leading into the break, including five by Mark Trumbo, who pushed his rookie-leading total to 17 before the break.

"I'm happy the way we're playing right now. It's like all cylinders are clicking," Hunter said. "All our young guys are stepping up and swinging the bats well. Our defense is a lot of fun. Pitching staff's been pitching pretty well. Sometimes you just have to ride that bike 'til the wheels fall off."

Angels: Haren to start second half

- Angels manager Mike Scioscia all but confirmed that Dan Haren will lead off the rotation after the break because Jered Weaver will pitch in Tuesday's Midsummer Classic. After that, it is likely Weaver and Ervin Santana will pitch in Saturday's doubleheader.

"This guy is a grinder," Scioscia said of Haren. "This guy is an extraordinary talent with the ability to command the baseball with anybody in the game right now, and he competes as well as anyone I've ever seen. You put that together, you can see why he's been so good."

A's: Melvin sets rotation to rest Cahill, Harden

- Manager Bob Melvin announced his rotation coming out of the break. After McCarthy takes the mound in the opener, righties Trevor Cahill and Rich Harden will start the two games Saturday, giving both some extra time off after their last outings. Gio Gonzalez, the A's lone All-Star representative, will close out the series on Sunday.

- Melvin is still unsure of the fifth starter in Oakland's rotation going into the second half. Guillermo Moscoso, who was optioned to Triple-A Sacramento before the break, is the front-runner to start in Detroit on July 19, but righty Tyson Ross (left oblique) is also nearing a return from the disabled list, and has one more rehab start to find his pre-injury form.

Worth noting

- The A's lead the season series, 5-4, and have won both meetings in Oakland this year.

Rangers blank A's, 2-0

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ARLINGTON, Texas — Matt Harrison pitched six-hit ball into the eighth inning, Adrian Beltre homered in his third consecutive game and the Texas Rangers extended their winning streak to a season-best seven games with a 2-0 victory over the A's on Sunday.

Harrison (7-7) struck out seven and walked one in 7 2-3 innings, and Neftali Feliz completed the shutout by working a perfect ninth for his 18th save in 22 chances.

After Josh Hamilton drew a two-out walk in the sixth, Beltre lifted a 1-0 pitch from Trevor Cahill (8-7) into the seats in left-center for Beltre's 19th of the season.

Beltre and Hamilton are two of five Rangers on the AL All-Star team.

AL West-leading Texas opened the season with six consecutive wins, then topped that streak with a four-game sweep of Oakland.

A game played in 98-degree heat wrapped up an emotional weekend for both teams following the death Thursday of a fan who reached for a ball tossed into the stands by Hamilton.

Brownwood firefighter Shannon Stone tumbled over a rail, falling about 20 feet to the concrete below. He died less than an hour later.

Cahill nearly matched Harrison before faltering in the sixth. Cahill gave up two runs and five hits in 7 2-3 innings with three strikeouts and two walks.

Cahill entered the game with an 8-2 record and 2.18 ERA in 11 career starts against Texas.

Oakland was shut out for the 11th time this season and is 5-13 in its last 18 games after a six-game winning streak.

The A's fell to 16-32 on the road and a season-worst 14 games under .500 (39-53).

The Rangers have outscored opponents 53-22 during the seven straight victories that moved them a season-high 10 games over .500 (51-41).

NOTES: A's 1B Conor Jackson sat out the game after sustaining bruised ribs in a collision at first base with Texas' Elvis Andrus in the ninth inning of Saturday night's game. Jackson said the ribs weren't broken, but he had trouble raising his arms.

... Rangers manager Ron Washington set his rotation for after the All-Star break: LHP Derek Holland, RHP Colby Lewis, LHP C.J. Wilson, Harrison and RHP Alexi Ogando. RHP Scott Feldman, on the DL while recovering from offseason right knee surgery, will be activated after the break. Feldman, a 17-game winner in 2009, was a candidate to join the rotation, but Washington's immediate plan is for Feldman to work out of the bullpen.

... A's manager Bob Melvin announced his postbreak rotation: RHP Brandon McCarthy, RHP Rich Harden, Cahill and LHP Gio Gonzalez. ... A's C Kurt Suzuki was struck in the left ankle by a foul ball off the bat of Texas' Mitch Moreland in the seventh, but Suzuki remained in the game after he was on his back in pain for a few minutes.

It's time for this group to step up to the plate

Nick Cafardo, Boston Globe, 7/10/2011

1. **Albert Pujols**, 1B, Cardinals - Pujols wasn't himself, then broke his wrist, and was left off the All-Star team for only the second time. He's in his contract year and we expect a big second half if he's physically able. Pujols could be the difference in propelling the Cardinals past the pack that includes Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati.
2. **Carl Crawford**, LF, Red Sox - What's it gonna be, boom or bust? The high-priced free agent acquisition has missed a month with a hamstring injury, but is scheduled to return this week. Will we see the player in which the Sox invested seven years and \$142 million, or the fraction of that player we've seen so far? The Sox need Crawford performing well to make this lineup truly head and shoulder above others.
3. **CC Sabathia**, LHP, Yankees - He'd better not get hurt. There's no player more valuable and who is tied in more to the Yankees' present and future success than Sabathia.

4. **Roy Oswalt**, RHP, Phillies - If he does, indeed, return in late August and he's the money pitcher he's always been, pencil in the Phillies for the National League pennant. They will have their Big Four intact and there won't be a team that can boot them off their perch.
5. **Ichiro Suzuki**, RF, Mariners - The Mariners are in the AL West race, but unless Ichiro gives them the Ichiro of the last 10 seasons, it likely won't happen for them. Ichiro has had the worst first half of his career, and failed to make the All-Star Game for the first time. There's certainly pressure on general manager **Jack Zduriencik** to make a deal for a hitter, but Ichiro is the catalyst.
6. **Aubrey Huff**, OF, Giants - One of the keys to the Giants' success last season, the cleanup hitter has been awful. His numbers (.238 average, .290 on-base percentage, .364 slugging percentage) aren't cutting it. If he starts hitting, the Giants won't need to give away the farm to get a bat. With a productive Huff and **Pablo Sandoval**, they'll score enough runs to back their superior pitching.
7. **Zack Greinke**, RHP, Brewers - Considering what the Brewers gave up to get him and how much they're paying him, they need him to be a lot better than his 5.45 ERA. Greinke needs to be an ace if the Brewers hope to play in October.
8. **Joe Mauer**, C, Twins - Mauer missed two-plus months with bilateral leg weakness, and when he played he didn't play well. The Twins have made a bit of a comeback, but it won't matter if Mauer doesn't carry this offense.
9. **Pedro Alvarez**, 3B, Pirates - Alvarez, who has been on the disabled list since May 20 with a strained quadriceps, has hit just .208 with two homers and 10 RBIs in 36 games. If he comes back and hits like he did in the second half last season as a rookie - .270, 13 HRs, 53 RBIs in 71 games - it will be better than any trade the Pirates might be able to swing.
10. **Kurt Suzuki**, C, A's - Where has the offense gone? Former A's pitching coach **Curt Young** raves about Suzuki's handling of pitchers and his presence behind the plate. But Suzuki could always handle the bat, as well. Not this year. The A's get an "F" for offense, but one of the guys they've always depended on is Suzuki, who needs to hit.
11. **Jayson Werth**, RF, Nationals - Maybe Washington isn't really a threat to earn a playoff berth, but it certainly won't do it with Werth being a virtual non-factor offensively since signing that enormous seven-year, \$126 million deal. There was much debate from the Red Sox' perspective over Werth or Crawford. So far, it hasn't worked out for either team.
12. **Chris Antonetti**, GM, Indians - The Indians aren't fading as we thought they might. So hanging in requires enhancing your team. Antonetti and team president **Mark Shapiro** have said they will not make moves that require giving up prospects. This limits them, but they obviously need hitting with **Shin-Soo Choo** out until September with a broken thumb and **Grady Sizemore** not the player he once was.
13. **Ozzie Guillen**, manager, White Sox - If the White Sox stay in their malaise, when does it become apparent that Guillen's ready to leave for another job, and how strict will management be in making him honor the final year of his contract in 2012? Wonder if this becomes a Guillen-to-Florida and **Tony La Russa**-to-Chicago scenario.
14. **Jose Reyes**, SS, Mets - A left hamstring strain has sent him to the DL with a .354 average, which leads the majors. The injury, if prolonged, may work in the Mets' favor. If they can't trade him at the deadline, it may help them re-sign him.
15. **Mariano Rivera**, RHP, Yankees - His elbow has been tender and the Yankees' bullpen has some injuries, including to **Rafael Soriano** and **Joba Chamberlain**. Rivera has always been the rock. Let's see if he can be that in the second half.
16. **Dan Uggla**, 2B, Braves - Uggla was the Braves' big offensive acquisition, but he's had the first half from hell. The Braves need run production to go along with a pretty nice pitching staff. Uggla must be one of their more productive hitters.
17. **Josh Hamilton**, LF, Rangers - Hamilton will have to deal with watching a man topple over the railing to his death after he flipped the man a ball to give to his son. What a tragedy. Not an easy thing for anyone to deal with, let alone Hamilton,

who has overcome so many demons in his life. Hamilton had a mediocre first half for him - .293/10/46 - and as the centerpiece of the Rangers' offense he needs to be his dominating self in the second half.

18. **Jered Weaver**, RHP, Angels - He's having a Cy Young-type season, and while **Dan Haren** has been outstanding, losing Weaver for any stretch would doom the Angels, who have a good chance of taking the AL West.

19. **John Lackey**, RHP, Red Sox - If Lackey could give the Red Sox a respectable second half, it would go far in them winning the AL East. This is a great time for Lackey to show veteran leadership with **Jon Lester** and **Clay Buchholz** on the shelf.

20. **Carlos Beltran**, CF, Mets - Beltran is going to influence whichever team he goes to at the deadline. He was on Boston's radar before the Sox signed Crawford (would they have been better off with Beltran?), and the Sox may still be interested. The Giants definitely have their sights set on him.

NOT SITTING WELL

Mariners' Gray awaits chance Remember **Roger LaFrancois**, who spent the 1982 season with the Red Sox as a catcher? He was there from Game 1 through Game 162, and had 10 at-bats with four hits. He never played in the majors again, finishing with a .400 average. He played in eight games for **Ralph Houk** that season, with **Gary Allenson** doing the bulk of the catching and **Rich Gedman** the primary backup.

That one might be the all-timer, but in this day and age when all players seem to play a significant amount, the Mariners have righthander **Jeff Gray**, who was claimed off waivers from the White Sox May 13, and has been on the roster since.

Word is he's healthy, but as of Friday he'd appeared in just three games, not facing a batter since June 11.

What's happened? Mariners pitching has been decent since his arrival, eliminating the need for the long man. Manager **Eric Wedge** has relied heavily on his top four relievers - **Brandon League**, **David Pauley**, **Jamey Wright**, and **Aaron Laffey**, and somewhat on **Chris Ray**.

MARKET WATCH

Relievers may be available The reliever market is heating up, and the prize appears to be **Heath Bell** (left). The Padres' closer could wind up in different scenarios, though not necessarily as a closer. The Yankees are sniffing around, given the losses of setup men **Rafael Soriano** and **Joba Chamberlain**, and elbow issues that have cropped up with **Mariano Rivera**.

According to one major league source, the Rays are also interested, and able to offer a good package of young players. But the Rays have to determine over the next two weeks whether they have enough firepower to seriously compete with the Red Sox and Yankees for a playoff spot.

The Rangers, Diamondbacks, and Phillies are also monitoring Bell.

There are other teams who could be selling. The A's need offense and have lefthanders **Craig Breslow** and **Brian Fuentes** to offer. **Grant Balfour** and **Michael Wuertz** are also possible chips. The Blue Jays may be ready to sell, with **Jason Frasor** the major piece, though **Octavio Dotel** or **Shawn Camp** may be intriguing to some teams.

There's also interest in Baltimore's **Mike Gonzalez**, a lefty who could fill a situational and/or setup role. The Padres may listen, too, on setup man **Mike Adams**.

ETC.

Apropos of nothing 1. The Orioles' **Matt Wieters** is the only catcher with more than 40 starts this season who has not been charged with a passed ball. He had caught 640 1/3 innings through Friday; 2. While in Houston recently, the Herald's **Scott Lauber** and I shared a cab, and were surprised to hear that the driver was **John Drew**, former Atlanta Hawks star who has driven a cab for 14 years; 3. Loved **Mike Scioscia's** line to describe **Justin Verlander** getting out of a fifth-inning jam in his 1-0 loss to the Angels: "[Verlander] went from electric to nuclear."; 4. Astros officials are really against a move to the AL West. They don't buy the theory of a rivalry against the Rangers; 5. Well done, **Derek Jeter**.

Updates on nine 1. **Scott Kazmir**, LHP, free agent - There hasn't been a lot of interest. The Padres and Rangers have taken a look, but Kazmir was so messed up, it would take a good amount of time to straighten him out. Not as bad as the **Dontrelle Willis** downfall, but as one press box scribe said, "He looked like a lefthander trying to throw righthanded." Now *that's* messed up.

2. **Adam Dunn**, DH, White Sox - Since the All-Star break last year, Dunn is hitting .192 with 24 homers, 76 RBIs, and 204 strikeouts in 495 at-bats (through Thursday). "This guy is too good not to get it going," Royals manager **Ned Yost** said. "When he gets to the point where he just says, 'Screw it,' and gets back to not thinking about it, he's going to be OK."

3. **Dayan Viciedo**, OF, White Sox - While Dunn struggles, the Cuban-born Viciedo is hitting .325, with 16 homers, 62 RBIs, and a .909 OPS in 87 games at Triple A, with four homers in his last 10 games. He's stuck in the minors because **Juan Pierre**, **Carlos Quentin** or Dunn would have to sit to get him big league at-bats, and manager **Ozzie Guillen** doesn't want to do that. GM **Ken Williams** has basically said it's Guillen's call, and Viciedo has turned into the most discussed prospect for a Chicago team since maybe **Mark Prior**.

4. **Jason Kendall**, C, Royals - Kendall's career might be over, after it was revealed he has re-torn two tendons in his right rotator cuff. The 37-year-old is scheduled for surgery Wednesday. "That takes him out of the picture for this year and out of the picture for next year," Yost said. "I think it's more a quality-of-life surgery so he can have function in his shoulder." His 1,990 starts as a catcher rank fourth in history. Kendall has a .288 average with 75 homers and 744 RBIs in 2,085 career games, and has been selected to three All-Star teams.

5. **Aramis Ramirez**, 3B, Cubs - The Cubs would love to make a deal for Ramirez, who is in the final year of his contract earning \$14.64 million, with a \$2 million buyout. Thing is, there aren't many places to go. The hottest interest seems to be coming from the Angels. The Mariners have finally benched **Chone Figgins** and are going with rookie **Kyle Seager** and they need hitting, so Ramirez, with an .854 OPS, would be welcome. Other teams who might have interest include the Giants (though what do you do with **Pablo Sandoval** and **Aubrey Huff** at the corners?), the Braves (who need the bat but not at that position), the Angels, and possibly the Diamondbacks.

6. **Matt Garza**, RHP, Cubs - The Cubs may not deal him, but baseball people insist they would have to listen. Garza, 4-7 with a 4.26 ERA, is AL East battle-tested and would have to appeal to the Yankees and Red Sox.

7. **Mike Cameron**, OF, Marlins - The Marlins needed veteran leadership and it looks as if Cameron may be able to provide it for **Jack McKeon**. Question is, can he back that up with good play? Cameron will get a chance to play more center field, which he prefers to the corners. He should be a good influence on **Mike Stanton**. "I'm coming out here fresh," said Cameron, who will receive just under \$200,000 of his remaining \$7.5 million salary from the Marlins. "Hopefully my mind is fresh. I haven't played every day since spring training. I haven't gotten much time on the field other than a few at-bats here, a few at-bats there, so I'm looking forward to it. Especially going back to the middle of the diamond, I expect it will be a little bit of a grind, but once my legs get under me I should be OK."

8. **Justin Masterson**, RHP, Indians - Looks as if the Red Sox gave up a gem in the **Victor Martinez** deal. That's not breaking news, but it may haunt them considering they spent all that money on **John Lackey** and Martinez turned into a rent-a-player. Masterson's 2.66 ERA is top 10 and his 7-6 record is due, in part, to his team being shut out in four of those losses. He was 5-0 in April, winless in May and June, before dominating the Yankees, who had six lefthanded batters go a combined 0 for 19. He's throwing a sinking fastball at 95-96 miles per hour. Pretty nasty.

9. **Jaime Garcia**, LHP, Cardinals - The Cardinals are being proactive with Garcia, who is 21-11 over the last two seasons. He's about to sign a four-year, \$27.5 million deal, which will take him through the first year he's eligible for free agency. The Red Sox recently did this with **Clay Buchholz** and would probably like to do it with **Jacoby Ellsbury**, who with **Scott Boras** representing him will likely avoid such a deal. Garcia was going to be arbitration-eligible after this season.

Short hops From the **Bill Chuck** Files: "The Charlie Sheen Award: There is very little difference in the numbers of **C.J. Wilson** (3.02 ERA, 1.208 WHIP), **Hiroki Kuroda** (3.06, 1.221), and **Paul Maholm** (3.08, 1.219) except in one key category: winning. Wilson is 8-3 (.727), Kuroda is 6-10 (.375), and Maholm is 5-9 (.359)." Also, "**Carlos Quentin** in the

final year of his contract with the White Sox has dramatically improved his fielding in right field. Last season, he had a minus-21 Total Zone rating, and this year it's a plus-8." . . . Happy 57th birthday, **Andre Dawson**.

Fido and Me

George Shirk, Mammoth Times, 7/10/2011

I am trying to teach Fido baseball.

He's doing pretty well since April, but he's got a ways to go.

There is no set way to teach a dog baseball. For that matter, there's no set way to teach a human, either. It's an acquired thing, based on repetition.

"Wanna learn baseball?" I says to Fido as the season began. Snow was falling outside.

Fido says, "Hey Hey Hey Hey!"

So we began.

My idea was to latch on to one team, and one set of broadcasters. Me, I subscribe to mlb.com audio. My team is Oakland. The broadcasters are Ken Korach and Vince Cotroneo.

There is a cadence to a baseball broadcast. I figured if Fido could become familiar with the sound of the announcers and the cadence, he might learn to pick up on the exciting bits, and we'd go from there.

There wasn't a lot that was exciting about the Opener. The A's dropped a 6-2 game to the Mariners. One hundred, sixty-one games to go.

Fido stretched out on The World's Largest Dog Bed (the couch) and kept his eyes closed the whole time. But when there was something afoot, I reached across the couch and lifted his head by the withers.

"Fido! Fido!" I says, "Something's up!"

Fido says, "Umm."

It's not like Fido's actually sleeping when he has his eyes closed like that. It's that his eyelids just get too heavy for him. He's paying attention, but in that dog kind of way.

I slipped a hand under his jaw and lifted him further up.

Fido opened his eyes and said, "Hey Hey Hey Hey."

Over time, when Korach or Cotroneo would reach a fever pitch, I'd lift Fido's head and go through the routine again. April turned into May, May into June, June into July.

I enjoyed it. Fido was hard to read.

A note: Fido is a 70-pound chow-retriever mix. He's about four years old. The people at the Whitmore Shelter estimated his age, but testified to his temperament. He's loyal (chow). He has a retriever's temperament (mellow).

Last week Fido had a breakthrough.

During an afternoon game against Seattle (again!), the Mariners took a 4-0 lead and were hanging on like a terrier on a pants leg.

In the eighth, however, the A's rallied. Korach and Cotroneo raised their pitch to match the events on the field.

Suddenly an Oakland run. Then another run. Then a man on base. The crowd noise rose behind the broadcasters. The tying run was at the plate.

Me, I leaned forward.

I looked toward Fido.

By God, his eyes were open.

"Good dog," I says, and I scampered over to the World's Biggest Dog Bed and ruffled the fur on his head. "Good dog!"

The Athletics rally died right then and there, and there was nothing for the Green and Gold in the ninth.

Fido set his head on his paws and closed his eyes.

It's not easy, teaching baseball to a dog.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Hounds Break Loose With Five Homers

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

The RockHounds and Springfield Cardinals combined for 27 runs, 30 hits, six home runs and six errors on a 100-degree Sunday evening at Hammons Field. Springfield had more hits (17-13) and, thankfully, errors (five to one), but the 'Hounds re-discovered the joy of hitting, belting five of the home runs and breaking a 4-game slide with a 15-12 win.

Among the highlights and statistical goodies:

- The RockHounds built leads of 10-0 and 15-8, with Springfield rallying back to twice draw close enough to make the game a "save" situation.
- The 'Hounds hit for the "home run cycle," capped by back-to-back shots in the eighth inning. Jeremy Barfield belted a Grand Slam, and Ryan Ortiz followed with a solo shot. Barfield's "slam" was the RockHounds' fourth this season. Michael Spina, Grant Green and Stephen Parker have each hit one in 2011.
- In three games (27 innings) in the Arkansas series, the 'Hounds scored four runs. They scored five in the first three innings Sunday. The 'Hounds scored in just two of 27 innings at North Little Rock, then scored in the first five innings Sunday.
- At Arkansas, the RockHounds scored four runs in three games. They had five home runs in Sunday's game.
- Springfield's five errors didn't do nearly as much harm as you might think. Only two of the 'Hounds' 15 runs were unearned.
- Wes Timmons led the attack, going 3-for-6 with a home run and four RBI.
- Gary Daley, pitching against his former team (he was a member of the Springfield Cardinals in 2009 and most of last season), didn't allow a run until the fifth inning. The four runs allowed over 6.0 innings were twice as many as in any of his previous six starts. Daley was the winner, improving to 4-1. Gary was 0-1, 7.30 in his first three starts with the RockHounds in 2011. In his last seven, he is 4-0, with a 2.12 ERA.
- Grant Green missed his second game, but with a great purpose: he is representing the Oakland A's and the RockHounds at the major League Futures All-Star game, his second consecutive appearance in the Minor League showcase game.

ROAD 'HOUNDS - The RockHounds complete their 6-game road trip with Monday & Tuesday games versus the Springfield Cardinals at Hammons Field in Springfield, Missouri. It all "balances out," of course, but the 'Hounds are in a stretch of the season in which the club plays 18-of-24 games on the road.

ROCKY TOWN - The RockHounds return home for a weekend series with the Texas League's top club, the San Antonio Missions, beginning Thursday, July 14. The 'Hounds will host San Antonio on "Thirsty" Thursday through Sunday the 17th at Citibank Ballpark. Check out all the details at www.midlandrockhounds.org.

Ports Squeeze Out Series Split

Stockton Ports

What began as a game that was all Ports through six innings became very close competition as the Modesto Nuts battled back with a huge offensive seventh inning. Ultimately, the Ports would hang onto the win, splitting the series with Modesto with a final score of 9-8 in the series finale on Sunday.

Making a rehab start with Stockton, Tyson Ross was off to a bit of a rocky start in the first. Ross gave up a single to center fielder Delta Cleary Jr., and a walk to second baseman Angelys Nina. Right fielder Kent Matthes came to the plate and singled to left field, bringing Cleary Jr. around to score the first run of the game.

Facing Nuts starter Nick Schnaitmann, the Ports would pull ahead in the bottom of the first. Left fielder Myrio Richard led things off with a double to right field. He would be brought in as third baseman Michael Gilmartin homered for the 10th time this season, off the left field foul pole, giving the Ports a 2-1 lead.

Ross came out intending to pitch in the second, but did not start that inning. After the game, Ross cited discomfort while pitching as the cause of his early departure and indicated that his exit was a mutual decision between himself and manager Webster Garrison. Instead, James Simmons took the mound. Simmons struck out two then drew a ground out to end the inning swiftly.

Schnaitmann pitched two more scoreless innings, but the Ports would heat up in the fourth, beginning with a solo home run for first baseman Anthony Aliotti. Designated hitter Jason Christian would reach on an error - a ground ball through the legs of third baseman Carlos Martinez.

Shortstop Dusty Coleman would keep things going with a single to left. Right fielder Rashun Dixon struck out for the inning's first out before catcher Ryan Lipkin doubled, bringing in Christian and Coleman. Second baseman Conner Crumbliss came to the plate and knocked his first home run of the season out to right field.

Crumbliss's home run would spell the end for Schnaitmann who, in 3.1 innings gave up seven runs on seven hits. Leuris Gomez would replace him on the mound, but the Ports would continue to hit. Richard doubled then reached third on a bock, scoring on a single by Gilmartin. Stockton left the fourth with an 8-1 lead.

In the top of the fifth, A.J. Huttenlocker took the mound for the Ports, Simmons having gone three scoreless innings. Huttenlocker would also hold Modesto scoreless through his two innings of work.

The Ports would extend their lead by another run in the fifth as Dusty Coleman hit a solo home run to right-center field. The fifth would be Gomez's last inning, Chad Rose coming in in the sixth and retiring the Ports in order.

Trouble would begin for the Ports in the seventh. Scott Deal came in to start the inning, and catcher Beau Seabury would lead things off with a single. Deal would strike out Martinez and walk Cleary Jr. before Modesto's bats really got going. Nina doubled, Matthes singled and advanced to second base, and designated hitter Kiel Roling doubled, bringing in a total of four runs for the nuts before Connor Hoehn would come in to replace Deal.

Hoehn would walk and hit his first two batters before drawing a ground out from first baseman Jared Clark, which scored another run. Seabury would bat again in the inning, singling and bringing in two more runs for a total of seven runs in the inning. Josh Lansford would come in as the third pitcher of the inning, striking out Martinez to get out of the seventh.

Stockton would face Coty Woods in the bottom half. Center fielder Michael Choice would get his first hit of the night, a single to center, but the Ports failed to get a run out of it.

Jose Guzman would take the mound for Stockton in the eighth. Guzman would hold Modesto, striking out three with a walk mixed in.

Kurt Yacko would be the Nuts pitcher in the bottom half. Yacko struck out Dixon before giving up a single to Ryan Lipkin. Modesto would end the threat when, on the strike out of Crumbliss, Lipkin was caught stealing to end the inning.

Ultimately, the Ports would cling to their one-run lead. Guzman would get the save, striking out two, walking one, and getting Seabury to chop out for the final out.

The Ports get a much needed off day before making the long bus ride down to Bakersfield to face off against the Blaze at Historic Sam Lynn Ballpark. Rob Gilliam will take the mound for the Ports on Tuesday.

Cougars Take Game Two

By Jon Versteeg, Burlington Bees

GENEVA, IL -The Kane County Cougars (12-5) scored five runs in the second inning to power their way past the Burlington Bees (6-11) by a score of 7-5 at Elfstrom Stadium on Sunday afternoon.

The Bees scored a single run in the first inning against Kane County RHP Jason Adam (3-4). CF Jose Crisotomo singled (2-2) and went to second base on a single by 3B Tony Thompson (3-5). 1B Josh Whitaker (3-5) added an RBI single to left field to score Crisotomo for a 1-0 lead

The Cougars scored two runs in the first inning against Burlington RHP Nate Long (5-3). RF Alex Llanos (3-4) doubled and scored on a double by LF Brian Fletcher (1-3). 3B Cheslor Cuthbert (2-4) added an RBI single to score Fletcher for a 2-1 lead.

Burlington took a 3-2 lead on a solo home run by Crisotomo over the right field wall for a 3-2 lead.

Kane County pushed five runs across home plate in the second inning, including a grand slam home run from Cuthbert for a 7-3 lead.

Whitaker added an RBI single in the fifth inning to score Landaeta to get the Bees within three runs at 7-4. The Bees scored another run in the eighth inning to inch closer at 7-5. With DH Nino Leyja (0-2) at third base and LF Royce Consigli (1-3) at first base, CF Jose Rivero (0-4) grounded into a double play to score Leyja from third base.

The Bees finish their series with the Kane County Cougars on Monday at 6:30 p.m. RHP Josh Bowman (6-2, 3.11) gets the start for the Bees against RHP Leonel Santiago (6-6, 3.01) for the Cougars. Pre-game coverage begins at 6:10 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at www.gobees.com.

Lake Monsters 8-2 Win On Sunday

By Paul Stanfield / Vermont Lake Monsters

BURLINGTON, VT --- Sean Jamieson went 3-for-4 with two runs and two RBI to lead the Stedler Division-leading Vermont Lake Monsters to an 8-2 victory over the McNamara Division-leading Staten Island Yankees in New York-Penn League action Sunday afternoon at historic Centennial Field.

Vermont jumped out on top in the bottom of the first as Jamieson and Jordan Tripp both singled and then executed a double steal with Jamieson scoring the game's first run. The Yankees quickly tied the game in the second with a sacrifice fly before the Lake Monsters took the lead for good with three runs in the bottom of the second.

An Aaron Shipman RBI groundout gave Vermont a 2-1 lead and Jamieson followed with an RBI single to short scoring Chad Oberacker, who had doubled earlier in the inning. Jamieson then scored all the way from first on a Chih-Fang Pan single to rightfield as the throw back into the infield went towards second base and Jamieson kept running around third to just beat the throw home.

The Yankee got another sacrifice fly for their second run in the fourth before Diomedes Lopez led off the bottom of the inning with his third home run of the season for a 5-2 Vermont lead. The Lake Monsters added three insurance runs in the eighth on a Jamieson RBI single to center and Pan two-run double down the rightfield line.

Ryan Hughes (1-0) gave up two hits with two walks and two strikeouts over three scoreless innings for the win in relief of starter Seth Frankoff, who allowed two runs on four hits over the first four innings. Pan went 2-for-5 with three RBI and Oberacker scored twice for Vermont (14-7), which has now won nine of its last 12 games.

The loss snapped a four-game winning streak for Staten Island (18-4), which had also won 17 of its previous 18 games before the loss on Sunday. Shane Brown went 2-for-3 with two runs and a double, while starter Wilton Rodriguez (0-2) allowed four runs on six hits in three innings for the loss.

Vermont and Staten Island will wrap up the three-game series at Centennial on Monday beginning at 7:05 pm. Monday is also "Hot Dog Heaven" at the ballpark with 25-cent hot dogs on sale throughout the night courtesy of McKenzies.

