

**Oakland A's have to use six relievers to preserve win**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

A's right-hander Brandon McCarthy went nine starts without a victory, and the dry spell nearly continued Friday night.

Oakland's bullpen settled down after a rocky sixth inning, McCarthy was rewarded for his effort, and the A's started their second half with a 5-3 win over the Los Angeles Angels.

"It's just nice to get us a win again," McCarthy said. "I've had some bad luck in games I've thrown, and I haven't done my job when I have been given a lead. This time I was able to do it."

Much went right for the A's in the opener of a four-game series.

Josh Willingham, hitting third after swapping batting-order spots with Hideki Matsui, hit a monster two-run homer and went 3 for 4. Matsui, batting cleanup, chipped in a run-scoring single in the eighth to add an insurance run.

The A's got some nice defense, too, including a pretty diving catch from right fielder David DeJesus in the fourth.

Had the bullpen not righted the ship, it wouldn't have mattered.

With the A's leading 4-1 in the sixth inning, manager Bob Melvin needed to burn through six relievers to finish things off.

That's not the ideal scenario leading into Saturday's doubleheader, but the A's did snap a four-game losing streak before a home crowd of 18,470.

McCarthy (2-5) was solid, giving up six hits over 5 1/3 innings, striking out seven and walking one.

He left with one out and a runner on in the sixth with the A's leading 4-1.

Michael Wuertz entered and promptly walked three straight batters, throwing 12 balls in 14 pitches and forcing in a run.

He was relieved by Joey Devine, who lasted just four pitches and left with upper-back spasms. Brad Ziegler entered with the bases loaded and a 3-1 count on rookie Mike Trout.

Ziegler allowed Trout's run-scoring single but then coaxed a 4-6-3 double play from Erick Aybar to end the inning and keep the A's ahead 4-3.

Craig Breslow, Grant Balfour and Andrew Bailey closed it out, giving McCarthy his first win since April 10 at Minnesota, his second start of the season. He did miss six weeks with a stress reaction in his right shoulder.

"I would prefer not to do it like that," Melvin said. "But Ziegler came up big for us against Aybar."

Devine hurt his back when his left foot landed awkwardly in a hole during his second warm-up pitch. He began pitching to Trout but lasted only four pitches.

"It's very minor," said Devine, who didn't know his availability for Saturday.

Willingham's two-run shot to left highlighted a three-run third inning off Dan Haren (10-6), the former Athletic who surrendered a season-high-tying 10 hits.

Willingham's name is mentioned often in trade rumors, and how well he hits will help dictate the market for him as the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline approaches.

He launched a 2-0 pitch from Haren about seven or eight rows deep in the second deck. He's believed to be the first player to reach the Coliseum's second deck in left field since Frank Thomas in August 2006.

"That was the farthest ball I've seen hit in a game here," said Ziegler, who broke in with the A's in 2008.

McCarthy allowed a run in the fifth but did well to minimize the damage. He struck out Howie Kendrick and Torii Hunter to strand runners on second and third, keeping the score 4-1.

### **Oakland A's update: Chris Carter sent back to Triple-A Sacramento**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's optioned first baseman Chris Carter back to Triple-A Sacramento on Friday, leaving the question of where he fits in the team's future plans.

In 10 games since being recalled June 23, Carter hit .133 with no RBIs and 14 strikeouts in 32 plate appearances.

Oakland is 121/2 games back in the American League West, and now appears the perfect time to give top prospects such as Carter an extended look. But the A's obviously feel he has a long way to go.

"I think confidence plays in it for him, and he's going to have to find a way to believe in himself," manager Bob Melvin said.

Melvin added that Carter appeared "apprehensive" at times defensively.

In 34 career major league games, Carter, 24, has hit .170 with three homers, seven RBIs and 35 strikeouts in 110 plate appearances.

Infielder Eric Sogard was recalled to take Carter's spot on the 25-man roster.

The A's and Angels on Saturday will play the first scheduled doubleheader in the major leagues since 2003.

"Hopefully we get a lot of fans," A's closer Andrew Bailey said. "If we could do one or two a year, I think it would be a cool thing to look forward to."

The A's expect 26,000-28,000 for the doubleheader.

The idea was hatched by the A's marketing department, and players and officials from both teams had to approve the doubleheader. Making it easy to approve, according to A's player rep Brad Ziegler, was the fact that Oakland has days off Monday and Thursday.

Melvin said he doesn't like to use relievers twice in a doubleheader but added: "I wouldn't mind using Bailey for about 10 pitches twice."

Shortstop Grant Green, the A's top prospect according to Baseball America, played his first game in center field Friday for Double-A Midland.

"We're going to explore it," general manager Billy Beane said. "We think it's something he could take to very well, and it's a big void in the organization right now. We've thought that his bat will get him to the big leagues quicker than his glove."

Green has made 58 errors at shortstop since the start of the 2010 season. There's been thought among scouts, ever since Green was drafted out of USC in 2009, that a position switch might be in his future.

### **Chin Music: Chris Carter sent down, Eric Sogard called up; Grant Green debuts in center field for Double-A Midland**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune 7/15/2011 6:39pm

The second half of the season appears a great time for the A's to get their top young prospects some major league exposure. But on the first day after the All-Star break, the A's sent Chris Carter the other direction, optioning the first baseman to Triple-A Sacramento and recalling middle infielder Eric Sogard. It's a clear sign that the A's brass doesn't regard Carter as part of the solution for the team's current offensive woes. At this point, you have to wonder where Carter fits into the A's thoughts at all. He hit .133 with no RBIs in 10 games during his call-up and hardly distinguished himself with the glove.

I've been of the opinion that the A's need to draw a conclusion on Carter by season's end – is he a part of this team's future or is it time to look for another young 1B/DH type? Perhaps the A's have already made that decision. Manager Bob Melvin

was careful to point out Carter's biggest strength. "One of the attributes he has that we don't have a whole lot of here is power." But Melvin's other comments were more telling. "I think confidence plays in it for him, and he's gonna have to find a way to believe in himself," Melvin said.

—Sogard has played strictly shortstop all season for Sacramento, but Melvin said he'll get work at second, short and third. If he doesn't debut in Saturday's doubleheader, he will surely play Sunday. Melvin said Cliff Pennington may play shortstop in both games tomorrow and get Sunday off.

—A noteworthy development at Double-A Midland: Shortstop Grant Green, the A's top prospect according to Baseball America, played center field for the first time Friday night. He'll get more time there in the future. "We're going to explore it," general manager Billy Beane said. "We think it's something he could take to very well. It's a big void in the organization right now. We've thought his bat would get him to the big leagues quicker than his glove. It's a way to merge the two and address an organizational need." Green's defense has been rough at shortstop since being drafted in the first round out of USC in 2009. He's made 58 errors since the start of the 2010 season.

Tonight's lineups:

A's – Weeks 2B, Crisp CF, Willingham LF, Matsui DH, Sizemore 3B, DeJesus RF, Jackson 1B, Suzuki C, Pennington SS; McCarthy RHP.

Angels – Aybar SS, Hunter RF, Abreu DH, Wells LF, Kendrick 2B, Callaspo 3B, Trumbo 1B, Mathis C; Trout CF; Haren RHP.

### **Josh Willingham and A's open 2nd half with a bang**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Almost five years ago, in August 2006, Frank Thomas hit a homer into the second deck in left field at the Coliseum.

No member of the A's had done so since - until Friday night, when Josh Willingham opened the second half with a big bang, a two-run shot five rows up in Thomas territory above the Budweiser sign off former Oakland All-Star Dan Haren.

The A's went on to defeat the Angels 5-3, ending their four-game losing streak and their American League West foe's four-game winning streak.

For the power-challenged A's, this was a good way to return from the break.

"That's the furthest ball I've seen hit here in my four years," reliever Brad Ziegler said. "You think Frank Thomas, Mark McGwire, Jose Canseco - not many people can hit it to that area."

Willingham, whose homer came with two outs in the third, leads the A's with 12 home runs and 46 RBIs, but he's also the prime possibility to be traded in the next two weeks. He'll be a free agent after the season, he's a right-handed hitting outfielder, and he's coveted by at least one team, the Phillies.

If he were expected to be a Type-A free agent, the A's might be tempted to hang onto him and get a first-round draft pick as compensation after the season. But Willingham projects as a Type-B free agent, as do all of Oakland's impending free agents, including outfielders Coco Crisp and David DeJesus and reliever Michael Wuertz.

There is little doubt that the A's, 12 1/2 games out in the West, would move some players if the deal were right.

"I think we'd have to consider all options at this point," A's general manager Billy Beane said. "With our record and the standings, we have to leave everything open."

Wuertz came in with a man on and one out in the sixth and walked three in a row, sending in a run. The next reliever, Joey Devine, left with back spasms after taking his first batter to a 3-1 count. Devine called the spasm "minor" and said he believes it will calm down by today's doubleheader.

Ziegler, in for Devine, gave up an RBI single, then induced an inning-ending double play, getting slick, quick work from second baseman Jemile Weeks and shortstop Cliff Pennington.

Weeks and Hideki Matsui also drove in runs.

A's starter Brandon McCarthy went 5 1/3 innings and allowed six hits and two runs. He struck out seven and walked one. Andrew Bailey earned the save with a perfect ninth, striking out two.

Oakland was denied a run on a poor call in the fourth. Conor Jackson, who'd driven in a run earlier in the inning, tried to score from second on Kurt Suzuki's single to right. He sailed over catcher Jeff Mathis as the throw came in, landed on the plate and tumbled off it without being tagged, but plate umpire Dan Iassogna called him out.

### **Chris Carter sent down by A's**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Oakland's top power-hitting prospect was sent down Friday, but manager **Bob Melvin** said **Chris Carter's** departure doesn't mean he won't be back.

"He certainly has a lot of ability, and one of the attributes he has that we don't have a lot of here is power," Melvin said.

The manager added that there weren't going to be a lot of at-bats for Carter with **Josh Willingham** back in the lineup. Melvin had been quick to replace Carter after two miscues in the field and said that the first baseman looked "maybe apprehensive at times" in the field.

Pacific Coast League All-Star shortstop **Eric Sogard**, who was called up Friday, is a left-handed hitter who can also play second and third base, and that versatility might be needed with a doubleheader today.

The A's had faced several left-handed starters at Texas last week, perfect for the right-handed Carter, but the Angels are throwing all right-handed starters this weekend.

Carter hit .133 with no RBIs in 10 games but, as Melvin noted, has struggled in his initial move up to every level. Last year with Oakland, Carter went 0-for-his-first-33 but in his final two weeks with the team hit .342 with three homers and seven RBIs.

Carter - usually a first baseman, designated hitter or outfielder - played third base and went 0-for-4 at Triple-A Sacramento on Friday because of minor injuries elsewhere in the infield. He played 41 games at third at Class-A Stockton in 2008.

**Double dip:** Today's doubleheader is the first scheduled before the season in the major leagues since August 2003, and the players on both teams had to agree to it. The A's said OK last year, when it was first proposed; player rep **Brad Ziegler** checked with the team's veterans, and they all were in favor, especially because it allowed for an extra day off after the break.

Not everyone is a fan, though.

"I hate them," outfielder **David DeJesus** said. "Most guys want to play one game a day. Two is hard on the body."

Most A's relievers said that they would be available to pitch in both games today; right-hander **Michael Wuertz** said he's done so before. **Brian Fuentes** has too.

"I'd love to. I think it would be cool," closer **Andrew Bailey** said. "It would be great to get two saves in one day."

Melvin said that he would prefer not to use any of his relievers in both games.

## **A's Leading Off**

**Changing spots:** Grant Green, the MVP of Sunday's Futures Game, is moving from shortstop at Double-A Midland to center field, and he'll be there regularly, according to assistant GM David Forst. The shift could hasten Green's arrival in the big leagues.

### **Drumbeat: A's send down Chris Carter, call up Eric Sogard**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum, 7/16/2011 5:28pm

First baseman/DH Chris Carter was optioned out to Triple-A Sacramento today and infielder Eric Sogard, a Pacific Coast League All-Star, was called up.

Manager Bob Melvin said that with Josh Willingham back from the DL, Carter wasn't going to get consistent at-bats, and it had been apparent from the way he was used recently that his time with the club might be short.

Sogard, who can play shortstop, second and third, will provide more versatility tomorrow, when the A's have a doubleheader, and Melvin noted that Sunday also will be important to have an extra super-sub, the day after a doubleheader.

Melvin emphasized that "just because Chris is gone now doesn't mean he won't be back later," and that's what he told Carter yesterday when he sat down with him. He also noted, as many club officials often do, that Carter does take awhile to get adjusted to each new level, always starting off slow after every promotion - which we all know from Carter's 0-for-33 last year followed by a strong final two weeks in which he hit .342.

Carter didn't do much in this callup, hitting .133 with no RBIs, and when I asked Melvin about Carter's defense, he did say that Carter appeared "maybe apprehensive at times." I'm sure Carter will get another shot this year, but the next time, he needs to really grab the opportunity, or the chances are going to start to dwindle.

Sogard made a nice impression in a brief callup last September, going 3-for-7. He's primarily been at shortstop at Sacramento after mostly playing second his previous pro seasons.

Here's the lineup behind Brandon McCarthy, and it's former A's All-Star Dan Haren on the mound for the Angels: Weeks 2b, Crisp cf, Willingham lf, Matsui DH, Sizemore 3b, DeJesus rf, Jackson 1b, Suzuki c, Pennington ss

Matsui's moved from third to cleanup, as Melvin said yesterday would happen, and several people have told me today they think Matsui finally will get that 500th career homer, combined between the majors and Japan, out of the way tonight.

Several A's relievers told me today that they could pitch in both games of the doubleheader tomorrow if needed - Michael Wuertz is among those who's done it before, and Brad Ziegler and Andrew Bailey said they could, too. Bailey said he'd like to get two saves on one day.

Melvin said he'd prefer not to use anyone in both games, though he does like the idea of two saves for Bailey.

## **Willingham's big night leads A's past Halos**

By Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Sitting in the American League West cellar at the midway point of the season, A's manager Bob Melvin knew his team would have to find consistency at the plate to complement the team's stellar pitching.

Hosting the division-rival Angels to begin the second half of the season, the A's did just that, coming away with a 5-3 win on Friday night in the Coliseum behind double-digit hits and a rare display of power to back another solid outing from a starting pitcher.

After getting on the board first, thanks to a Jemile Weeks RBI single in the third, the A's -- who ranked last in the AL in home runs and near the bottom of the Majors in offensive output -- found the offensive surge they lacked for much of the first half of the season, when Josh Willingham launched his 12th home run of the season off Angels starter Dan Haren (10-6) to put the A's up, 3-0.

"He's the guy in the lineup, certainly, that can hit it out of any park, any field, really," Melvin said. "That's what we've been looking for, to get him back in the lineup and do stuff like that."

The round-tripper landed in the second deck in left field, marking the first time a home run had been hit that far since Frank Thomas belted one there in August 2006.

"That was the furthest ball I've seen hit in a game here in my four years," reliever Brad Ziegler said. "That was really impressive. Josh was swinging it well all night, so [I] just hope he can keep it up and be that rock in the middle of the lineup for us."

Oakland tacked on another run in the fourth behind back-to-back knocks from David DeJesus and Conor Jackson to give the club a four-run lead, and an insurance run in the eighth on Hideki Matsui's RBI single. But none were as big as Willingham's two-run blast.

"I saw the ball when it landed, and it was an absolute -- that ball was crushed," starter Brandon McCarthy said. "I do want to see a replay, because I didn't get to see it off his bat. But it's just nice when there's a flash of power like that. It's fun to watch."

Along with giving the A's offense a needed boost, Willingham's shot gave McCarthy a comfortable lead to work with all night. McCarthy tossed 5 1/3 innings and gave up two runs -- one each in the fifth and sixth -- and struck out seven, while walking just one. The righty eclipsed 100 pitches for the first time since sustaining a stress reaction in his right shoulder in May.

"It's nice," McCarthy said of the run support. "This isn't meant to sound callous, but I don't care when it happens. I don't care if we're getting shut out, I don't care if we've got 15 runs. The only thing I can really focus on is the next pitch I throw, and the next pitch after that. If I start thinking about runs that were scored or not scored, I've lost what I should be focused on. It's nice looking back after the fact, having a bit of a cushion."

While McCarthy (2-5) was solid, the A's normally stout bullpen was shaky upon his exit in the sixth. Michael Wuertz walked the only three batters he faced to put a run across for the Angels, before Joey Devine entered and quickly exited four pitches later due to back spasms.

Ziegler then gave up an RBI single that cut the A's lead to one, before inducing a double-play ball by Erick Aybar to Weeks to end an inning that saw the A's use four different pitchers -- something Melvin hoped not to do the night before a doubleheader.

"It's not fun to watch, but you do have to have confidence in the guys out there that they're going to get out of it," McCarthy said of watching the sixth inning from the dugout. "You don't want to see a game get away from you when you've got a lead like that. It's not a selfish thing, we just need a win. We need to start winning and locking down games."

"We had opportunities to score with an out, and couldn't do it," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "We paid a price as the game went on. You're not going to score six, seven runs every night."

After Ziegler's double-play ball in the sixth, the A's bullpen returned to form, holding off a surging Angels team that had won a Major League-best 19 games since June 13. Andrew Bailey recorded his ninth save, and the A's halted a four-game skid and helped McCarthy return to the win column for the first time since April 10.

More importantly, though, the A's got the offensive output they needed to pair with their pitching to get the second half started on the right foot.

"Any win is big, but it's just fun," Ziegler said. "We had such a bad end to the first half, and we got a few days off to just sit back and relax -- and clear our minds a little bit and come back in here. We came out swinging tonight, and to get those runs early, it's big."

### **Devine exits with injury to upper back**

By Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Reliever Joey Devine left Friday night's 5-3 win against the Angels with thoracic spasms in his upper back.

The righty entered the game in the sixth, with the A's holding onto a 4-2 lead after Michael Wuertz walked the only three batters he faced. Devine, making his 23rd appearance of the season, left after tossing just four pitches.

Devine said he first hurt his back while warming up in the A's bullpen, landing in a hole created on the mound by the previous two pitchers warming up.

"I hit the hole on the wrong side, and my leg kind of went underneath me and caused my back to do something unorthodox. And everything just kind of grabbed up," Devine said.

Devine fell behind Angels center fielder Mike Trout, 3-1, before exiting the game because of the spasms. Right-hander Brad Ziegler came in for Devine and gave up a single to Trout, before getting out of the frame with a 4-6-3 double play and preserving a one-run A's lead.

Devine, who entered Friday with a streak of 83 straight games without allowing a home run, felt the pain in the middle-right side of his back, but said the injury was very minor. He hopes to be available for Saturday's doubleheader.

### **Aces match up in first game of doubleheader**

By Jordan Garretson / MLB.com

Somewhere, Ernie Banks is jealous.

The Hall of Fame infielder was in love with the game of baseball, leading to his most famous quote, an expression of his desire to play a doubleheader as often as possible: "Let's play two!"

The Angels and A's will do exactly that on Saturday, playing the Major League's first scheduled doubleheader -- not brought on by postponements -- since 2003. It's the Halos' first scheduled twin bill since 1978, and the first for Oakland since 1997.

Angels manager Mike Scioscia thinks the rarity could be a sign of things to come in the near future, particularly with the increased possibility of expanded playoffs. Doubleheaders would be crucial to ensure the season ends before November.

"They're going to have to be given more consideration as the league looks into reforming the schedule, [and a] change in the amount of teams in each league," Scioscia said. "A lot of things are going to have to be considered, and one of them is scheduled doubleheaders. We're already looking at incredible burdens of travel out West, and we're still pushing the schedule of playoffs almost into November. It's something that has to be put on the front burner."

For the Athletics, manager Bob Melvin might hope that two games in one day against the Angels leads to his club mirroring its opponent. Oakland has gotten sturdy pitching all season, but its offense -- the Majors' third-worst at 3.44 runs a game -- hasn't provided nearly enough support.

It was the same script for the Angels before their offense clicked, spurring their turnaround.

"[The Angels] struggled for quite a while with a team you expect to do good things offensively," Melvin said. "They finally hit their stride offensively, and look at what they're doing right now. It can be a simple fix. A lot of times, it's a couple, three, four games in a row where you swing the bats a little bit and it gets contagious. And that's what we're looking for."

#### **Angels: Weaver looks to continue dominance**

- Jered Weaver, coming off a scoreless first inning in Tuesday's All-Star Game, will toe the mound for the Angels in Game 1. He owns a Major League best 1.86 ERA, and is on pace for 20 wins.

"I'm looking forward to keeping it going, giving the team a chance to win every time I go out there," Weaver said. "I really like the way we've been playing. Our defense has been great all year."

- With the Angels moving center fielder Peter Bourjos to the disabled list on Friday, 19-year-old Mike Trout's first big league stay may last longer than originally expected. Trout went 1-for-4 on Friday, singling in Mark Trumbo in the sixth for his first Major League RBI.

- Ervin Santana will start Game 2 for the Angels. After an up-and-down first half, Santana finished strong, giving indications that he has put it all together, with his 91-94-mph fastball complemented by a wicked slider. If he can keep the ball in the park, he's one of the game's best.

#### **Athletics: Cahill gets the nod**

- Oakland right-hander Trevor Cahill will look for a change in script on Saturday. His last two starts have seen him hit with some bad luck -- tagged with a loss and a no decision despite giving up a total of three earned runs in 14 2/3 innings of work. Cahill was hit hard in his only start against the Angels this season, surrendering four runs on 10 hits in a 4-1 loss on May 25.

"Trevor pitched great," said Melvin of Cahill's last outing, in which he allowed two runs -- all on an Adrian Beltre homer -- in 7 2/3 innings against Texas on July 10 when Oakland lost, 2-0. "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."

- Andrew Bailey's save on Friday was the 60th of his career. He is one away from tying Jay Howell for the sixth-most saves in club history.



- Veteran Rich Harden will get the call in the nightcap. Harden allowed five runs in five innings in a 6-0 loss to the Rangers on Thursday. Harden did reach 98 pitches in his second start of the season. Harden has allowed a home run in each of his starts.

### **Worth noting**

- The Angels' 336 road wins since 2004 are the most in the Majors, but they have won only four of the last 13 games they've played in Oakland.

- Oakland hasn't won a season series from the Angels since 2003, but leads this year's series, 6-4.

### **Veterans face off in nightcap**

By Jordan Garretson / MLB.com

Somewhere, Ernie Banks is jealous.

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### **Doubleheader forces Melvin to juggle 'pen**

By Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Rarely are managers faced with the issue of using a pitcher twice in one day. But with the A's playing their first scheduled doubleheader in 14 years on Saturday, manager Bob Melvin will have to juggle his bullpen between the two games.

"I don't like to use a guy twice in one day," Melvin said. "Sometimes you have to -- and certainly there are ... guys more suited than others for that. But for the most part, I don't like to use a guy twice in one day."

Melvin didn't get into who he believes is suited for such a quick turnaround out of the bullpen, if necessary. One player he wouldn't mind using twice, under the right circumstances, is closer Andrew Bailey.

"I wouldn't mind using Bailey for 10 pitches twice [on Saturday], but we'll see how that goes," Melvin said.

And Bailey wouldn't mind being used in both games of the doubleheader, if the situation arose. The righty has recorded eight saves in 10 opportunities this season since returning from the disabled list (forearm), and has fanned 13 while walking just three. The 2009 American League Rookie of the Year has held opponents to a .170 batting average in 15 innings of relief.

"I'm totally comfortable with that," Bailey said. "For me, if my pitch count was under control and I didn't go out there and throw 25 to 30 pitches, I definitely feel I could come back and bounce back and help the team out in the second game. Hopefully, I'll have the opportunity to."

### **A's option Carter, recall Sogard**

OAKLAND -- Prior to beginning the second half of the season with a four-game home series against the Angels, the A's optioned rookie Chris Carter to Triple-A Sacramento and recalled infielder Eric Sogard.

The move comes just three weeks after the club called up Carter from Sacramento. But in 10 games in the lineup, Carter struggled, hitting just .133 with no RBIs. He started nine of the A's final 11 games before the break, including six at first base and three as the designated hitter.

"It seems like, at every level for him, it takes him a while to feel comfortable," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "I think that's been the case in Single-A, Double-A, Triple-A, and certainly here. ... It seems like it takes him a while to feel comfortable."

When Oakland called up Carter toward the end of last season, the slugger went 33 at-bats before registering a hit. And while he didn't get off to as slow a start this time around, he was never able to find his rhythm at the plate. With Josh Willingham recovered from a strained left Achilles tendon and back in the everyday lineup, Melvin said it would be difficult to get Carter in the lineup enough to build his confidence at the plate.

"That's a hurdle he's going to have to get over, and we talked about that a little bit [on Thursday]," Melvin said. "But, certainly, he has a lot of ability. And one of the attributes he has, that we don't have a whole lot of here, is power. Just because he's gone now, doesn't mean he won't be back at some point in time."

For the time being, though, Sogard is taking Carter's spot on the A's 25-man roster. Sogard was batting .298 and reaching base at a .381 clip in 79 games for Sacramento, while solely playing shortstop for the first time in his young career.

"Now, we have another left-handed bat that can play the middle infield, as well," Melvin said of Sogard. "He's had some success down there. I haven't seen him before, but from what I understand, he's a gritty little player."

While Sogard made all 73 of his defensive starts at shortstop for the River Cats this season, Melvin said the 25-year-old could see time at shortstop, second and third. The A's skipper also didn't rule out inserting Sogard into the lineup at some point during Saturday's scheduled doubleheader or Sunday's series finale -- especially with some of the Angels' starting pitchers having a better track record against righties than lefties.

Regardless of his role, Sogard, who was an All-Star in Triple-A this season, is excited for his second stint with the A's -- after making his Major League debut last September, when he went 3-for-7 in four games.

"I was hoping," Sogard said. "I never knew when the day would be. I went out and played every day hard, and [hoped] my day would come. Sure enough, it came. I'm extremely excited to be here, and will do what I can to help the team."

### **Weeks savors time with All-Stars**

OAKLAND -- Jemile Weeks has only been in the Majors since June. But when the A's rookie traveled to Arizona for All-Star Game festivities, he got an opportunity few rookies are presented with.

Weeks, the younger brother of Brewers All-Star second baseman Rickie Weeks, was at the Midsummer Classic as Rickie's guest, and the younger Weeks soaked in as much as he could during the break.

"Being around those guys, with that type of celebrity status and ability to play and be the best in the world, I was among them," Weeks said. "A lot of people would have loved to have been in that situation."

Weeks was on the field while his brother participated in the Home Run Derby, and said he was "star struck" by the experience and being around All-Stars who he grew up watching play.

"Honestly, all the guys that were there, most of them were guys that I've watched -- either through my Minor League ranks or growing up, I watched them," Weeks said. "Just to see all of them -- from [Jose] Reyes to seeing guys like [Troy] Tulowitzki, who I watched play a lot, or a guy like Scott Rolen, who you grow up watching -- just different guys who you don't see yourself being on the same field as. Those are the guys you really look at and are like, 'Wow.'"

Although he was surrounded by some of his childhood idols, Weeks didn't use the opportunity to pick anyone's brain, admitting he was perfectly content just taking in the experience. However, the time at the Midsummer Classic did inspire Weeks, who hit .287 for the A's before the break and was named the Co-Rookie of the Month for June, to strive to make it back as a participant, rather than a spectator.

"When it comes to stuff like that, those are the best in the game. And if you play this game, you might as well try to be the best," he said. "Hopefully, one day I'll be able to get there."

## Oakland hangs on to beat L.A.

OAKLAND — Brandon McCarthy won for the first time in nearly three months but it was teammate Josh Willingham's home run into the second deck that had the Oakland Athletics' clubhouse buzzing.

Willingham hit a towering two-run shot off Angels starter Dan Haren in the third inning, his 12th of the season and the first to reach the upper level in left field at the Oakland Coliseum since Frank Thomas did it in 2006.

"That was the farthest ball I've seen hit here," reliever Brad Ziegler said after the A's 5-3 win over the Los Angeles Angels on Friday night. "Not many people can reach that area. I hope he can keep it up and be that rock in the middle of the lineup that we need."

Willingham's homer highlighted his 3-hit day. The A's outfielder singled and doubled and is batting .450 since returning from the disabled list on July 7.

Oakland still has the fewest home runs in the American League with 51 but the power numbers look much better when Willingham is in the lineup.

"He's the guy in the lineup that can hit it out of any park, any field really," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "That's what we've been looking for, to get him back in the lineup and do stuff like that."

McCarthy (2-5) pitched into the sixth inning and matched his season high of seven strikeouts for his first win since April 10. The right-hander, who missed nearly seven weeks with a stress reaction in his right scapula, had to work out of trouble in almost every inning but held on for the win after the A's bullpen blew most of a three-run lead.

Jemile Weeks singled twice and scored, Kurt Suzuki added two hits and Oakland snapped its four-game losing streak while beating the Angels for the sixth time in eight games.

Haren allowed four runs and 10 hits as Los Angeles had a four-game winning streak snapped.

"I don't know if Dan was as sharp as we've seen him," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "He threw a lot of pitches early and they bunched some hits against him in that one inning. The most frustrating thing was how many chances we had with runners in scoring position. You're going to pay a price for that and we did."

Part of it was because of McCarthy, who ended his long winless drought with a solid but unspectacular outing.

McCarthy, 0-5 with a 4.14 ERA over his previous nine starts, scattered six hits and walked one.

"I'm not shy with how much I hate the win-loss stat ... but it's just nice to get us a win again," McCarthy said.

It wasn't easy.

The A's used three relievers in the sixth inning and six overall to hold off the Angels. Andrew Bailey worked the ninth for his ninth save in 11 tries.

Los Angeles, which went into the All-Star break on a 14-3 run, dropped 2 1/2 games behind Texas in the AL West.

Haren (10-6) had not lost to the A's in four career starts before this season but has dropped two straight against his former team. Oakland beat Haren on May 24.

Suzuki doubled leading off the third, was sacrificed over then scored on Weeks' single up the middle against a drawn-in infield. Two batters later, Willingham hit a 2-0 pitch into the second deck in left field to give the A's a 3-0 lead.

"I was trying to throw a cutter for a strike but I left the ball up in the zone and that's not where you want go," Haren said. "He made me pay for it. I was not commanding the bottom of the strike zone like I have been."

Oakland made it 4-0 on Conor Jackson's RBI single in the fourth but missed a chance for more when Jackson was thrown out at home trying to score on Suzuki's second hit of the game.

Replays appeared to show Jackson's hand hitting the plate as he tumbled over catcher Jeff Mathis but umpire Dan Iassogna ruled otherwise.

McCarthy, who worked his way out of jams with runners in scoring position each of the first three innings, lost his shutout bid in the fifth.

Russell Branyan drew a leadoff walk and took second on Mathis' infield single that started off in foul territory before hitting the edge of the grass and bouncing back fair. After McCarthy retired Mike Trout on a deep fly to center, Erick Aybar doubled to drive in Branyan.

McCarthy left after giving up a one-out single to Alberto Callaspo in the sixth then watched as Oakland's bullpen imploded.

Reliever Michael Wuertz walked three straight batters to force in one run. Joey Devine replaced Wuertz but lasted just four pitches before leaving with an apparent injury to his right side.

Trout greeted Brad Ziegler with an RBI single to make it 4-3 but Ziegler got Aybar to ground into an inning-ending double play.

Earlier in the day, the Angels placed Peter Bourjos on the 15-day disabled list and plan to keep the speedy outfielder there until July 23 because of his lingering hamstring injury. Bourjos was injured while rounding second base on an eighth-inning RBI double against Seattle on July 7.

Scioscia was forced to jumble his lineup further when cleanup hitter Vernon Wells fell ill before the game and was scratched. Bobby Abreu, scheduled to be the designated hitter, replaced Wells in left field and Branyan took over at DH.

## NOTES

The teams will play a doubleheader on Saturday, the first scheduled twin-bill in the majors since 2003. ... Los Angeles called up OF-INF Alexi Amarista from Salt Lake (PCL) to take Bourjos' spot on the roster. Amarista joined the Angels after making the trip from Tacoma earlier Friday. ... Angels RHP Fernando Rodney (upper back strain) will pitch at least one inning against San Jose in a rehab outing on Saturday. ... The A's sent struggling rookie 1B Chris Carter back to Triple-A Sacramento and called up INF Eric Sogard. Carter started nine of Oakland's 11 games before the All-Star break but was batting only .133 with no RBIs.

### **Ratto: A's display rare marketing savvy with twin bill**

Ray Ratto, CSNBayArea.com

First, you're not on the 405, so whatever stinks about your weekend is nothing.

Second, you get lots of extra baseball tomorrow as part of the first forward-thinking idea the A's have had since Jose Canseco.

Of course, they did this by looking backwards, but this is good backwards. The good-old-fashioned two-games-for-the-price-of-one doubleheader, as opposed to the sit-down-now-get-out-now-come-back-in-with-your-wallets-open doubleheader, or the we-got-rained-out-but-you-still-have-to-get-in-get-out-and-get-in-again doubleheader.

We don't often credit the A's with marketing savvy, since much of their marketing seems to hinge on the unstated proposition, "We don't really want to be here but since we are . . ." variety. And frankly, the only way this actually works is if the A's beat the Angels twice -- Trevor Cahill over Jered Weaver, and Rich Harden over Ervin Santana.

You see the problem here, right? The Angels look pretty good, twice.

But let's view this from the viewpoint of the meek inheriting the earth because, well, what the hell? Why not one time for the soft underbelly of the American League? Why not one big day for the folks who really need one?

The majority of doubleheaders end up in a mildly satisfying split -- which is to say a mildly unsatisfying split. Everybody gets something, and the A's are only 12, or 13 games behind Texas, and 15 or 16 games behind New York. They're still safe in 12th place, and the rest of the season is still an extraordinary slog just to seek relevance, especially when pitchers like Brett Anderson get a 12-month surgical hall pass.

Doesn't seem like a lot when you think about it, really.

But a sweep -- a sweep sends the audience home with songs in their hearts, twinkles in their eyes, and unconfined joy in every car, be it BART or Prius. A sweep brings hope. A sweep causes illusions to construct themselves in the imaginations of those who are sick to death of reality in all its ugly forms.

It is, in short, an all-or-nothing strategy built specifically for those who are short-stacked -- an all-in for the audience. Cheap adrenalin on a Saturday afternoon. You just hope the concessions stands don't run short of frothy cold Mother's Little Helper.

Doubleheaders fell out of fashion because baseball stopped wanting to give dates away to its customers. Every date was considered gold, and a new chance to optimize and monetize.

But the A's are trying somehow to shrink the product, whether it be by tarping the upper deck, keeping payroll and expenses under the kind of controls one typically finds in a central Asian village, and now, letting dates get away from them.

This is another of those ideas, but it may still be fun for the customers, and that is more important than wondering if the management is maximizing a buck. Frankly, what the A's do to make money is of less interest to us than knowing the crowd got what it thought was its money's worth.

So here's to Saturday, to the good old-timey doubleheader. Maybe Bob Melvin can get tossed from one of the games. Maybe Cahill can buzz someone and get something started. How about a walkoff in the second game? Hey, if it's for the audience, give the audience full value.

Lord knows they could use it.

### **A's end four-game losing streak, beat Haren and Angels, 5-3**

By Sam McPherson, Oakland A's Examiner

(OAKLAND) -- If the Oakland Athletics trade Josh Willingham away in the next two weeks before the trade deadline, they may be trading away their entire offense in the process.

The A's left fielder had three hits, two RBI and a big home run tonight as Oakland started off the second half of the season with a 5-3 win over the visiting Los Angeles Angels and former A's pitcher Dan Haren.

Brandon McCarthy got his second win of the year with 5 1/3 innings of work, allowing two runs and striking out seven batters. Oakland manager Bob Melvin then used six relievers to preserve the A's lead, culminating with Andrew Bailey's ninth save of the year.

Jemile Weeks and Kurt Suzuki also added two hits to Oakland's 12-hit attack on the night.

The A's remained 12.5 games out of first place, even with the win, as the Texas Rangers won their ninth straight game tonight. In truth, Oakland is probably playing for third place in the American League West now, as the Seattle Mariners are only three games ahead of the A's in the division standings.

Thus, Willingham -- who has now hit 12 home runs and driven in 46 runs in only 69 games this year -- is probably going to find himself slugging second-deck homers for some other team come August 1.

And Oakland will be lesser for it, as they already have one of the worst offenses in the majors. Take away the one guy who is capable of going deep every time he steps to the plate, and the A's will be even more punchless than they are now.

Which makes the team's decision earlier in the day to demote Chris Carter to Triple-A Sacramento even more puzzling. Carter has tremendous power, and even though he's struggled to find his groove in Oakland in two short stints now, not giving him the chance to develop at this level is a serious mistake.

After all, when Willingham goes, someone's got to be able to hit a home run with regularity in this lineup.

Right?

Suzuki would be the next biggest power threat on the team, and his seven HRs and .349 slugging percentage are quite mediocre, even for a catcher.

So, perhaps the A's can just enjoy Willingham while they can, but it's too bad it's not going to be for much longer.

## **Pamela Pitts does it all for the A's**

By Whitney Holtzman, espnW.com, 7/15/2011

*Pamela Pitts started her career with the Oakland A's in November, 1981 as the minor league and public relations secretary. In 1993 she became the first woman on the baseball side of a Major League Baseball organization to receive a director title. Pitts is now in her 18th year as director of baseball administration. All paperwork regarding the team's baseball operations bears Pitts' fingerprints. She manages the day-to-day business side of baseball operations, from minor to major league staff, contract administration, player records, waivers and payroll issues. espnW caught up with Pitts to talk to her as part of our ongoing Power Play series highlighting women in the sports business.*

**espnW: You were the first woman in Major League Baseball to be given a director title in the baseball department of a team. How did people react to that?**

### **Power Players**

Check out espnW's series profiling high-ranking women in sports business. Find out how they got to where they are, where their love of sports was bred and how they manage to balance demanding jobs with everyday challenges.

**Pam Pitts:** You know, I took a lot of [grief] about "What does she know about baseball?" After 31 seasons, I tell people I don't know anything about baseball. Would I be the one trying to throw my two cents in on who's ready to come up from the minors? Are you kidding? The guys would laugh me out of the place. But when they need to know anything about the rules, the waivers, how things are done, that's what I know, and that's what I'm good at. That is why Sandy [Alderson, then the general manager of the A's] decided the director's title was appropriate.

**espnW: I'm sure there's no such thing as a "typical" day for you, so tell me about your day so far today.**

**PP:** I fire up the computer and check my e-mail. I get the medical report from our minor league teams. I scan that to see if anybody was injured badly. ... I have been trying to get some immigration matters taken care of. ... Setting up files for major league player contracts, all the follow-up details, thousands of details. Getting players out of their apartments. ... I got a call from a minor league player from the state of Louisiana. They want him to file a tax return for two days he played in New Orleans in 2007. His daily rate was 542 bucks. I work closely with the folks who do the major league pension. ... I'm notifying people of the details that you have to tell people about.

**espnW: Tell me about an "I can't believe this is my job" moment you've had over the years.**

**PP:** One time I took Lamaze classes with one of the wives because she was absolutely positive her husband was not going to make it back from the road trip when she delivered. She was scared to death and I said I'd be glad to. I was taking the Lamaze class up until the very bitter end and, of course, the baby came when the team was home.

**espnW: What's it like being a senior woman in a male-dominated organization?**

**PP:** I think women can fill a very, very important role. ... It comes from the top. I think a lot of us are extremely lucky to have Sandy Alderson who said, "If they're discussing rules and information you need to know for your job, then if there are meetings going on you better be there." He never ever held me back. I never had to go and ask permission if I could go to a meeting. I was extremely lucky in that regard.

**espnW: Do you and your husband, Dan, have children?**

**PP:** No. I have 300 baseball players [that are like my family]. Now, granted, I don't have 300 actual players but I have seven minor league teams so we have a total of eight teams and every one of those have a manager, a trainer, two coaches, extra personnel. You can't help but get to know people and get to know their families.

**espnW: What do you do for fun or to relax and defray stress?**

**PP:** I used to belly dance. I danced solo for years and we were in a troop. Some of my closest friends came from there. We were the award-winning belly dancing troop Saba Banat [Arabic for Seven Sisters]. It was fabulous. ... Now I have a group of girls and we get together and do card making and rubber stamping. I'm not a scrapbooker, but it's kind of similar. It's my adult playtime. It's my outlet, my creativity outlet, and I love it.

**espnW: What advice do you have for women who want to work in baseball?**

**PP:** Be willing to work your way up and learn as much as you can. For me it was paper pushing and I'm good at it. So do that job the best you can.

## **Five questions about ... the A's**

By BILL PLUNKETT / THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

The Angels and A's return from the All-Star break with very different second halves to look forward to.

The Angels were the hottest team in baseball, winning 19 of their final 25 games before the break. Their second half will center on trying to maintain the offensive revival of the past month and run down the Rangers in the AL West.

The A's were hoping a strong pitching staff led by Trevor Cahill (above) would lead them into contention in 2011. Things have not gone as planned.

The A's, on the other hand, lost their final four games before the break, 13 of their past 18. With a managerial change already done and multiple injuries to the pitching staff they hoped would carry them into contention, the A's look like non-factors in the second half.

Before the second half gets underway, we checked in with A's beat writer Susan Slusser of the San Francisco Chronicle for some perspective on the A's. You can find [Susan's coverage here](#) and follow her on Twitter @susanslusser.

### **1) Why are they playing a doubleheader Saturday (MLB's first 'scheduled' doubleheader since the 2003 season, according to Elias)?**

A: I was going to say, "Two games, one game, the attendance won't be that different." But the real reason is: It plays well into the A's 80s night, plus - and you'll like this, Plunky - it gives both teams an extra day off after the break. This way, we get to see you Friday instead of Thursday. You're welcome.

### **2) How have things changed for the A's since Bob Melvin took over as manager?**

A: The players all say that the energy in the clubhouse is better, and it does seem as if the mood has lightened. Melvin is very diligent about making sure all the players know if and when they're playing and the lineup is up hours earlier, and that probably has helped - I think everyone feels as if they know where they stand.

From a strategic standpoint, Melvin did some things differently immediately, including committing to Hideki Matsui as an everyday player and even using him in the outfield in American League games. He's getting Kurt Suzuki more time off from behind the plate. He has a clear answer for every move he makes or doesn't make. His handling of interleague games, double switches and the like, was impeccable.

The actual record of the team is worse since Melvin took over, though. Really, the problem with this team is that it can't hit. No manager can change that.

### **3) Should Brian Fuentes be seen as a brave visionary now for the way he ripped his manager (then Bob Geren) earlier in the season?**

A: Well, visionary isn't the word I'd use - I'd say catalyst. Those remarks, along with Huston Street's, certainly contributed to the "media focus" that GM Billy Beane cited when he made the managerial switch. Beane felt that too much attention was on Geren's status. And there was little attention on it until Fuentes' criticisms.

### **4) Assuming the A's will be sellers at the trade deadline - what will they be selling?**

A: Would you like an outfielder or a set-up man? The A's have three outfielders who are about to be free agents, Willingham, Crisp and DeJesus, and two set-up men, Fuentes and Balfour, signed to pricey deals.

I'd say one of the outfielders goes, and they'd certainly move Fuentes. Balfour has been quite good, and though the A's have a lot of depth in the bullpen, it might take a good return to pry Balfour away. And any of the potential Type-A free agents wouldn't go cheaply, either - a team such as Oakland really values those compensation picks.

### **5) How much attention is Hideki Matsui getting for being one home run away from 500 (combined between Japan and MLB)?**

A: Well, after he hit 499, it was quite a bit - but he's been sitting on 499 so long, nearly a month, that the interest has dwindled. There was an influx of Japanese writers for a while, but I think some have peeled off lately.

Matsui doesn't think the numbers should be combined, by the way. He considers the totals separately. I think it's still pretty neat - 500 homers is an awful lot, I don't care where you do it or how. Plus, he's been such a good representative for his country here, and I think it will be nice to see his accomplishments celebrated. There's been some speculation at points that



he's pretty close to done, and while I hope that's not the case, 500 homers will be a special moment. Even if he doesn't think so.

#### **Probable pitchers for the Angels-A's series in Oakland this weekend:**

- **Friday (7:05 p.m., FSW)** – RHP Dan Haren (10-5, 2.61) vs. RHP Brandon McCarthy (1-5, 3.66)
- **Saturday Game 1 (1:05 p.m., FOX)** – RHP Jered Weaver (11-4, 1.86) vs. RHP Trevor Cahill (8-7, 3.12)
- **Saturday Game 2 (TBD, FSW)** – RHP Ervin Santana (4-8, 3.89) vs. RHP Rich Harden (1-1, 5.73)
- **Sunday (1:05 p.m., KCOP)** – RHP Joel Pineiro (5-3, 3.90) vs. LHP Gio Gonzalez (8-6, 2.47)

#### **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

##### **Sacramento falls to Fresno in extra innings**

By Max Lush / Sacramento River Cats

The last time Matt Yourkin pitched in Sacramento, the Fresno starter gave up a first inning home run to outfielder Jai Miller. Yourkin went on to otherwise shut the River Cats out for 6.0 innings in that June 17 outing, but the River Cats came back to win 6-5.

On Friday night at Raley Field, Yourkin gave up another first-inning home run to Miller. However, on this night, Fresno rallied back to win 4-3 in 10 innings. Yourkin and Miller played together in the Marlins organization in 2007.

"I think it's just one of those things where you're playing against an old teammate and you want to do well off him," Miller said.

On June 17, Chris Carter had the winning RBI with a dribbler in front of home plate that scored a runner from third.

On July 15, the Grizzlies scored the winning run on a sacrifice bunt by second baseman Brett Pill. Relief pitcher Willie Eyre fielded the ball cleanly, but threw behind covering second baseman Adrian Cardenas. The miscue allowed shortstop Edgar Gonzalez to score from second. Eyre absorbed the loss, falling to 3-5 on the season.

Miller's first inning homer was his 22nd of the season, tops on the club. The center fielder has been on a tear in July, launching seven home runs in his last 10 games.

"It's not something you really try to do, you just try to hit base hits and home runs just happen," Miller said.

Sacramento right hander Graham Godfrey, making his second appearance and first start after being recalled from Oakland, did not miss a lot of bats - striking out none. However, Grizzlies hitters didn't miss many gloves either, managing only two hits and two walks in 5.0 innings.

Godfrey earned a no-decision and lowered his ERA from 2.32 to 2.12 in the outing. The right-hander has not allowed a run in 9.0 innings since returning to Sacramento.

Yourkin was equally impressive for the Grizzlies, setting a career high in strikeouts with 10. He allowed eight hits and no walks. His 10 strikeouts pushed him to second in the Pacific Coast League with 95 on the season.

The River Cats added on to Miller's home run in the fourth inning when first baseman Daric Barton hit a lead off single. Right fielder Matt Carson roped a two-out RBI single to left field, plating Barton.

Sacramento scored again in the sixth, thanks to a handful of extra outs given by the Grizzlies defense. Miller led off with a check-swing infield single to second. Barton then grounded out sharply to first and Fresno had Miller in a pickle. Miller managed to outrun the Grizzlies infielders and safely slid headfirst back into first.

With two outs in the inning, catcher Josh Donaldson hit a routine grounder to third that third baseman Conor Gillaspie booted, leaving runners at first and second with two outs.

Carson wasted little time, lining a 1-1 pitch for a double to left field to score Miller.

Godfrey's shutdown outing was unusually spoiled by the River Cats bullpen. Justin Souza came on in the sixth innings and allowed one run on one hit and a strikeout.

Neil Wagner let the Grizzlies tie it up in the seventh, throwing 0.2 innings and giving up two earned runs on four hits.

Right-hander Trystan Magnuson finished the seventh and added stability for the River Cats, striking out the one batter he faced in the inning.

Magnuson came out again in the eighth inning, allowing only one hit in his 1.1 innings of work while striking out one.

Right-hander Bruce Billings followed Magnuson's lead, throwing a perfect ninth inning, but the River Cats could not add on in the ninth or 10th, going down in order in both innings.

Right-hander Marc Kroon pitched a perfect 10th to earn the save for the Grizzlies, his 15th of the season, good enough for third in the PCL.

Friday was the River Cats' seventh extra-inning game and third at home this season. They are now 4-3 (2-1 at home) when they play extra frames.

Fresno has Sacramento's number this year, winning seven of the Highway 99 rivalry's nine games, including four-of-six at Raley Field.

The River Cats will look to get back in the series at 7:05 p.m. Saturday at Raley Field. The Grizzlies throw right-hander Andrew Kown (8-6, 4.15) against River Cats left-hander Josh Outman (5-1, 4.64).

### **Missions blow away RockHounds**

Oscar LeRoy, Midland Reporter-Telegram

That momentum the Midland RockHounds were hoping to build after Thursday's big victory against San Antonio evaporated within the first three innings on Friday night.

The Missions scored all the runs they needed within those three innings and the RockHounds could not capitalize with men on base as the Missions rolled to a 9-4 victory in front of 3,558 fans at Citibank Ballpark on Friday night.

San Antonio turned the tables on the RockHounds, who were dominating in a 10-1 victory on Thursday night.

Friday's victory for the Missions wasn't necessarily dominating as the RockHounds out-hit the Missions 16-13. However, unlike the Missions, the RockHounds had a tough time getting a clutch hit as they left 12 runners stranded.

The Missions took advantage of Gary Daley's struggles on the mound. Daley (4-2) had been really good in his previous seven starts, going 4-0 with a 2.12 earned run average. But on Friday, the first five Missions reached against Daley and took a 2-0 lead in the first inning. The lead for the Missions could have been bigger for the Missions if not for a 2-3-2 double play with the bases loaded to help get out of the jam.

Unfortunately for Daley, the Missions added to their lead in the second inning as the plated five runs on five hits to chase the right-hander after just 1 2/3 innings. Jedd Gyorko had the big hit in the inning with a two-run single.

The RockHounds had a golden opportunity in the second inning to get back in the game when they had the bases loaded and nobody out. But Missions starter Casey Kelly (9-3) was able to get out of the jam by getting Mitch Canham and Tyler Ladendorf to fly out and then got Matt Sulentic out on a tapper back to the mound.

Kelly, the No. 1 prospect in the San Diego Padres organization, wasn't brilliant but always seemed to get out of jams. He only had two strikeouts and allowed two runs on 12 hits over five innings.

After San Antonio made it 9-0 on a two-run homer by Blake Tekotte (3 for 6) to right field in the top of the third inning, the RockHounds got their two runs against Kelly in the bottom of the frame. Stephen Parker and Adam Heether each had an RBI single. The 'Hounds again had Kelly on the ropes in the inning but Kelly and the Missions got out of the jam when right fielder Daniel Robertson threw out Adam Heether at home plate after a single to right by Mitch Canham.

The only other runs the 'Hounds got came in the ninth inning with the game out of reach. Michael Spina hit his second triple of the season to plate Green (3 for 5), and then scored on a grounder by Shane Peterson.

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'HOUND BITES: Grant Green made his first career start at center field. Tyler Ladendorf started at shortstop and Adam Heether was at second base for the RockHounds. ...The only RockHound not to get a hit on Friday was Ladendorf, who was 0 for 4. ...The Missions are now 15-7 against the RockHounds this season.

TODAY'S PROBABLES: The RockHounds host San Antonio in the third game of a four-game series at 7 p.m. as Midland starts RHP Jason Bergmann (0-5, 7.20 ERA) against Missions LHP Pedro Hernandez, who's making his first appearance with San Antonio.

### **A's remain committed to Midland**

By Oscar LeRoy , Midland Reporter-Telegram

This season for the Midland RockHounds hasn't gone as well as the players, field staff or even the front office of the Oakland Athletics would like, but A's assistant general manager David Forst said the organization has been trying to address the team needs by making the necessary moves.

"Unfortunately it's been a tough year," Forst said. "Most of it has been on the mound. We've tried to find some pitching for these guys because this team can swing the bats. We've got a lot of first-year Double-A guys on the offensive side of the ball -- (Michael) Spina, (Stephen) Parker and (Grant) Green, and now Ryan Ortiz is here -- and those guys swing the bats great. They don't have a problem putting up runs but pitching has been tough for this club."

In an effort to help the RockHounds, there has been a number of roster moves made by the organization, most notably in the pitching staff. One of those moves brought up right-hander A.J. Griffin from Single-A Stockton. Griffin threw six innings of two-hit baseball in a 10-1 victory over the San Antonio Missions on Thursday night.

Still, pitching in the Athletics farm system appears to be a need and it shouldn't be ruled out that the A's might address that need by the Major League Baseball trading deadline on July 31.

"I think we know as an organization that there's a gap in our pitching prospects between the big league and probably A ball," Forst said. "A.J. Griffin kind of represents that next wave of guys coming up from A ball."

Forst, a 34-year-old Harvard grad, is in town this weekend as part of an evaluation process and meeting with both the RockHounds field staff and players.

This season has sort of been an anomaly since the Oakland Athletics and the Midland professional baseball franchise have been in a partnership, which began in 1999. Since Midland has been the Double-A affiliate of the A's, the team has been in the thick of the division races and has won two Texas League championships -- in 2005 and 2009.

Fans coming through the Citibank Ballpark turnstiles have also seen a number of players, who eventually made it to the big leagues. The most recent RockHound to be a significant contributor with the A's is infielder Jemile Weeks, who spent parts of 2009 and 2010 in Midland. Weeks has been so productive at the big league level since his call-up from Triple-A Sacramento last month that the A's traded veteran infielder Mark Ellis.

"He has an energy out on the field," said Forst about Weeks. "When he's healthy, he's always performed and he provides a little spark for us at the top of the lineup. As long as he can stay out there and keep his legs in shape, I think he can play second base for us for a long time."

This year the RockHounds have another middle infielder in top prospect Grant Green, who was recently named the MVP of the Futures game.

"Grant's one of the guys that we really like a lot," Forst said. "His bat is going to move him up through the system quickly. Obviously he's played shortstop up to this point, but he played a pretty good second base in the Futures game, so I think there's enough athleticism there that Grant may end up moving around the diamond."

Finding good players either through the draft, trade or free agency is not always easy for a financially-strapped organization like the A's. Because their payroll, general manager Billy Beane and the rest of the front office must find ways to get players, who don't command a high salary. Much of their work during the first few years of Beane in the organization has

been chronicled in the book "Moneyball" written by Michael Lewis and a major motion picture starring Brad Pitt as Beane will soon be released.

"We don't like to make excuses but certainly our resources are an issue," Forst said. "Particularly in the division that we're in, you have three other teams that are bumping \$100 million in payroll. We're hoping to hear from the commissioner at some point about a possible move to San Jose, which would help the organization significantly. But in the meantime, we have the same challenges we've always had in getting players to come to Oakland."

Whether or not the A's relocate to San Jose remains to be seen, but the organization will remain in its partnership with Midland at least until the contract runs out in 2014. Forst said the relationship with the RockHounds has been a "fantastic one".

"We've been here for a long time and the relationship with (RockHounds general manager Monty Hoppel) and his staff have always been great," Forst said. "This league has always played well and it's helped in the development of our players. They also take good care of our players here and the facility is fantastic. We're very happy with our relationship."

### **Blaze Singe Ports Again In Extras**

Stockton Ports

**BAKERSFIELD, Calif.** - For the second time in their four-game series with the Bakersfield Blaze, the Stockton Ports saw a lead, and ultimately the game, slip away in the late innings. On Friday night, the Blaze scored two runs in the 8th to tie, then a run in the 10th to beat the Ports by a final of 5-4 and earn a series split at Sam Lynn Ballpark.

Stockton never trailed in the contest until the end. The Ports got the scoring started in the 3rd on an RBI groundout from Myrio Richard, scoring Conner Crumbliss who'd doubled with one out in the frame.

Bakersfield tied it in the bottom half of the inning. With one out and a runner at third, Ryan LaMarre hit a sac-fly to right to knot the score at 1-1.

The Ports would take the lead back in the 5th. With one out, Ryan Lipkin singled and Crumbliss followed with an RBI double to the left-field corner. Richard came up next and singled to center, scoring Crumbliss and giving the Ports a 3-1 advantage.

Ports starter Murphy Smith would allow one more run and it would come in the 5th inning. With one on and one out, Didi Gregorius singled to left to score Kevin Coddington and cut the Blaze deficit to 3-2.

Smith would receive a no-decision after going six innings and allowing two runs on five hits while striking out four and walking two.

Blaze starter J.C. Sulbaran would give up his final run in the 6th, an inning where the Ports might have broken the game wide open. Instead, they settled for just a single run. With the bases loaded and nobody out, Jason Christian hit into a fielder's choice with the force out coming at home plate. Leonardo Gil followed and was robbed of a hit on an outstanding diving play up the middle made by Blaze second baseman Brodie Greene. Greene was able to get a fielder's choice force-out at second and a run scored, but the diving stop saved an additional run from coming in. Gil would be caught stealing to end the frame.

Sulbaran received a no-decision, going six innings and allowing four runs on nine hits while striking out four.

Leading 4-2 in the 8th, the Ports handed the ball over to Mike Benacka. With one out, LaMarre hit a solo home run to left to cut the Blaze deficit to a run. Greene followed with a triple to right, and then scored on an ensuing single from Stephen Hunt to tie the game at 4-4.

Benacka would allow two runs on five hits over two innings of work as the game moved into extra innings.

In the bottom of the 10th, Josh Lansford (3-4) came on to pitch and allowed a leadoff single to LaMarre. After LaMarre stole second, he was sacrificed to third by Greene. Lansford intentionally walked Hunt to pitch to Alex Buchholz who to that point had been 0-for-4. Buchholz, however, delivered a sac-fly to center field to score LaMarre and win the ballgame for the Blaze.

Doug Salinas (3-1), who pitched a scoreless 9th and 10th, earned the win for the Blaze.

For Lansford, three of his four losses on the season have come at the hands of Bakersfield.

The Ports return home on Saturday to begin a three-game set with the Visalia Rawhide. James Simmons (1-0, 4.00 ERA) will make the start for Stockton, opposed by Visalia right-hander Derek Eitel (4-6, 5.56 ERA). First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

### **TinCaps Take "Rubber Match"**

By Matthew Wheaton, Burlington Bees

BURLINGTON, IA-The Burlington Bees (7-14) scored five runs over the seventh and eighth innings but came up short and lost to the Fort Wayne TinCaps (9-12) by a score of 7-5 in front of 849 fans at Community Field Friday night. The TinCaps scored two runs in the ninth inning to earn the win.

Fort Wayne started the scoring in the top of the first inning after RF Rymer Liriano (2-4) hit a two out single to center field. A RBI double to left field by DH Luis Domoromo (1-4) plated Liriano. 3B Connor Powers (1-4) hit a RBI single to left field to make the score 2-0 TinCaps.

TinCaps C Cole Tyrell (1-3) hit a double to left field to lead off the top of the second inning. A RBI double to right field by LF Oscar Garcia (1-3) plated Tyrell. A sacrifice bunt by SS Chris Bisson (0-2) moved Garcia to third base. CF Rico Noel (2-4) hit a RBI single to right field, which plated Garcia. With Liriano at the dish, Noel stole second base and third base. Liriano hit a RBI double to right field to put Fort Wayne up 5-0.

In the bottom of the seventh inning, Burlington SS Yordy Cabrera (1-2) and 2B Wade Kirkland (0-3) drew back-to-back walks. CF Tyreece House (2-4) hit a single to right field. LF Royce Consigli (1-4) walked, which plated Cabrera. RF Jose Crisotomo (1-4) hit a sacrifice fly to right field, and Kirkland scored from third base. 1B A.J. Kirby-Jones (1-3) walked, plating House from third base to bring the Bees within two runs at 5-3.

Cabrera walked to lead off the bottom of the eighth inning and House hit a double to center field. A two-run triple from Consigli tied the game at 5-5.

In the top of the ninth inning, RHP Daniel Tenholder (3-2) came into the game for Burlington and walked three TinCaps batters. Noel hit a two-run double to left field to put Fort Wayne up 7-5.

Bees RHP Sean Murphy allowed five runs on seven hits, walked one and struck out four in five innings of work. RHP Pedro Vidal allowed one hit and fanned two in three innings of action. Tenholder finished the game by throwing the final frame, allowing two runs on one hit and earned the loss.

The Bees and the Lake County Captains begin a three-game series Saturday night at 6:30 p.m. It's "Friends and Family Night" at Community Field. Bring your family and friends, and everyone gets to run the bases after the game sponsored by KCPS AM 1150. The first 500 fans through the gate receive a 2011 Bees Baseball Card Set. It's also "Western Illinois Area Community Weekend" at Community Field and all fans who show their Illinois I.D. will receive discounted general admission tickets. LHP Mike Rayl (5-3, 2.40) gets the start for Lake County against RHP Nate Long (5-3, 3.81) for Burlington. Pre-game coverage begins at 6:10 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at [www.gobees.com](http://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 (319) 754-5705, go online to [www.gobees.com](http://www.gobees.com), or stop by the box office at Community Field during normal business hours.

### **Aberdeen Rallies For 9-8 Win Friday**

By Paul Stanfield / Vermont Lake Monsters

ABERDEEN, MD --- The Aberdeen Ironbirds rallied from an 8-6 deficit with single runs in the eighth, ninth and 10th innings for a come-from-behind 9-8 victory over the Vermont Lake Monsters in New York-Penn League action Friday night at Ripken Stadium.

The Ironbirds got an RBI single from Martin Serrata in the bottom of the eighth inning to get within a run at 8-7, then tied the game in the ninth on a one-out bases loaded single to right field from Connor Narron. Reliever Tanner Peters was able to escape out of the ninth with a strikeout and groundout, but Aberdeen was able to plate the winning run in the 10th inning off reliever Jeiler Castillo.

Glynn Davis walked with one out and advanced all the way to third base on a slow-rolling groundout to second base by Austin Knight. After a walk to Mychal Givens, Joe Velleggia hit another slow-roller to second base that Michael Fabiaschi that threw wild to first allowing Davis to score with the winning run.

Vermont had taken a 3-0 lead with three runs in the first inning, but Aberdeen scored three runs in the third and fifth innings to take a 6-4 advantage. Diomedes Lopez tied the game at six for the Lake Monsters with a two-run homer, his fourth home run of the year, in the sixth and Fabiaschi added an RBI single later in the inning to give Vermont a 7-6 lead.

Aaron Shipman and Jacob Tanis each had three hits for the Lake Monsters, who had 15 hits for the game and every starter had at least one hit. Lopez and Chad Lewis each added two hits and scored two runs as Vermont (15-10) lost for the first time this season in a game that they had a lead at some point.

Givens and Velleggia each had three hits and two RBI for Aberdeen (7-21), which has won four of its last six games and got the win Friday when trailing after eight innings a night after the Lake Monsters had rallied from a run down after eight innings to beat the Ironbirds.

With the Ironbirds taking two-of-three from the Lake Monsters in Aberdeen, the series now switches to historic Centennial Field for the next three games beginning on Saturday at 6:05 pm on Stowe Mountain Resort Night.