

Detroit Tigers rough up A's Guillermo Moscoso

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

DETROIT -- Guillermo Moscoso took the mound in the fifth inning Tuesday with a two-run lead.

He exited not long after that, learning a painful lesson in how quickly the tide can turn against the Detroit Tigers.

Moscoso was tagged for six runs in the fifth, an avalanche that buried the A's in an 8-3 loss at Comerica Park to begin their two-city, five-game trip.

Moscoso, so dependable for Oakland this season as injuries have decimated the rotation, allowed six hits over a span of seven batters. That included two-run homers by Miguel Cabrera and Carlos Guillen that turned a 3-1 A's lead into a 7-3 deficit.

"That's what's most frustrating," Moscoso said. "We came back and (scored) runs. We played very good baseball, and we lost the game in one inning."

Moscoso (3-5) was making his first big league start since July 6 as the A's skipped his turn and reworked their rotation because of the All-Star break. He pitched for Triple-A Sacramento on Thursday, and he brought a 2.16 major league ERA for the season into the game.

But he was charged with seven runs (six earned) and nine hits over 42/3 innings Tuesday. Those six earned runs were the most by an A's starter since Trevor Cahill gave up six in a June 9 loss to the Chicago White Sox, Bob Melvin's first game as A's manager.

A familiar A's nemesis sent Moscoso on his slippery slope.

After Magglio Ordonez's sacrifice fly cut Oakland's lead to 3-2, Miguel Cabrera stepped to the plate with a runner on second and two outs. Melvin sent pitching coach Ron Romanick to the mound to remind Moscoso to pitch him carefully.

But Moscoso caught too much of the plate with a 2-2 fastball that Cabrera crushed for a 422-foot, two-run homer to left.

In his past eight games against Oakland at Comerica Park, Cabrera has gone 15 for 34 with five homers and 15 RBIs. That included a three-homer game on May 28, 2010.

But Melvin saw switch-hitting Victor Martinez (.314, 52 RBIs entering the game) waiting in the on-deck circle and wasn't willing to walk Cabrera with a base open.

"They've got so many guys behind him," Melvin said. "It's a line that's difficult to navigate."

With Detroit leading 4-3, Martinez doubled down the left-field line, and Jhonny Peralta singled him in. Then switch-hitting Carlos Guillen ripped a fastball for a two-run homer to right-center that finally chased Moscoso.

In hindsight, Melvin said he should have brought in left-hander Craig Breslow to turn Guillen to the right side.

"I had Breslow up, and I don't think he was quite ready," Melvin said. "I'm thinking, 'Just keep (Guillen) in the ballpark and I've got my matchup after that (for the left-handed-hitting Alex Avila). And he ends up hitting a home run. I left (Moscoso) out there too long."

The A's could have taken a bigger lead into the bottom of the fifth but they failed to score in the fourth with the bases loaded and nobody out.

Detroit took the lead in the bottom of the fourth when Martinez scored from first on Guillen's sharp grounder that got past first baseman Conor Jackson for a three-base error.

A's catcher Kurt Suzuki took the throw from right fielder David DeJesus and made a lunging tag attempt, but Martinez tiptoed around his tag and touched home plate on a close play.

The A's took a 3-1 lead in the fifth on Ryan Sweeney's broken-bat RBI single and a two-run single by Hideki Matsui.

Oakland A's update: Third baseman Scott Sizemore day-to-day after being hit by a pitch

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

DETROIT -- A's third baseman Scott Sizemore is day-to-day after being hit by a pitch in the left jaw and neck during Tuesday night's 8-3 loss to the Detroit Tigers.

X-rays were negative, but Sizemore suffered a contusion on his jaw and neck. He also sported a lump on his left cheek and said it hurt when he tried chewing or turned his head too much.

He's fortunate he escaped serious injury. Sizemore squared to bunt in the fourth inning and was unable to turn away as he was struck by a 90 mph fastball from Tigers starter Rick Porcello.

Sizemore went to a knee and was tended to at home plate for several minutes before walking off the field and being replaced by pinch-runner Eric Sogard.

"I was able to get my face out of the way," Sizemore said after the game. "When I went to the ground, I was a little woozy. I felt jello-legged. I just knew it hurt quite a bit and that I was not able to stay in the game."

That spoiled what should have been a pleasant return to Detroit for Sizemore. The A's acquired him from the Tigers on May 27 for reliever David Purcey.

Sizemore was promoted from Triple-A Sacramento on June 6 and seized the A's third base job.

Though Sizemore entered Tuesday in a 2-for-24 slump, his four home runs since being promoted led the A's during that span.

A's manager Bob Melvin said he doubted Sizemore would play Wednesday but wouldn't speculate beyond that.

"He's a tough kid," Melvin said. "We're glad there was no fracture."

Sogard figures to handle third base in Sizemore's absence.

Left fielder Josh Willingham was out of the lineup, as Melvin said he wants to make sure Willingham's recovery from a strained left Achilles continues to go well.

Willingham said Tuesday that he's fine physically.

The Pittsburgh Pirates reportedly had a scout in attendance Tuesday and are known to be searching for a hitter. Willingham, who's hitting .244 and leads the A's with 12 homers and 46 RBIs, is considered Oakland's top trade chip.

To make roster room for Guillermo Moscoso, reliever Jerry Blevins was designated for assignment but remains on the A's 40-man roster.

Chin Music: Guillermo Moscoso makes his return for A's; Josh Willingham not in lineup

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 7/19/2011 3:55pm

Think back to the A's starting rotation candidates during spring training ... It figured Rich Harden might eventually get healthy and contribute for the big league club. Josh Outman, too. But who would have thought Guillermo Moscoso would play such an important role for the A's in 2011? The right-hander makes his return tonight against Detroit, after being sent to Triple-A for a spot start as the A's re-worked their rotation over the All-Star break. Moscoso takes a 2.16 ERA into the game in 10 appearances (eight starts), and he's provided stability as injuries ravaged the starting staff. His outing will be key in setting the tone for the A's on this five-game road trip through Detroit and New York ...

—Josh Willingham is out of the lineup tonight, with Ryan Sweeney playing left field and Hideki Matsui serving as DH. A's manager Bob Melvin is trying to be cautious with Willingham in the aftermath of his strained left Achilles. Melvin wanted to

get Willingham back-to-back days off (including Monday's off-day) and said that Willingham is likely to play all four remaining games of the trip.

–Tyson Ross came out of his throwing session well over the weekend and is likely to throw off the mound sometime this week before starting in a minor league game. Ross said during the last homestand that his oblique injury is healed, and now he's trying to work through the soreness in his right shoulder.

–Coco Crisp will get a rest at some point this week, according to Melvin. Crisp was just 3 for 16 on the last homestand. Another player who I'm guessing will get a break soon — Jemile Weeks. He has started 35 straight games at second base since being called up. Unlike Crisp, Weeks is rolling at the plate, so it's tough to take him out right now. He went 9 for 16 on the last homestand.

–Reliever Jerry Blevins was optioned to Triple-A to clear a spot for Moscoso. No big surprise there ...

Tonight's lineups:

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

Tigers — Jackson CF, Boesch LF, Ordonez RF, Cabrera 1B, Martinez DH, Peralta SS, Guillen 2B, Avila C, Inge 3B; Porcello RHP.

Tigers pound and dance their way past A's

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

The Tigers don't just mash. They dance.

On Tuesday night at Comerica Park, it was an unbeatable combination. The A's got frazzled by Miguel Cabrera's and Carlos Guillen's power and dazzled by Victor Martinez's finesse, losing 8-3 and perhaps escalating speculation that trades are coming.

"It is that time of year," manager Bob Melvin acknowledged before the A's dropped the opener of their five-game trip. "There is a lot of talk about that. I try not to take too much stock in that. For the most part, they're just rumors. It's something every team has to deal with when they're in the position we are right now."

That would be 42-55, including 16-33 on the road. Tuesday's game showed again how the A's don't match up with the big boys. The A's had nine hits, but seven were singles; five of the Tigers' 12 hits went for extra bases (two homers, three doubles).

With 11 days until the July 31 trade deadline, it's no secret the A's would be more about selling than buying, making players such as Josh Willingham, David DeJesus, Coco Crisp and Conor Jackson - along with a reliever or two - wonder if they'll be in green and gold in August.

"When you're a veteran and have been around a little bit, you know those things are going to come up," Melvin said. "You just deal with it accordingly, try to focus on what you're doing for the Oakland A's today, tomorrow, however long that goes on."

The Tigers are in a different place, tied with Cleveland atop the American League Central. They're in the market for starting pitching, with Atlanta's Derek Lowe and the Dodgers' Hiroki Kuroda possible targets.

They also could add a hitter, but compared with Oakland's offense - the A's wasted a bases-loaded, no-out threat when DeJesus forced a runner at the plate and Jackson bounced into a double play - Detroit's seems perfectly fine.

The Tigers scored six fifth-inning runs off Guillermo Moscoso, who surrendered homers to Cabrera and Guillen, but Martinez's fourth-inning dance step was the evening's highlight.

Guillen's grounder past Jackson (E-3) prompted Martinez to try scoring from first base. DeJesus' throw from right field beat Martinez to the plate but was a little up the line. Catcher Kurt Suzuki backhanded the ball and reached for Martinez, who played a little hand jive - bypassing the plate, U-turning, evading Suzuki's tag and reaching down with his left hand to touch the plate.

"I didn't realize how far he was from home plate," Suzuki said. "He stopped, did a little dance and avoided me."

Melvin said he erred by not having lefty Craig Breslow face Guillen, a switch-hitter who would have batted right-handed. Instead, Guillen homered from the left side and was Moscoso's final batter.

"I should've turned Guillen around," Melvin said. "I left (Moscoso) out there too long."

Moscoso admitted making bad pitches to Cabrera, Guillen and Brennan Boesch, who doubled.

"We lost the game in one inning," said Moscoso, insisting he wasn't affected by getting skipped in the rotation because of the All-Star break.

Scott Sizemore hurt in return to Detroit

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Ex-Tigers infielder **Scott Sizemore** was eager to play his first game at Comerica Park since his May 27 trade to the A's, but it didn't go well. While squaring to bunt in his second plate appearance, he was plunked on the jaw and neck, and exited.

"I saw it was a fastball right away, but it didn't click in my head to get out of the way right away," Sizemore said. "The ball was tracking me, tailing up and in. I was able to get my face out of the way, but it squared me up right on the jaw and neck."

Sizemore - who was replaced by **Eric Sogard** - had X-rays (they were negative), said he felt "a little dizzy, kind of woozy, kind of Jell-O-legged." He had trouble turning his head afterward and, according to manager **Bob Melvin**, is doubtful for tonight.

On Monday, Sizemore dined with former teammates **Casper Wells** and **Charlie Furbush**. On Tuesday, he played before 31,980, quite different from Oakland crowds.

"New change of scenery," Sizemore said of his new gig. "Different organization. Different mind-set. Different brand of ball. It's just different in Oakland than it is in Detroit. ... It's not as intense in Oakland."

Sizemore hit .343 in his first 21 A's games before slumping in his past 12, going 5-for-41 (.122) with 17 strikeouts.

Another ex-Tiger: Melvin broke into the majors with the 1985 Tigers and doubled off Oakland's **Tim Birtsas** in his first game at Tiger Stadium. Melvin was a big fan of **Alan Trammell**, saying he belongs in Cooperstown.

"You look at shortstops who are in the Hall of Fame and ask, 'Is Alan Trammell as good as them?' I don't know how you can't say yes," Melvin said.

Briefly: Jemile Weeks limped through the clubhouse and said he was sore from getting hit by a foul ball and making turns at second. "I'm just stiff right now," he said. ... To make room for **Guillermo Moscoso** (speaking of ex-Tigers), the A's designated reliever **Jerry Blevins** for assignment. He's able to remain on the 40-man roster. ... Melvin wanted to rest **Josh Willingham** (tender Achilles tendon) once during the trip, and Tuesday was it.

Leading off

Six is enough: The six earned runs surrendered by Guillermo Moscoso were the most by an A's starter since Trevor Cahill gave up six June 9 - Bob Melvin's first day on the job, 34 games ago.

Drumbeat: Welcome home, Bob Melvin and Scott Sizemore

John Shea from Comerica Park . . . 7/19/2011 3:38pm

The A's begin a five-game journey tonight in Detroit, where Scott Sizemore played in 2010 and part of 2011 until his trade to Oakland on May 27. The Tigers got reliever David Purcey, who'll be in Detroit's bullpen tonight.

"New change of scenery," Sizemore said of playing for the A's. "Different organization. Different mindset. Different brand of ball. It's just different in Oakland than it is in Detroit."

Sizemore hit .343 in his first 21 A's games but is hitting .125 (5-for-40) with 16 strikeouts in his last 11.

On the switch from second base, where he played in Detroit, to third base, Sizemore said, "It's a lot of fun. It definitely took a few games to get comfortable, and now it seems like I'm confident about everything that's going on over there. I feel like I'm pretty natural over there."

Someone from the Detroit media asked about the difference between the two markets. The Tigers rank sixth in the league in average home attendance (29,739) while the A's are second-from-last (19,465).

"It's not as intense in Oakland," he said. "They've got a bunch of different things going on there. It's just not quite the same."

I said "welcome home" to Melvin, and he said, "This is one of them."

The A's manager played for seven big-league teams, and the Tigers were his first, back in 1985 -- the year after Detroit won the World Series -- and a year before he played for the Giants following a six-player trade.

Melvin's first game at Tiger Stadium was against the A's, and he doubled off the wall against Tim Birtsas. He scored when Kirk Gibson was hit by a pitch with the bases-loaded. Melvin remembers blood dripping from the face of Gibson, who didn't want to come out -- solidifying Gibson's tough-guy image for Melvin.

Melvin's favorite was Alan Trammell.

"I tried to watch him as much as I could," he said. "He handled everything beautifully. The media, his teammates."

But not a Hall of Famer.

"I have problems with that," Melvin said. "You look at shortstops who are in the Hall of Fame and ask, 'Is Alan Trammell as good as them?' I don't know how you can't say yes."

Before the game, the A's promoted pitcher Guillermo Moscoso to make tonight's start and sent out reliever Jerry Blevins. Melvin is resting Josh Willingham today, careful with the left fielder's Achilles' issue. Willingham is expected to play the final four games of the trip.

The lineup: 2B Weeks, LF Sweeney, CF Crisp, DH Matsui, 3B Sizemore, RF DeJesus, 1B Jackson, C Suzuki, SS Pennington. Moscoso on the hill.

Road woes continue for A's in Detroit

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

DETROIT -- It was a compilation of several woes, extending to essentially every part of the A's game, which led to yet another road loss in Detroit on Tuesday.

The troubles started in the form of a frightening injury to Scott Sizemore, continued with a dance gone awry at the plate, were heightened by a decent pitching performance turned bad by way of the long ball and weren't exactly helped by all too common missed offensive opportunities.

By night's end, the A's were left staring down an 8-3 loss in the Motor City, one which dropped them to 16-33 on the road -- the third worst road record in the American League -- compared to a 26-22 mark when playing at home.

"It's just unexplainable," Conor Jackson said. "Really, it's just one of those things none of us can figure out."

All remained quiet through the first three frames on Tuesday before the A's threatened in the fourth by loading the bases with no outs against Detroit righty Rick Porcello only to keep them that way.

Back-to-back hits from Coco Crisp and Hideki Matsui put runners on first and second for Sizemore, who looked to bunt but instead took a fastball to his left neck and jaw.

The A's third baseman, returning to Detroit for the first time since the Tigers traded him to Oakland in May, was ultimately deemed day-to-day after X-rays proved negative. Back on the field, where Eric Sogard ran for Sizemore at first base, David DeJesus proceeded to ground into a forceout that wiped Crisp from the bases, and Conor Jackson followed with an inning-ending double play.

Oakland left nine on base during the night and went 2-for-11 with runners in scoring position, further magnifying an offensive problem that has been present since the start of the season.

"That's a momentum swing," manager Bob Melvin said. "You have the bases loaded and don't get anything and now the momentum's back in their dugout. You feel like they dodged one, and they did at that point."

The bottom half of the fourth proved no better for the A's. With Victor Martinez on first base with two outs, Oakland starter Guillermo Moscoso induced a grounder from Carlos Guillen only to watch the ball hit off Jackson's glove and make its way to right field while Martinez raced home. The throw home beat Martinez to the plate, but he was able to shuffle around Kurt Suzuki and reach his hand in to tag home.

"He stopped and did a little dance and avoided me and that was that," Suzuki said. "He did a good job of avoiding the play. I went to tag him and he stuck his arm under, and I was kinda put in a messed-up situation and he slid and touched the plate before I touched him."

Melvin admitted to thinking he was safe. Martinez, naturally, agreed.

"I think when I went past home plate, he was still with his glove laid on the plate and I was like, 'Wait a minute, I think I've got a chance to [sneak] my hand here.' I think that I did."

An inning of hope ensued thereafter for the A's, who tallied three runs in the fifth on an RBI single off the bat of Ryan Sweeney and a two-run base hit from Matsui to gather a 3-1 lead.

But another bleak scene was awaiting, as the Tigers responded with six runs in the bottom of an inning highlighted by a two-run, sky-high shot from Miguel Cabrera and a two-run homer from Guillen. It marked the end for Moscoso, who was charged with six earned runs on the night after entering the day with just one earned run attached to his name in his previous four outings.

"It's frustrating when you're throwing the ball well all day," Moscoso said, "and then I started missing my spots. You can't miss a spot in this game."

Cabrera's at-bat spanned seven pitches, five of which were strikes and the last -- coming on a 2-2 pitch -- of which made itself a little too comfortable on top of the plate.

"We want to make him hit our pitch, and then you get to two strikes, and you really gotta make sure he hits your pitch, and he just missed," said Melvin. "We were setting up away, and you can see the ball run back up over the plate. He just didn't execute that pitch."

By the time Guillen's turn came, Melvin was near ready to pull Moscoso with Breslow warming in the bullpen, set to face Alex Avila should Guillen reach base.

"I kept thinking, just keep [Guillen] in the ballpark and then I've got my matchup right after that, but he ends up hitting it out of the ballpark," the A's skipper said. "So I left [Moscoso] out there too long."

In the sixth, Breslow surrendered Detroit's final run, which came courtesy of Brennan Boesch's RBI double, and that proved to be more than enough insurance as the A's went quietly the rest of the way.

"It's a lineup that's difficult to navigate," Melvin said, "and we didn't do it like we should."

Sizemore out after being hit on neck

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

DETROIT -- Scott Sizemore endured a shortened reunion in Detroit on Tuesday, when he exited the game in the fourth inning after taking a fastball to his left jaw and neck.

It was a scary moment for Sizemore, who was deemed day-to-day following X-rays that proved negative.

The A's third baseman squared up to bunt against Tigers right-hander Rick Porcello and, after being hit, was seen bent over for several minutes, with manager Bob Melvin and the team's head trainer by his side before departing the game.

"I saw it was a fastball right away, but it didn't click in my head to get away right away," Sizemore said. "When you're bunting, when you want to get it down, you kinda gotta stick your nose in there, and the ball was just tracking me. It tailed up and in, I was able to get my face out of the way, but it still squared me up right on the jaw and neck."

Sizemore was understandably sore following the game and noted he was limited when turning his head, but he believes the injury won't keep him out of the lineup too long. Manager Bob Melvin was also unsure of a timetable for his return, as much will depend on how Sizemore feels Wednesday, but said, "I'm guessing he's not going to be able to play tomorrow."

"When you're bunting, you get out there, and if it's a breaking ball you gotta hang in there, and the next thing you know it's up under you like that," Melvin said. "We're glad there was no fracture."

Eric Sogard, called up from Triple-A on Friday, ran for Sizemore at first base and took over at third base in the bottom half of the frame, where he'll likely start while Sizemore is out.

Tigers call up Below to face A's

By Jon Star / MLB.com

A midseason promotion is what all rookies look forward to, but the excitement and energy gets ratcheted up when that rookie is thrown straight into a hotly contested divisional race. That is the environment with which the Tigers' Duane Below will find himself on Wednesday. Detroit called up the left-hander from Triple-A Toledo where he went 9-4 with a 3.13 ERA and 83 strikeouts in 18 starts. Below will make his debut with the opportunity to pitch the Tigers into first place in the American League Central.

Below is a local product, having grown up in Britton, Mich., roughly an hour from Detroit, and having attended Lake Michigan College in the western part of the state. Below earned his stripes in the Tigers system, making his first appearance for the Gulf Coast League Tigers in 2006 and his Triple-A debut this season.

His lengthy stay in the Minors has allowed the Tigers to get a good look at the 25-year-old southpaw, who manager Jim Leyland said has made one noticeable change throughout the season.

"His control has been really good this year," Leyland said. "It wasn't in Spring Training."

Countering Below will be Brandon McCarthy, who looks to build off his previous start -- his first victory since coming off the disabled list on July 3 and first overall since April 10. In between, McCarthy endured five losses in nine starts. Despite the injury, the right-hander has proven reliable, having lasted at least six innings in eight of his last nine starts.

One of McCarthy's best starts of the season came against the Tigers. On April 15, he blanked Detroit over 6 2/3 innings with seven strikeouts and only one walk. His 1.43 walks per nine innings currently ranks third in the AL (minimum 70 innings).

Athletics: Weeks continues to rack up hits

Jemile Weeks made his big league debut on June 7 and since then, all he has done is hit his way on base. Weeks, who is hitting .307 (44-for-143) this season, saw his streak of four consecutive multi-hit games end with an 0-for-5 night on Tuesday, but he has hit safely in nine of his last 11 games. Since going 0-for-4 in his first game, the second baseman's average has not dipped below .287, which it did on July 10.

Tigers: Cabrera once again punishes A's

Miguel Cabrera is having a relatively quiet July, but when he hit his 20th home run of the season on Tuesday, he expanded on his recent history of pounding Oakland pitching. Cabrera, who entered Tuesday's game hitting .178 this month, hit his 11th home run and drove in his 28th and 29th runs against Oakland since joining the Tigers in 2008. In that span, Cabrera is hitting .330 (35-for-106) in 29 games. The A's have somewhat held Cabrera in check this season. The Tigers' first baseman is hitting only .176 (3-for-17) against Oakland in 2011, though two of the hits are home runs.

Worth noting:

Oakland pitching has allowed four runs or more just four times since June 14.

A's legends need ballot box support

Vote to add them to the Pepsi Max Field of Dreams Team

By Tom Green / MLB.com

The Oakland A's have a storied history over the last 40 years, particularly in the '70s and '80s when the franchise racked up four World Series titles, including a stretch of three in a row from 1972-74.

At the heart of those championship teams were four Major League Baseball legends: Rollie Fingers, Reggie Jackson, Dennis Eckersley and Rickey Henderson.

All four are Hall of Famers, and all four have their jerseys retired in the upper rung of the Coliseum. Now, they need your help to join another exclusive club.

Each former A's great is up for a spot on the "Pepsi MAX Field of Dreams Team," and needs your votes to become a part of another special team.

From now through Aug. 31, vote up to 25 times a day for your favorite living legends and help create the **Pepsi MAX Field of Dreams Team**. All-time greats have been nominated at each position, from catcher to reliever. For each ballot cast, you will be entered to win the chance to take on the winning Pepsi MAX Field of Dreams Team with 10 of your friends on your home turf next spring, surrounded by family, fans and media.

Fingers knows what it takes to join an elite group. When he was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1992, he became just the second reliever to be enshrined -- and his numbers certainly showed why he was deserving of the honor.

A part of the A's back-to-back-to-back World Series teams in the '70s, Fingers ranks 10th on the all-time saves list with 341, and was the all-time leader from 1980 until '92.

Known as much more his waxed handlebar mustache as he was for his arm, Fingers was considered a pioneer of modern relief pitching, and added an American League Cy Young Award and a MVP Award to his resume in 1981 to go along with his three World Series titles.

Also on the A's dynasty of the '70s with Fingers was Jackson, who was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1993. "Mr. October" became the first player to ever earn World Series MVP honors for two different clubs, doing so for the Yankees in '77 and also for the A's four years prior in '73.

That same season in Oakland, Jackson was named the AL MVP after driving in 117 runs and belting 32 home runs.

Throughout his 21-season Hall of Fame career -- which was bookended by stints with the A's -- Jackson launched 563 round-trippers and earned 14 All-Star nods.

Up for one of the 10 spots with Fingers and Jackson is Eckersley, who was a key component of the A's 1989 championship squad, when he recorded 33 of his 390 career saves -- which ranks sixth all-time.

Eckersley began his career as a starting pitcher, and was never really a closer until he joined the A's in 1987. Because his role evolved as his career progressed, Eckersley became the first player to record both a 20-win season and a 50-save season during his career.

He won 20 games in 1978 with the Red Sox and recorded a career-high 51 saves in '92 for the A's en route to earning both the AL Cy Young Award and MVP Awards.

Finally, there's Henderson, who was also a part of the 1989 championship team. The "Man of Steal," as he became known, rewrote the record books over the course of his 25-year career.

Henderson holds the Major League records for career steals (1,406), runs scored (2,295), and leadoff home runs (81).

In 1982, the greatest baserunner of all time swiped a record 130 bags -- one of three times he stole at least 100 bases in a season.

He won a Gold Glove in 1981, was a 10-time All-Star and was named the '90 AL MVP before being inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2009.

So what are you waiting for? Cast your ballots for these legends while you still can, and you could end up playing against them in your own backyard.

Tigers' six-run fifth inning dooms A's

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DETROIT — Guillermo Moscoso's worst inning as a starter led to another loss for the Oakland Athletics.

Moscoso yielded two-run homers by Miguel Cabrera and Carlos Guillen during Detroit's six-run fifth inning, and Oakland lost 8-3 to the Tigers on Tuesday night.

"It is kind of frustrating, because we played very good baseball, and I lost the game in one inning," Moscoso said.

"It was really just three mistakes, but they did damage on all of them. You can't leave fastballs up when you are trying to get out of a jam."

Moscoso (3-5) hadn't allowed more than four earned runs in a game this season, his first as a starter. He allowed six in 4 2-3 innings Tuesday.

The Tigers trailed 3-1 before they grabbed control in the fifth.

After Magglio Ordonez brought Detroit to within a run with a sacrifice fly, Cabrera hit his 20th homer of the season, putting the Tigers ahead to stay. Cabrera's drive went an estimated 422 feet to left and gave him 600 career extra-base hits.

Victor Martinez followed with a double, and Jhonny Peralta's RBI single made it 5-3.

Guillen then hit a two-run shot of his own.

It was his first homer since Aug. 14 — shortly before his 2010 season ended because of a left knee injury. Guillen didn't return to the lineup until Saturday. He reached base four times Tuesday.

"It stretches out your lineup any time you get another hitter going in there," Detroit manager Jim Leyland said. "Especially a switch hitter like Carlos and a proven hitter."

Detroit's Rick Porcello (9-6) allowed three runs and eight hits in six innings.

Brennan Boesch hit his second double of the game in the sixth, driving in another run to make it 8-3.

The Tigers might have figured this was their night after Martinez showed impressive agility while scoring in the fourth inning.

"Great feet, you know," Cabrera said. "He can play soccer."

Martinez was on first with two out when Guillen hit a hard grounder that handcuffed first baseman Conor Jackson for an error. The ball bounced over into foul territory down the right-field line, and Martinez tried to come all the way around.

David DeJesus' throw was in plenty of time but a bit wide of home to the first-base side.

Suzuki caught it and dove back to tag Martinez, but the runner wasn't there yet.

Rather than slide, Martinez sidestepped the plate entirely. When Suzuki, almost on all fours at the plate, reached out again to make the tag, Martinez reached back with his left arm and touched home.

"That was a very acrobatic — I guess, to say the least — slide," Leyland said. "But he got in there and he was safe. It was a big play for us."

Oakland manager Bob Melvin came out and argued the safe call to no avail. It was 1-0 Tigers.

"Martinez started running around, and your instinct is to go after him instead of making him come to you," Melvin said. "He went for the tag and Martinez got his hand in."

Oakland answered back immediately with three runs in the fifth.

Ryan Sweeney singled in a run, and Hideki Matsui hit a two-run single.

Oakland third baseman Scott Sizemore left in the fourth after being hit on the left side of his jaw by a pitch.

Sizemore was squaring to bunt when he was beamed. X-rays were negative, and he is day to day.

The A's had the bases loaded with nobody out after Sizemore was hit, but they didn't score. DeJesus grounded into a force play at the plate, and Jackson hit into a double play.

NOTES: Guillen's homer was upheld after a review. Replays showed the ball hit a fan above the wall in right-center. ... The Tigers agreed to terms with OF Tyler Collins, a sixth-round draft pick. ... Detroit CF Austin Jackson (sore left wrist) played for the first time since the All-Star break. He had two hits and scored twice. ... Boesch had three hits, as did Oakland's Cliff Pennington.

With scoring down in baseball, teams learning to adjust

By Thomas Boswell, Washington Post

One trend in baseball now dominates all others: Better pitching, plus swifter defense, equals lower scoring. Not just this year or last year. We're watching a sea change, not a brief cycle. The sport is now in its sixth straight season with fewer runs scored. And the lines on this graph are still dropping — fast.

Soon, baseball may have a problem if offensive shrinkage continues at its recent rate: 9.72 total runs per game, 9.60, 9.30, 9.22, 8.76 and so far in 2011 just 8.38. That's a plummet from the very top of the range of aesthetically acceptable offense to somewhere within sight of "arrggghhh, too low!" And the big drops the past two seasons have been dramatic to traumatic.

For now, no migraines yet. This year's scoring is about like 1952, '73, '83 or — in the last season when runs were near this level — '92. But get used to it. Through history, when scoring drops to this level, it stays there for years — unless it goes even lower.

Washington Nationals fans certainly know what's up. The Nats have had 21 games of 1-0, 2-0 or 2-1! Their games average just 7.85 runs. But they aren't even among the six teams with the lowest-scoring games. Pity fans in San Diego or Seattle with fewer than seven runs per game.

Who defines how many runs are enough? We do. And history does. For 136 years, the average is 9.07 per game. When scoring gets above 10 runs ('96, '99, '00) or below eight (7.54 in '67 and 6.84 in '68), everybody goes nuts. Rules change. The ball is (secretly) tweaked.

For the moment, we've returned to a palatable balance familiar to fans from '73 through '92 (8.54 runs). But different eras favor different styles of play. The current trend is so pervasive that the teams that don't heed it will probably be on the wrong side of history.

"Just look at the players," Nats General Manager Mike Rizzo said when he took charge in '09. "They are built more like they used to be. I'm not saying why. But we have to adapt to it. The game will be played more like it was in the past. Not home run derby. So, adjust."

Several teams already have. Last year's world champion San Francisco Giants exemplify it with their four-deep postseason rotation, super closer Brian Wilson and just enough offense to win tense games. The Phillies, this season's best team, are built on pitching with Roy Halladay, Cole Hamels and Cliff Lee curing an offense that ranks 14th in runs.

If you want archetypes for teams that dominated in periods of comparable offense, look back to the 1972-73-74 champion Athletics, the '86-88 Mets powerhouses of Davey Johnson or the '91-93 Braves. All were defined by rotations with famous aces: Catfish Hunter, Dwight Gooden or Tom Glavine. But those behind them, always to the third and sometimes to the fourth starter, were almost as dominant. Pitching was the core.

Just as pertinent, all three teams blended power and speed in their three peak years: A's (average of 138 homers, 126 steals), Mets (164, 139) and Braves (149, 139). That athleticism meant "plus" range at most defensive spots.

The reasons for the current drop in offense make a nice but inconclusive debate. However, one practical implication is clear: In hindsight, steroids and human growth hormone helped hitters more than pitchers. Why? More strength instantly results in

more bat speed. (The bat literally feels lighter in your hands.) And that quickness, like swinging a broomstick instead of a club, means that it's easier to hit fastballs. It just is.

So, as overall bat speeds decline, what pitch immediately becomes more valuable? The fastball. In recent years, every power arm in the minors who lacked the repertoire, command or temperament to be in a big league rotation got sent to the bullpen. Last season, the 90-win Padres had five relievers who averaged almost 95 mph on fastballs.

Of this season's young promising teams — such as the Indians, Pirates and Nationals — perhaps none is as consciously modeled on the “traditional” teams of the pre-steroid era as Rizzo's Nats. He's looking for the same kind of players whom his dad, the lifelong scout, searched for a generation ago and whom he himself sought until muscle mass ruled everything.

The GM practically has his tenets nailed to his office door. Get me more power arms. Find more athletic, less bulky players with some power and enough speed. That syncs with better defense up the middle. Get catchers to stop the running game, because it will soon return to fashion. Goodbye, Adam Dunn. Hello, Wilson Ramos and Ivan Rodriguez.

Rizzo wanted pitchers who “miss the bat.” So far he's only found Stephen Strasburg and Jordan Zimmermann as starters. But he's packed the bullpen with four high-K men.

Players with several of the five classic tools — not just “hit for power” — are central to this slightly sub-normal offensive era. So, Danny Espinosa, Ian Desmond and Roger Bernadina are gold, if they pan out. Maybe 20-20 is the new (honest) 30-30. As for balance, the Nats are on pace for 147 homers and 135 steals.

In similar fashion, big bucks go to Carl Crawford, Jayson Werth or Adrian Beltre, who seem multitalented. But pick the wrong \$100-million free agent, and you've bought only an anchor.

The early results: the Nats are on pace to add 22 wins in two years, before they ever get Strasburg back from surgery or glimpse the power-speed of Bryce Harper.

The Nats probably have the right blueprint. But so do others. It's not just the Phils with their four aces and the second-fewest errors in baseball. Right inside the National League East, the Braves have been rebuilt along the current proper lines. If you want to score, avoid Atlanta.

Welcome to baseball as it is today. The game stopped being home run derby several years ago. But, now, as scoring has dropped to levels not seen in 20 years, we must adapt again. Last October, San Francisco introduced to its new motto. Giants baseball: Torture.

Embrace the pain. The low-scoring nail-biter is the wave of the present.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Sacramento blows late lead in Salt Lake

By Kyle Tucker / Sacramento River Cats

Sacramento starter Lenny DiNardo turned in a dominant performance Tuesday night in Salt Lake, but the bullpen wasn't able to hold the lead and the River Cats fell 5-3.

DiNardo squared off against Salt Lake for the eighth time in his career and third time this season (1-0, 5.25). DiNardo has been outstanding in his last four outings, allowing two runs or less in three of those starts.

The Bees countered with former San Francisco Giants and River Cats pitcher Jerome Williams, who is trying to reinvent himself in the Angels' organization.

Williams cruised through the first 3.0 innings, but the River Cats offense cashed in on a two-run double by Josh Donaldson in the fourth. Andy LaRoche followed with a single that scored Donaldson and gave Sacramento a 3-0 lead.

DiNardo continued his outstanding pitching of late, working 6.1 innings, giving up six hits and two earned runs. He was lifted with one out in the seventh not having given up a run but responsible for two runners on base. DiNardo allowed back-to-back singles after striking out the first man he faced in the inning and turned the ball over to reliever Trystan Magnuson.

Magnuson struck out the first batter he faced, but failed to escape the jam before surrendering a three-run home run to Paul McAnulty to tie the game.

Vinnie Chulk came on in the eighth to try and hold Salt Lake from scoring and give Sacramento a chance to take the lead in the ninth.

After walking the first batter, Chulk gave up a one-out single to Kevin Melillo and a fielder's choice to third that scored Navarro and gave the Bees the lead. On the fielder's choice, first baseman Chris Carter fielded the grounder and threw home for the force out. Home plate umpire Stephen Barga ruled catcher Donaldson's foot came off the plate and called Efren Navarro safe for a 4-3 lead. River Cats Manager Darren Bush was ejected after arguing the call. Salt Lake tacked on another run on a suicide squeeze.

Donaldson led off the Sacramento ninth with a double, but that was all Sacramento could muster in the inning, falling short 5-3 and dropping to 6-10 in July.

Williams picked up his fourth win and threw 8.0 solid innings, allowing three earned runs.

Sacramento looks to rebound Wednesday night, sending team wins leader Graham Godfrey (8-1, 2.12) to the mound against Matt Palmer (3-9, 8.48).

RockHounds Get 'Van Ostranded' Again

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

Corpus Christi's Jimmy Van Ostrand has played at the Double-A level of the Houston system for three seasons. In that time, he has absolutely terrorized the RockHounds, and he did it again Tuesday night at Whataburger Field in Corpus.

On Monday, Van Ostrand had a solo home run, but it came in a losing cause (15-8, RockHounds). Tuesday, the British Columbia native had only one hit in four trips to the plate, but it was the game-winner.

Van Ostrand came up with the bases loaded and no outs in the sixth inning, and bounced a "Pittsburgh chop" just over the glove of 'Hounds first baseman Michael Spina, breaking a 2-2 tie with a two-run single. Neither team would score the rest of the way.

For the season (he's played in 85 games), Van Ostrand is hitting .295, with nine home runs and 41 RBI. Four of the home runs and 15 of the RBI have come in 18 games against the RockHounds, in which he's hitting .403.

Adding insult to injury ... Van Ostrand's tie-breaking hit came against his former college teammate at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Gary Daley. The right-hander was pitching in relief of Ethan Hollingsworth in a "piggy-back start."

The RockHounds saw their 3-game win mini-streak snapped as the Hooks evened the 4-game series at a game apiece and tied the RockHounds for third place in the Texas League South (11-13).

- Shane Peterson went 3-for-4 (and was robbed of an RBI hit in the first inning by second baseman Brandon Wikoff) with a game-tying, solo home run. "Pete" has now hit in six straight games (14-27).

- Michael Spina had a triple and a double, extending his hit streak to nine games (16-42).

- Stephen Parker went 2-for-5 and has now hit in six straight games (13-29).

- Grant Green had a first inning solo home run and a bunt single, and has now hit in 5-of-6 games (9-26).

ROCKY TOWN - The RockHounds stay at "the beach" through Thursday, taking on Corpus Christi, then head right back to West Texas for a return bout with the division (and league) leading San Antonio Missions. The 4-game series opens Friday night and runs through Monday at Citibank Ballpark. Check out all the details at www.midlandrockhounds.org.

Vermont Falls 10-4 At Lowell Tuesday

By Paul Stanfield / Vermont Lake Monsters

LOWELL, MA --- Garin Cecchini went 4-for-5 with three runs, double and RBI as the Lowell Spinners capitalized on four Vermont errors for five unearned runs in a 10-4 victory over the Lake Monsters on Tuesday night in New York-Penn League action at LeLecheur Park.

The Spinners scored three times in the bottom of the first inning, including a two-run double from Boss Moanaroa and added another run in the third for a 4-0 lead before Vermont cut the deficit to one with three runs in the fifth.

With the bases loaded and no outs in the fifth, Aaron Shipman smacked a two-run double to centerfield scoring Diomedes Lopez and Chris Affinito to cut the lead in half to 4-2. After Sean Jamieson was hit by a pitch to reload the bases with no

outs, the Lake Monsters were able to plate just one more run on a Chad Oberacker sacrifice fly as Chad Lewis struckout with the tying run on third and Xavier Macklin popped out.

Lowell got a run back in the sixth with an unearned run on a Jamieson throwing error, then the Spinners used two Vermont errors to score three unearned runs in a five-run seventh inning. Cecchini made it 6-3 with an RBI double off reliever Jeff Urlaub, who looked to get out of the inning with just one run scoring before a two-out run-scoring wild pitch on a strikeout of Seth Schwindenhammer prolonged the inning.

After Affinito and Lewis both made fielding errors that kept the seventh inning going for the Spinners, Keury De La Cruz's two-run single gave Lowell a 10-3 lead. Lewis led off the eighth with double to extend his hitting streak to 12 games for the Lake Monsters and later scored on a wild pitch.

Four Spinners had two hits in a 13-hit attack for Lowell (14-17) as Vermont pitchers allowed 11 or more hits for the fifth straight game. The only Lake Monster pitcher to not allow a hit was infielder Michael Fabiaschi, who tossed a 1-2-3 eighth inning with one strikeout.

Vermont (16-13), which has lost three straight and six of its last eight games, play a single-game at Lowell on Wednesday night before the series switches to historic Centennial Field for a doubleheader on Thursday starting at 6:05 pm and a single game on Friday.