

**Hideki Matsui hits 500th homer as Oakland A's beat Detroit Tigers**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

DETROIT -- In a perfect scenario, Hideki Matsui would have made history this weekend at his old stamping grounds of Yankee Stadium.

His 500th home run combined between Japan and the major leagues instead came Wednesday night at Comerica Park, and the timing was no problem for the A's.

Matsui's long-awaited blast highlighted a 7-5 victory over the Detroit Tigers, a rare night when Oakland's offense carried the load.

He launched a 1-0 pitch from Duane Below that glanced off the right-field pole to lead off the sixth inning, making Matsui the first player to combine for 500 homers in Japan and the major leagues.

"I'm happy to be able to get it out of the way," said Matsui, who went 3 for 4 with three RBIs. "Winning the game made it only better."

That's typical of Matsui's team-first approach that has won respect throughout the clubhouse, even as Matsui's first season with the A's hasn't gone according to plan. He is hitting just .223 with seven homers and 43 RBIs, though he has notched eight RBIs over the past three games.

As he went through a 24-game homer drought after hitting No. 499 -- his longest dry spell since a 33-game streak in 2007 - - he never gave any indication his pursuit of history was a priority.

"Hideki seems to be really even-keeled," teammate Landon Powell said. "He hit that homer, and he came in, high-fived everybody and sat down and watched (the game)."

Wednesday's homer was the 168th of Matsui's nine-year big league career. He hit 112 with the Yankees -- with whom he won 2009 World Series MVP honors. He also hit 332 homers in 10 seasons with the Yomiuri Giants of Japan's Central League.

Twenty-five major leaguers have reached 500 homers. Eight have done it in Japan.

Matsui, 37, downplayed his accomplishment.

"Honestly speaking, the way I look at it, the numbers in Japan and here are separate," he said.

A's manager Bob Melvin had a different take.

"Five hundred homers is quite a feat," Melvin said. "I don't care if it's split between two different places. It's the major leagues in Japan and the major leagues here."

Matsui's homer off Below, a left-hander making his major league debut, gave the A's a 3-2 lead. The Tigers answered with three runs off starter Brandon McCarthy and reliever Joey Devine (1-1) in the bottom of the sixth to take a 5-3 lead.

Then the A's put it away with four runs in the seventh, with RBI singles from Cliff Pennington, Matsui and Conor Jackson and a sacrifice fly from Josh Willingham.

The A's won despite second baseman Jemile Weeks and third baseman Scott Sizemore not starting because of injuries. Jackson made his second career start at third base, and Powell, the backup catcher, made his fifth start at first. Both held their own defensively.

The Tigers were celebrating a "Christmas in July" promotion. As the A's went through pregame infield drills on a 95-degree night, "Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire" blared over the P.A. system.

"With the humidity like that, it was just like you're wearing a blanket," said McCarthy, charged with four runs over five-plus innings.

The A's split the brief two-game series with Detroit and now will play three against the Yankees starting Friday.

Matsui said missing a crack at No. 500 in New York was no big deal, but as he prepared for the team charter bound for the Big Apple, he added: "The next destination is a good place to celebrate."

### **Oakland A's update: Sore foot forces rookie second baseman Jemile Weeks to miss finale in Detroit**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

DETROIT -- It took an injury to finally get Jemile Weeks out of the A's lineup.

The rookie sat Wednesday night against the Detroit Tigers after fouling a ball off his right instep Tuesday.

That snapped a string of 36 consecutive starts at second base since Weeks was promoted for his major league debut June 7.

Weeks remained in Tuesday's game after fouling the ball off his foot but was hobbling around the clubhouse afterward.

"It got progressively worse," manager Bob Melvin said. "He had to use a crutch to get to the bus (Tuesday). There was nothing there on the X-rays. We're hoping he's available on Friday."

The A's are off Thursday then start a three-game series at Yankee Stadium on Friday.

Melvin also is hopeful third baseman Scott Sizemore will return to the lineup Friday. After leaving Tuesday's game when he was hit by a pitch in the jaw and neck, Sizemore felt good enough to enter as a defensive substitute in the ninth inning of Wednesday's 7-5 win.

"I woke up sore and stiff, but it wasn't terrible," Sizemore said before the game. "It's the neck. My jaw is pretty good. It's just the fact that I can't turn my head real well to see the pitcher."

The A's are carrying eight relievers, which leaves just three position players on the bench. With Sizemore and Weeks ailing, outfielder Ryan Sweeney was the only fully healthy non-pitching substitute.

"In the American League, sometimes you're in the position where you have a three-man bench, and you want the extra bullpen arm," Melvin said. "That's just something you have to deal with."

Espn.com reported the preliminary 2012 major league schedule has the Boston Red Sox visiting the A's twice, a series over the Fourth of July holiday and one in late August.

An A's spokesman said he couldn't confirm that information. But because Boston is on Oakland's home schedule just once this season, it makes sense the Red Sox would visit twice next year.

Right-hander Tyson Ross will test his sore shoulder with a bullpen session Friday with Triple-A Sacramento. If that goes well, he is likely to throw a minor league outing or two before the A's decide whether to activate him from the disabled list.

### **Chin Music: A's playing musical chairs in the infield vs. Tigers**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 7/20/2011 4:33pm

It's the thinnest of benches for the A's tonight. Jemile Weeks is sitting out after fouling a ball off his right instep last night. Scott Sizemore, as expected, won't play after taking a pitch in the jaw area last night. With the A's carrying just three bench players (and eight pitchers), that leaves Ryan Sweeney as the only healthy position player available off the bench for manager Bob Melvin.

Conor Jackson draws the start at third, Eric Sogard is playing second and backup catcher Landon Powell is playing first. Sogard has played lots of second base in his career, so it would seem the bigger concerns are Jackson and Powell on the corners. Both took extra work before the game, but keep an eye on whether the Tigers try laying down some bunts early on. Powell appeared in six games at first base in 2009 (four starts) and entered one game at first as a substitute last season. He's taken grounders this season as a way to stay ready. Jackson has made a couple of appearances at third this season, but he's much more comfortable at first and in the outfield.

Melvin said he's hopeful that Weeks and Sizemore both will return for Friday's series opener against the Yankees (Sizemore shares that hope). Melvin considered Weeks available in a pinch tonight. Sizemore, who took a fastball off the jaw and neck, said his neck is the bigger issue right now. When he simulates standing at the plate, he can't turn his head all the way toward the pitcher. But Melvin noted that Sizemore's face was less swollen than last night.

More updates ...

–Right-hander Tyson Ross will test his sore shoulder with a bullpen session Friday in Sacramento.

–It was 95 degrees at first pitch, which makes the Christmas theme going on tonight at Comerica Park all the more odd. I saw a big Christmas float outside the stadium that said "Season's Greetings", and then heard "White Christmas" and "Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire" playing during batting practice. Not sure what that's all about, but "roasting" at least is appropriate for today ...

The lineups:

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

Tigers — Jackson CF, Boesch LF, Ordonez RF, Cabrera 1B, Martinez DH, Guillen 2B, Avila C, Kelly 3B, Santiago SS; Below LHP.

### **Matsui hits 500th pro HR as A's top Tigers 7-5**

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Hideki Matsui is a big-timer in New York, a triumphant Yankee for most of seven seasons who saved his best for last - an MVP award in the 2009 World Series.

Now he's returning to Yankee Stadium a member of the 500 home run club.

With an asterisk.

No, not that type of asterisk. Matsui wasn't linked to steroids. The link in this case involves two continents and an accomplished hitter who slugged in both. Matsui's 500 combined homers are split between Japan (332) and the majors (168).

The big five-oh-oh came Wednesday when he homered off Tigers left-hander Duane Below, who made his big-league debut in Oakland's 7-5 victory. Matsui collected three hits and three RBIs and is 8-for-19 with nine RBIs since the All-Star break.

"It's not like I was aiming for 500 in my career," Matsui said through interpreter Roger Kahlon. "Honestly speaking, I look at the record in Japan and here as totally separate. Now that it's out of the way, we can move forward."

As he did with most of his other milestones, Matsui played down the Tokyo-New York-Anaheim-Oakland homers exploit, saying he's simply someone trying to help his team win.

That he did Wednesday. Aside from his home run, which put the A's ahead 3-2 in the sixth inning, he hit two run-scoring singles - one in Oakland's decisive four-run seventh - and has three straight multiple-RBI games.

His teammates didn't rush onto the field after 500 (No. 7 with Oakland) or give him a beer shower in the clubhouse. Matsui has been in green and gold fewer than four months, and he said himself the feat isn't as immense as it would have been if he hit them all in one place.

Matsui, hitting .223, didn't expect the milestone to come at Comerica Park. He hadn't homered since June 16, and his teammates were ribbing him.

"I know Brian Fuentes was teasing me about it," Matsui said. "He asked me, 'When are you going to hit it?' I told him, 'I won't hit it here.' After the game, he called me a liar."

Fuentes confirmed the story.

"I called him a liar in the showers," he said.

The ball hit the right-field foul pole and bounced into the crowd off the first-base line, enabling first-base coach Tye Waller to ask the fans who retrieved it - a man and his son - for an exchange. No dice. Waller offered an autographed Matsui ball and was rejected.

Manager Bob Melvin said the feat shouldn't be downplayed. The 500 club has been reached by 25 big-leaguers and eight others in Japan, but Matsui's the lone combo hitter.

"I don't care about the split or that it happened in two different places," Melvin said. "It's the major leagues in Japan and the major leagues here, and 500 home runs is quite a tribute to an incredible player, so congratulations."

Kurt Suzuki added, "You've got to be very good in this game for a long time to get to 500. Whether it's split or all in one place, it's still impressive. There are good pitchers in Japan."

Asked how he'd celebrate No. 500, Matsui said, "The next destination is a perfect place to celebrate." He headed for the charter bound for New York.

### **Matsui numbers**

**31:** U.S. season best (Yankees, 2004)

**50:** Japan season best (Yomiuri Giants, 2002)

**168:** U.S. total (nine seasons)

**332:** Japan total (10 seasons)

### **Because of injuries, A's Melvin shuffles lineup**

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

With **Scott Sizemore** and **Jemile Weeks** sore and out of the lineup, the A's displayed a couple of novice corner infielders Wednesday.

**Landon Powell** made his fifth career start at first base, and **Conor Jackson** was a starting third baseman for the second time. **Eric Sogard** played second, and the only healthy hitter on the bench was **Ryan Sweeney**.

Manager **Bob Melvin** is hoping it was a one-game occurrence, saying it's possible both Sizemore (neck, jaw) and Weeks (right foot) will return Friday in New York. X-rays for both were negative, and Sizemore entered Wednesday's game in the ninth inning.

"Typically, there are a couple of games during the season that you're in this position," Melvin said.

While Powell and Jackson played mostly smooth defense - Powell scooped a couple of Jackson throws - Weeks and Sizemore were getting treatment.

Weeks had made 36 straight starts since his June 7 promotion but hit a foul ball off his right instep Tuesday and was limping so badly afterward that he needed a crutch to board the team bus. Sizemore, one day after getting plunked on the jaw/neck area while trying to bunt, experienced less swelling but remained stiff.

Melvin said the injury could have been far worse. "First and foremost, after watching the replay, you're glad he didn't break his jaw. He's a pretty tough kid," Melvin said.

**Briefly:** One day after **Guillermo Moscoso** surrendered two homers, **Brandon McCarthy** kept the Tigers in the park. In 86 2/3 innings this year, he has given up three homers. ... The next step in **Tyson Ross'** rehab is throwing a bullpen session Friday in Sacramento. ... A day after he was designated for assignment, reliever **Jerry Blevins** was optioned to Triple-A Sacramento.

### **Leading off**

**Pirates' push:** Among the teams reportedly targeting Josh Willingham, Pittsburgh might make the most sense. The Pirates need a right-handed bat along with a left-handed reliever, which is why Craig Breslow's name is attached to rumors.

### **Drumbeat: An infield without Jemile Weeks and Scott Sizemore along with Josh Willingham trade talk**

John Shea from Comerica Park . . . 7/20/2011, 3:02pm

Your third baseman is first baseman Conor Jackson.

Your first baseman is catcher Landon Powell.

"You can never have too many catchers in the lineup," cracked Bob Melvin, an ex-catcher.

The manager had to rearrange his infield because Jemile Weeks and Scott Sizemore were too sore to play. Weeks fouled a ball off his right instep Tuesday and was limping so badly after the game that he required a crutch to board the team bus. Sizemore was still hurting from getting plunked on the jaw and neck on his left side.

Melvin said both could play Friday in New York.

Meantime, A's trade talk might be escalating. Rob Biertempfel of the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review Tweeted that the Pirates are considering acquiring outfielder Josh Willingham and reliever Craig Breslow and could be dangling outfielder Garrett Jones.

But Buster Olney of ESPN.com Tweeted that the clubs aren't discussing a Willingham deal -- only relief pitching.

The lineup: CF Crisp, SS Pennington, LF Willingham, DH Matsui, 3B Jackson, C Suzuki, RF DeJesus, 1B Powell, 2B Sogard. McCarthy on the hill.

## **Matsui clubs 500th homer while powering A's**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

DETROIT -- Personal achievements, no matter the type or size, are always secondary to team accomplishments.

Hideki Matsui has fervently preached such a belief throughout his career, placing more value on the performance and standing of his squad than himself.

After Wednesday's 7-5 A's victory over the Tigers, Matsui had good reason to talk about both.

The veteran slugger collected a pair of go-ahead hits in the game, the first coming in the form of his 500th professional home run between the U.S. and Japan -- a solo shot against Detroit starter Duane Below that bounced off the right-field foul pole -- in the sixth inning to give the A's a 3-2 lead.

"I guess you can say I'm happy to get it out of the way and, to add to that, winning the game just made it even better," Matsui said through translator Roger Kahlon.

Just 25 Major Leaguers have hit 500 home runs, while eight have done so in the Japanese Leagues, but Matsui represents the first player in the history of the game to spread his total -- which includes 168 in the Majors and 332 in Japan -- over both.

"Five hundred home runs is quite a feat," manager Bob Melvin said. "I don't care if they're split in two different places. It's the Major Leagues in Japan, it's the Major Leagues here. Five hundred home runs is quite a tribute to an incredible player."

"You have to be very good at playing this game for a very long time to get 500," A's catcher Kurt Suzuki said. "Whether it's split or all in one place, it's still impressive."

It marked the designated hitter's seventh long ball of the season and his first in more than a month, his last coming on June 16 against Kansas City. It was also just his third career homer at pitcher-friendly Comerica Park, making it somewhat of a surprising place to get the job done.

In fact, Matsui had to apologize to reliever Brian Fuentes after the game, having told his teammate upon arrival in the Motor City on Monday that the milestone wouldn't come in the confines of Detroit's stadium.

"I said, 'Yeah, it's probably the wrong park to hit it in because it's so big here,'" Fuentes recalled. "So we were all screaming in the bullpen for him when he hit it."

"He called me a liar after the game," Matsui said, smiling.

The 37-year-old veteran hit his first 140 Major League homers as a member of the Yankees, and he came two days shy of potentially reaching the milestone in New York, where the A's are set to begin a three-game series on Friday. But the missed chance to do so there didn't faze him.

"I've had so many great memories in New York," Matsui said, "that I think I'd be asking for too much if I had done it there."

Matsui's big hit provided just one of several momentum changes in a seesaw matchup that culminated with Oakland's fourth win in six tries since the break -- a time span during which Matsui has nine RBIs.

Fittingly, he played a role in the first game-changing inning of the night -- a two-run Oakland third that included the first of his three RBI hits, along with an RBI groundout by Eric Sogard, who received a start at second base in place of the injured Jemile Weeks.

Oakland's 2-0 lead held up for only minutes, as starter Brandon McCarthy allowed the Tigers their own two-spot in the bottom half of the frame. He struggled through a large dose of humidity that made a game-time temperature of 95 degrees feel like well over 100.

"I could have probably done a better job mixing my pitches, and just like any lineup it's about executing your pitches and hitting your spots," McCarthy said. "I don't know what it was today, but I've never thrown in anything like that before. With humidity like that, it's like you're wearing a blanket, and it's hard once you lose your breath to get it back. It kind of suffocates you."

Matsui's long ball put the A's back on top, but Detroit threatened to spoil the veteran's special night by way of a three-run sixth. Leadoff hits from Magglio Ordonez and Miguel Cabrera paved the way for McCarthy's departure, and reliever Joey Devine had no better luck against a potent Tigers lineup. The righty quickly surrendered a two-run double to Victor Martinez, along with a sacrifice fly by Don Kelly later in the frame to make it 5-3.

Detroit, prematurely celebrating the winter season with a holiday-themed night at the ballpark in the midst of the heat wave, watched the A's take full advantage of Christmas in July with a four-run seventh helped by three consecutive walks issued from the arm of former Oakland hurler David Purcey. Cliff Pennington and Josh Willingham's ensuing hits against righty Joaquin Benoit again tied the game, and Matsui resumed his role as hero with a go-ahead RBI base hit of his own.

Conor Jackson's line-drive single to right field capped off the fateful frame, extending a lead Oakland ultimately hung on to en route to splitting the two-game set before Thursday's day off.

"We don't hit a lot of home runs, a lot of extra-base hits," Melvin said, "but the way we beat them today was singling them to death and driving in key runs with two outs and taking what they gave us."

"We needed to win a game on the road. We needed to win against an offensive club. Texas handed it to us [before the All-Star break], last night Detroit got us, so it was good to get a game where we responded offensively a couple different times. It makes the off-day a lot better, that's for sure."

And one Matsui will surely enjoy in a familiar place.

"I guess in terms of celebration," Matsui said, "I guess the next destination is a good place to celebrate."

### **Banged-up Sizemore, Weeks out of A's lineup**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

DETROIT -- Half of Oakland's infield was sidelined by injury for the start of Wednesday's series finale in Detroit, but Scott Sizemore made good on manager Bob Melvin's hope of its return by Friday when he entered the game in the ninth as a defensive replacement at third base.

"He was good enough to play defense for an inning," Melvin said. "I was hoping we didn't get into a tied game again where he had to hit, but he came to me and said he could do it, so credit to him."

Sizemore took a fastball to his left jaw and neck area in the fourth inning on Tuesday and was still stiff on Wednesday. He noted there was hardly any swelling, though an outline of the baseball could partially be seen.

Conor Jackson played the first eight innings at third, while Eric Sogard started at second base in place of Jemile Weeks, who was battling a sore right foot after fouling a ball off his inset in the third inning Tuesday. He underwent X-rays following the game that proved negative.

Weeks, who had started 36 consecutive games at second base since his June 7 promotion, said Wednesday afternoon he'd be available off a depleted bench in an emergency situation, but he was never needed in the A's 7-5 win.

"We want to make sure it's healthy enough for me to get out there and be effective," he said. "Everybody plays through something and it's no big deal. At this point it's making sure my foot is good today and giving it the rest it needs."

### **Powell, Sogard part of makeshift A's infield**

DETROIT -- Injuries to regulars Scott Sizemore and Jemile Weeks forced A's manager Bob Melvin to again shuffle his ever-changing lineup on Wednesday.

Jackson received just the second start of his career at third base with Sizemore out of the mix, with Landon Powell manning the other corner and Eric Sogard to his right at second base in the injured Jemile Weeks' place.

Powell made four starts at first in 2009 and entered the day with seven total appearances at the position under his belt in his pro career.

"I played there some growing up," Powell said. "It's definitely not my first position, but I'll be able to go out there and get the job done and help the team. I've been taking balls over there just to stay fresh in case a day like today happened where we were two infielders down and I had to go over there."

"You can never have too many catchers in the lineup is the way I look at it," Melvin joked. "He'll be all right. He takes ground balls there every day and has played some there before. Typically, there are a couple games during the season when you're sometimes in this position."

Sogard, meanwhile, is a natural second baseman, despite having made just one other start there in his Major League career. He started 95 games at second base for Triple-A Sacramento in 2010 before strictly playing shortstop for the River Cats prior to his callup this season -- the majority of his time spent beside Weeks.

"He's fine over there," Weeks said. "I know his roots are at second base, and he's a complete player. We're not losing anything by having him in the lineup."

### **Rookie reliever De Los Santos turning heads**

DETROIT -- A's reliever Fautino De Los Santos has recently made it rather easy for manager Bob Melvin to seek positives during a roller-coaster stretch that has left his club nearly 15 games below the .500 mark.

Entering Wednesday, De Los Santos had allowed just one run with six strikeouts in six innings since being recalled from Triple-A Sacramento on July 1 for his third big league stint of the season.

Overall, he's averaging 11.88 strikeouts per nine innings after compiling a combined 36 in 29 innings between Double-A and Triple-A. De Los Santos garnered two on Tuesday night in a clean 1 2/3-inning performance against the Tigers.

"I thought he was really good [Tuesday]," Melvin said. "One thing you want to do typically for a youngster like that is give him regular work, and in a long role that's not easy to do."

"So to come in last night, having not pitched much, I thought his command was good, and that's the issue you usually have with a guy that's a hard thrower, a guy who doesn't go on a regular basis. He pitched beautifully for us."

The 25-year-old righty could command a more significant role if the A's deal any reliever before the July 31 Trade Deadline. Brian Fuentes, Craig Breslow and Grant Balfour are all strong trade candidates.

### **Worth noting**

- Rehabbing hurler Tyson Ross (shoulder) is scheduled to throw a bullpen session on Friday in Sacramento. Barring any setbacks, the right-hander will likely make a rehab start sometime next week.



## **Yankees have not been kind to Cahill, A's**

By Steven Miller / MLB.com

When the A's need a stopper, there is no reason not to send Trevor Cahill to the mound.

But if Oakland wants to exorcise any demons at Yankee Stadium this weekend, it needs Cahill to do the same in Friday's series opener. The A's are 1-9 at the new ballpark in the Bronx, with the only win coming July 25, 2009.

The A's suffered a four-game sweep there last season, and Cahill started that opener with a forgettable four-inning, eight-run outing.

"I think it comes with the stadium a little bit," said Oakland manager Bob Melvin. "I remember as a young player going into Yankee Stadium, you have to get over the awe factor. But these guys have all played there before."

The 23-year-old Cahill has that experience on his side when he returns to New York, where he will face off against Phil Hughes. The Yankees rightly picked up a win in one of those four games in New York last season, when he was en route to an 18-win season. Now he is two starts removed from a lengthy stint on the disabled list.

Hughes allowed two runs in five innings in his first start back, then two runs over six innings in a win Sunday in Toronto. He had an improved curveball in his most recent start, which he credited for his success.

"I'm hopefully going to make some more strides, and if I can string together as good an outing as [my second start] or even some better ones, I'll be satisfied," Hughes said. "But I'm always looking to get better. Maybe even better than last year."

### **A's: Sizemore, Weeks target returns in Bronx**

- The A's could use Thursday's day off after Scott Sizemore and Jemile Weeks were held out of the lineup Wednesday. Sizemore took a fastball off his jaw and neck and Weeks fouled a ball off his right foot Tuesday, but manager Bob Melvin expects both to be ready for Friday's contest in New York. Sizemore entered Wednesday's game in the ninth inning as a defensive substitution.

### **Yankees: New York targets series win Thursday**

- The Yankees have a chance to take three of four games in Tampa Bay on Thursday, when they wrap up a series with the Rays. New York won, 4-0, on Wednesday, when Curtis Granderson hit his 26th homer.
- HBO will air an hour-long special chronicling Derek Jeter's 3,000th hit July 28 at 9 p.m. ET. "DEREK JETER 3K" followed the Yankees captain both at and away from the ballpark and had the cooperation of Jeter, the Yankees and MLB Productions.

### **Worth noting**

- A's closer Andrew Bailey recorded his 10th save of the season and 61st of his young career in Wednesday's 7-5 win over the Tigers. Bailey's 61 saves tie him for sixth on Oakland's all-time list with Jay Howell.

## **Matsui hits 500th pro homer as A's top Tigers 7-5**

Associated Press

Hideki Matsui hit his 500th professional homer and drove in three runs to lead the Oakland Athletics over the Detroit Tigers 7-5 Wednesday night.

Matsui led off the sixth inning with his milestone homer - 168 in the majors and 332 for the Yomiuri Giants - to put Oakland up 3-2 and end Duane Below's night. Below, making his major-league debut, allowed three runs - one earned - in five-plus innings.

Fellow rookie Lester Oliveros finished the inning, and Detroit took the lead with three runs in the bottom of the sixth.

Magglio Ordonez and Miguel Cabrera led off with singles off McCarthy, and Victor Martinez followed with a two-run double off reliever Joey Devine (1-1).

Tigers reliever David Purcey (1-2), though, walked the first three batters of the seventh before giving way to Joaquin Benoit.

Cliff Pennington singled to make it 5-4, and Josh Willingham's sacrifice fly tied the game. Matsui and Conor Jackson then hit RBI singles to give Oakland a 7-5 lead.

Matsui had a RBI single in Oakland's two-run third, but Don Kelly's triple helped the Tigers tie the game in the bottom of the inning.

Andrew Bailey, Oakland's sixth pitcher, pitched the ninth for his 10th save in 12 tries, striking out Cabrera to end the game with a runner on second.

Notes: The Tigers acquired 3B Wilson Betemit from Kansas City for two minor leaguers. Betemit, who is expected to join the Tigers in Minnesota on Thursday, will replace Brandon Inge as the starting third baseman. ... Matsui has hit 333 homers in Japan, including one major-league homer, 160 in the United States and seven in Canada. ... Scott Sizemore, traded for Purcey earlier in the season, entered the game as a ninth-inning defensive replacement after being hit in the jaw by a Rick Porcello pitch on Tuesday.

### **By the numbers**

**31:** U.S. season best (Yankees, 2004)

**50:** Japan season best (Yomiuri Giants, 2002)

**168:** U.S. total (nine seasons)

**332:** Japan total (10 seasons)

### **Oh pays tribute to Matsui for 500th home run**

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese home run king Sadaharu Oh paid tribute to Hideki Matsui after the Oakland Athletics' outfielder hit his 500th homer.

"Five hundred is a figure that carries a lot of worth in the major leagues," Oh said Thursday. "To keep hitting home runs during a tough schedule while maintaining your conditioning is not easy."

Matsui has 168 home runs in the majors and 332 for the Yomiuri Giants.

Oh hit a record 868 home runs over 22 seasons with the Giants, helping his team win nine straight Japan Series championships between 1965-73. Oh shares the Japanese single-season home run record of 55 with Tuffy Rhodes and Alex Cabrera.

## Gutierrez: How to commemorate Matsui's 500th?

Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com

*Random observations from the A's come-from-behind 7-5 defeat of the Detroit Tigers Wednesday night at Comerica Park in Detroit...*

-- While there is no doubting that hitting a combined 500 home runs, whether it's in Japan, the United States or Parts Unknown, is an impressive feat in and of itself, I'm still having a hard time wrapping my head around just *how* to celebrate Hideki Matsui's Godzillian feat.

Consider: Matsui hit 332 of his professional homers, or 66.4 percent, against what few would argue is an inferior brand of baseball in Japan. And he did that in 10 seasons. In nine years against the best hardball in the world, Matsui has gone deep 168 times, a relative pittance of 33.6 percent.

Again, this is not to diminish what Matsui, the consummate gentleman pro, has accomplished. Rather, it's fascinating.

But if we are asked to discount anything Japanese players do in the Far East when it comes to considering them for MLB rookie of the year honors, why are we essentially celebrating 332 home runs Matsui clobbered in Japan?

Because, it turns out, chicks aren't the only ones who dig the long ball. And I can dig that.

-- On "A's Postgame Live," Matsui downplayed feeling any angst in the lengthy road to 500. He had not homered since June 16.

"Personally, I wasn't really putting too much attention to it," he said through interpreter Roger Kahlon. "Everybody else was sort of making sort of a big deal out of it, giving it a lot of attention. But to be able to just move on, get it out of the way and move on, in that sense I feel relief."

The smile on Matsui's face betrayed him, though. Especially when asked about six of his seven home runs this season coming against left-handers.

"I think it's just a coincidence that the numbers are a bit skewed going in that direction," he claimed. And didn't former manager Bob Geren say the New York Yankees owning the A's was a "coincidence" as well?

But I digress. Look at it this way, at least Matsui got the milestone out of the way before heading back to the Bronx, where his first major league homer came. It was a grand slam off Minnesota's Joe Mays on April 8, 2003.

"The attention level would have been 10 times more," Matsui said with a wider grin.

His biggest smile of all, though, came when asked about the "negotiations" with the young fan who came up with the home run ball.

"Negotiations," Matsui said, "did not work out."

-- Scott Sizemore was sidelined after taking a pitch off the neck and jaw on Tuesday. David Purcey walked the bases loaded in his appearance Wednesday night. I think the A's got the best of that trade. For at least one series.

-- Did not like Brandon McCarthy's inability to throw a shutdown inning on either occasion the A's handed him a lead.

-- Liked, a lot, the A's answering with aplomb and a four-spot in the seventh inning after Detroit dropped a three-spot on them in the sixth.

-- Let's just say Conor Jackson was, ahem, surprised in Anaheim earlier this season when Geren penciled him in at third base. What, then, was his reaction when Bob Melvin had him at the hot corner Wednesday?

-- Landon Powell's catching skills came in, ahem, handy when he had to dig balls out of the dirt at first base.

-- Of the following names possibly bandied about as trade bait -- Jackson, Josh Willingham, Coco Crisp, David DeJesus, Matsui, Brian Fuentes, Grant Balfour -- only Fuentes and Balfour are under contract for next season.

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **Back-to-back-to-back HRs not enough for Cats**

By Kyle Tucker / Sacramento River Cats

Josh Donaldson, Andy LaRoche and Michael Taylor hit back-to-back-to-back homers in the eighth inning for Sacramento, but it was all the offense Sacramento could muster in a 4-3 loss to host Salt Lake on Wednesday.

Graham Godfrey took the mound for Sacramento, bringing his 8-1 record and 2.12 to Salt Lake to face the Bees for the second time this season. On May 5 in Sacramento, Godfrey shut down the Salt Lake offense, pitching 6.0 strong innings and allowing just two hits and one run.

The Bees countered with right-hander Matt Palmer (3-9, 8.48). Palmer was excellent through the first 7.0 innings, allowing only a leadoff double by Jermaine Mitchell in the first inning and double from Adam Rosales in the sixth.

Godfrey had a rough night as the Bees scored in four of the five innings he worked.

Salt Lake got on the scoreboard in the first inning when Paul McAnulty hit a two-out double and later scored on a Jeff Baisley single. In the second, the Bees tacked on another run. After a leadoff walk, Dwayne Bailey followed with a single and Andrew Romine scored on an error by center fielder Jai Miller.

Godfrey surrendered another run in the third inning. After a Hank Conger singled, Baisley tripled in the third run of the game for the Bees.

In the fourth, McAnulty got to Godfrey again and hit a solo home run, extending the Salt Lake lead to 4-0.

Sacramento figured out Palmer in the eighth when Donaldson and LaRoche hit back-to-back solo home runs. For Donaldson, it was his 14th long ball of the season, good for third on the team in that department. After a Salt Lake pitching change, Michael Taylor added a solo shot of his own for three home runs in a row, bringing the River Cats within one run, 4-3. Sacramento failed to complete the comeback after threatening in the ninth with a pair of singles by Chris Carter and Jai Miller. Ryan Baisley got out of the jam by striking out Donaldson for the final out of the game and earned his first save of the season.

The River Cats couldn't get the big hit on Wednesday night, going 0-for-7 with runners in scoring position.

Sacramento is 31-15 away from Raley Field and has dropped two in a row in Salt Lake after winning the first five meetings versus the Bees at Spring Mobile Ballpark this season.

The River Cats will look to split the series Thursday night, sending right-hander Travis Banwart (4-6, 5.48) to the mound. Tune-in to hear Johnny Duskow call the action at 6:05 p.m. on Talk 650 KSTE.

### **Keuchel Quiets Hounds Bats in 5-2 Loss**

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

If you're a pitcher, and your record is 7-6 while your team is 36-58, you're having a tremendous season. Those were Dallas Keuchel's numbers with the Corpus Christi Hooks entering Wednesday's game.

Keuchel went 7.0 strong innings, dodging a bases-loaded, no out threat in the third, to win his eighth game of the season.

The Hooks put together a 3-run rally in the fourth that would be the difference in the game, scoring three times after a caught stealing had left the bases empty with two outs.

A walk to Jonathan Villar was followed by RBI doubles by Jimmy Paredes and J.D. Martinez and an RBI single by Kody Hinze. The 3-run rally turned a 2-1 game into a 5-1 Hooks lead.

The Hooks won for the second consecutive night and lead the 4-game series, 2-games-to-1.

- Michael Spina's RBI single extended his hit streak to 10 games (17-46, .370) ... and the RBI was his team-leading 59th.
- Stephen Parker went 1-for-4, and has now hit in seven straight games (16-33, .485)
- Ryan Ortiz had a pair of singles and has now hit in six straight games. The 'Hounds catcher is 7-for-16 in the streak, with five walks and three hit by pitch (he has reached base in 15-of-24 trips to the plate).
- Shane Peterson saw a 6-game streak go by the boards, and Tyler Ladendorf lost a 4-gamer.

- Jared Lansford pitched 3.0 scoreless innings in relief (one hit). "Lanny" has a sub-two ERA at home, but entered the game with an 11.51 ERA on the road, making the solid outing significant.

**ROCKY TOWN** - The RockHounds wrap up their stay at "the beach" Thursday, taking on Corpus Christi, then head home 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](http://www.midlandrockhounds.org).

### **Straily's Win Streak Snapped In 5-2 Loss To Nuts**

Stockton Ports

**MODESTO, Calif.** - There were two significant Stockton Ports streaks snapped on Wednesday night at John Thurman Field. Michael Choice's 17-game hitting streak ended; a span in which he hit .444 with nine home runs. Also, Ports starter Dan Straily (9-6), who'd won his last six outings, couldn't make it seven straight. Stockton's starter fell victim to timely hitting and some bad luck on Wednesday as the Ports fell to the Modesto Nuts by a count of 5-2.

The game started with a big missed opportunity for the Ports. After Myrio Richard doubled and Michael Gilmartin walked to open the ballgame, Richard was caught stealing trying to take third, and Gilmartin was doubled off second after Choice popped to right, ending the inning.

It took the Ports until the 4th inning to finally break through against Nuts starter Chad Bettis (7-5). With two on and two out, Dusty Coleman delivered a two-run double to left to give the Ports a 2-0 lead. As it turned out, it would be the only time the Ports would plate runs on the night.

Modesto countered in the bottom of the 4th. After being held hitless by Straily over the first three innings, Delta Cleary, Jr. doubled to left and Josh Rutledge reached on an infield single to put runners at the corners. Nolan Arrenado delivered the Nuts' first run of the night with a sac-fly to center to make it a 2-1 game.

In the 5th, Modesto would take command and Straily would be victimized by a fly ball lost in the lights. With runners at second and third and one out, Scott Robinson tied the game with a sac-fly to center. After Cleary walked to put two on with two out, Rutledge hit a fly ball to right that should have ended the inning. Instead, Ports right fielder Rashun Dixon lost the ball in the lights as it would fall in front of him, allowing both runners to score and giving the Nuts a 4-2 lead. Arrenado would cash in further with an ensuing RBI single to left to stretch Modesto's advantage to 5-2.

Straily would take the loss on the night, going six innings and allowing five runs on six hits while striking out five.

Meanwhile, Bettis settled down after allowing two runs in the 4th. After Coleman's two-run double, Bettis allowed just one more hit over his final three innings of work. He picked up the win, going seven full frames and allowing two runs on five hits while striking out five and walking a season-high four.

Kurt Yacko and Mike Marbry (SV, 4), combined for two scoreless innings to finish the contest. Marbry, who pitched a perfect 9th and recorded back-to-back strikeouts to end the game, recorded his fourth save of the season.

Connor Hoehn and Mike Hart combined for two scoreless innings of relief for the Ports.

For Straily, it was his first loss since June 5th against San Jose. The walk drawn by Cleary in the 5th inning also ended Straily's run of 20.2 consecutive innings without allowing a walk.

Though Choice's 17-game hitting streak came to an end with an 0-for-3 night, his consecutive-games-on-base streak remains intact at 40 after he was hit by a pitch in the 6th.

The Ports and Nuts will play the second game of their three-game set on Thursday night at John Thurman Field. Murphy Smith (3-7, 4.61 ERA) will head to the mound for Stockton, opposed by Modesto right-hander Parker Frazier (7-8, 4.10 ERA). First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

### **Hot Rods "Muscle" Their Way to Victory**

By Jon Versteeg, Burlington Bees

**BOWLING GREEN, KY**-The Bowling Green Hot Rods (11-14) scored seven runs on nine hits to earn a 7-1 win over the Burlington Bees (9-16) at Bowling Green Ballpark on Wednesday night in the opening game of a three-game series.

The Hot Rods loaded the bases in the first inning against Burlington RHP Blake Hasebrock (5-6). 3B Julio Cedeno (0-3) hit a sacrifice fly to score DH Robby Price (1-3) for a 1-0 Bowling Green lead.

In the fifth inning the Bees tied the game at 1-1. SS Yordy Cabrera (1-4) doubled and moved to third base on a groundout by RF Jose Crisotomo (0-4). CF Tyreace House (0-1) hit a sacrifice fly to right field to score Cabrera.

Bowling Green struck with two outs in the fifth inning to take a 4-1 lead. RF Cody Rogers (0-3) worked a two-out walk and Price singled. SS Derek Dietrich (2-4) smacked a two-run home run over the right field wall.

The Hot Rods scored two runs in the sixth inning to earn a 6-1 lead. LF Nick Schwaner (2-4) doubled and scored on a triple by CF Kevin Kiermaier (1-4). Hassebrock unleashed a wild pitch to allow Kiermaier to score and make it 6-1.

1B Phil Wunderlich (1-3) hit a solo home run in the eighth inning to make it 7-1.

Hassebrock pitched six innings and allowed six runs on seven hits. RHP Sean Murphy, in his first bullpen appearance of the season, allowed one run on two hits over two innings pitched.

The Bees and Hot Rods continue their series Thursday night at 7:05 p.m. Burlington has yet to announce a starting pitcher while Bowling Green will send RHP Eliazer Suero (5-4, 4.85) to the mound. Pre-game coverage begins at 6:45 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at [www.gobees.com](http://www.gobees.com).

### **Vermont Drops 4th Straight Wednesday**

By Paul Stanfield / Vermont Lake Monsters

LOWELL, MA --- For the second straight night the Lowell Spinners scored three runs in the bottom of the first inning for an early lead and would go on to defeat the Vermont Lake Monsters 6-2 in New York-Penn League action Wednesday night at LeLecheur Park.

Vermont has now allowed first-inning runs in each of the last five games and Lake Monster opponents have scored first in eight of the last nine games. The Spinners three runs on Wednesday came on a Garin Cecchini RBI single, Boss Moanaroa RBI triple and Seth Schwindenhammer RBI double off Vermont starter Brent Powers.

The Spinners quickly made it a five-run lead with a two-run homer in the second from Keury De La Cruz for his second home run of the season. Vermont got on the scoreboard in the sixth inning as Chad Oberacker led off with his fourth double of the year and then scored on back-to-back groundouts from Xavier Macklin and Chad Lewis.

Joantoni Garcia made it 6-1 with his first home run of the season to leadoff the seventh off Jailer Castillo. That would be the only run that Castillo would allow with three strikeouts over three innings in relief of Powers (0-2), who allowed five runs (four earned) on seven hits over five innings. Lake Monsters got a run in the ninth on a Jordan Tripp sacrifice fly following a Nick Rickles double.

Reliever Tyler Wilson (2-1) allowed two runs on three hits with no walks and five strikeouts over 5 1/3 innings for the win, while Schwindenhammer and Jason Thompson each had two hits for Lowell (15-17). Oberacker had two of the Lake Monsters six hits, while Lewis had a leadoff single in the second inning to extend his hitting streak to 13 games.

Vermont (16-14), which has lost four straight and seven of its nine games, returns home to historic Centennial Field for a five-day, six-game homestand beginning with a doubleheader against Lowell on Thursday beginning at 7:05 pm. It is Angler Night at the ballpark presented by LCI, along with Ramunto's Brick Oven Pizza Night and Kids Eat Free Thursday.