

## A's News Clips, Sunday, July 24, 2011

### Oakland A's beat New York Yankees 4-3

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Disaster did not find the A's on Saturday.

They did plenty right in a 4-3 victory over the New York Yankees. But it's what they didn't do that paved the way to halting their 11-game losing streak to the Yankees.

The A's didn't allow New York to strike for the big inning. They didn't give a crowd of 46,188 at Yankee Stadium much reason to get loud.

And when closer Andrew Bailey put the tying run on third with two outs in the bottom of the ninth, he didn't break the hearts of A's fans.

Robinson Cano grounded out to third baseman Scott Sizemore to secure the A's first win over New York since April 22, 2010.

That 11-game losing streak was the A's longest to the Yankees since a 14-gamer that spanned the 1956 and '57 seasons.

Must be a burden lifted, right?

"I don't know about the streak unless you guys ask me questions" about it, Bailey told reporters. "For me, it's, 'Hey, we won the game.' And that's the biggest thing."

Don't let the casual response fool you.

A's manager Bob Melvin talked Saturday morning about the importance of beating the Yankees. A 17-7 blowout loss in Friday's series opener added to that urgency.

"Typically, when you've lost that many games, you can't help but think about it," Melvin said. "Every game you don't win, the questions arise, and you have to think about having answers for them."

The victory provided a memorable moment for former Yankee Hideki Matsui, who drilled a solo home run to right-center in the seventh. His 501st career homer (combined between Japan and the majors) gave the A's a 4-2 lead and proved to be the winner.

"(No.) 501 was just as big as 500," Melvin noted.

Matsui was the 2009 World Series MVP with the Yankees. On Friday, the team presented a video tribute to commemorate his 500th homer, which came Wednesday in Detroit. As Matsui circled the bases Saturday, he got a warm ovation from the Yankee Stadium crowd.

"It took me a month to get 500, but 501 just took two (games)," Matsui cracked through his interpreter.

But the A's also required a huge effort from their bullpen.

Starter Rich Harden (2-1) left with one out in the sixth, after allowing Nick Swisher's deep homer to right that cut Oakland's lead to 3-2.

Brad Ziegler and Craig Breslow combined for 11/3 scoreless innings. Grant Balfour stranded runners on the corners in the seventh.

In the eighth, Balfour put the first two runners on. He retired Eduardo Nunez on a fly out and then faced pinch hitter Jorge Posada, who was 4 for 4 with a homer against him lifetime.

Balfour coaxed Posada into an inning-ending 6-4-3 double play.

"You play the odds," Balfour said. "Either he'll get five hits or I'll get him out."

Protecting a 4-2 lead in the ninth, Bailey walked Brett Gardner and allowed Derek Jeter's single to lead off the inning. Those two pulled a double steal on Curtis Granderson's strikeout.

Mark Teixeira's sacrifice fly made it 4-3 and advanced Jeter to third. But Bailey retired Cano to end it.

A's left fielder Josh Willingham, linked to the Pittsburgh Pirates and Cleveland Indians in recent trade speculation, put Oakland on the board with a two-run shot off A.J. Burnett (8-8) in the third, his team-leading 13th homer.

### **Oakland A's update: Rookie second baseman Jemile Weeks savors first trip to Yankee Stadium**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

NEW YORK -- When A's rookie second baseman Jemile Weeks arrived at Yankee Stadium on Friday afternoon, he immediately went out to the field to take it all in.

"You're talking a big deal, first time at Yankee Stadium," Weeks said. "It's an exciting time for me, just to look at the stadium and out into the stands to get a feel of what it's like."

Weeks certainly played inspired in his first visit to the ballpark. He went 3 for 6 with two RBIs, a bright spot for the A's in their 17-7 loss.

Weeks is hitting .315. Despite not being called up from Triple-A Sacramento until June 7, he entered Friday leading American League rookies in triples (three) and was ranked fourth in steals (10) and tied for fifth in multihit games (13).

Weeks showed no ill effects from fouling a ball off his right instep Tuesday against Detroit. He didn't play Wednesday against the Tigers and had Thursday's day off to get extra rest.

Right-hander Rich Harden starts Saturday afternoon for the A's, and he has a plan for combating the heat and humidity that he'll encounter: He'll simply take his time.

Harden said working too quickly in high temperatures can get a pitcher in trouble. Weather.com predicts a high of 98 degrees on Saturday in New York, with the heat index (which includes humidity) reaching 102.

"If you start rushing and going too quickly, it can be tough to actually catch your breath," Harden said.

A's pitcher Brandon McCarthy said the heat and humidity at Yankee Stadium on Friday were the worst he's experienced as a major leaguer.

"I was in Mobile (Ala.) in the minor leagues, Charlotte (N.C.) "... McCarthy said. "This is right up there, if not worse. It's something else."

The A's will hold a ceremony before Friday's home game against Minnesota to honor Hideki Matsui's 500th professional home run.

As part of the promotion, the A's are offering 500 Plaza Level tickets for \$5 each.

Tickets can be purchased at [www.oaklandathletics.com/500](http://www.oaklandathletics.com/500).

A's hitting coach Gerald Perry was ejected in the fourth inning by home plate umpire Marty Foster for arguing balls and strikes.

### **Chin Music: Will the daylight change A's luck against Yankees?**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 7/23/2011 9:53am.

Afternoon ball at Yankee Stadium today ... The A's don't get many Saturday 'day' games on the road, as lots of teams like playing their Saturday contests at night. Maybe the earlier start is advantageous for the A's. The quicker they flush out Friday night's blowout loss, the better.

A's manager Bob Melvin acknowledged this morning that this 11-game losing streak to the Yankees is probably taking a mental toll on his team. "Typically, when you've lost that many games, you can't help but think about it," Melvin said. "Every game you don't win, the questions arise, and you have to think about having answers for them."

—With Coco Crisp getting a day off, Cliff Pennington is hitting second. Hideki Matsui is back in the No. 3 spot and Josh Willingham is hitting cleanup. Melvin says he flip-flopped his 3-4 combo to keep the left/right variation throughout the batting order.

—Joey Devine's brief but eventful outing last night was all over the highlights shows, thanks to his wayward pitch that went behind Brandon Laird. Both Devine and Melvin maintain that Devine's primary problem Friday was the constant sweat he had on his hands that kept him from getting a good grip on the ball. "Every throw it was sweat dripping down to the finger tips," Devine said.

That's potentially a problem, since pitching in humid weather is a fact of life for major leaguers, especially on the East Coast. "Hopefully I can make an adjustment and get back out there and have a better outing," Devine said. As part of that adjustment, he's wearing a lotion on his arm today called Sweat Shield, which is supposed to close his pores and make him sweat less. Melvin said he wouldn't hesitate to go back to Devine as his regular seventh-inning reliever, but Melvin also said: "Everybody is pitching in the same conditions, so he's going to have to find ways to combat that."

The A's are having a hard enough time handling the Yankees. They don't need perspiration working against them too ...

The lineups:

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

Yankees – Gardner LF, Jeter SS, Granderson CF, Teixeira 1B, Cano DH, Swisher RF, Martin C, Nunez 2B, Laird 3B; Burnett RHP.

### **A's take hammer to 11-game Yankees losing streak**

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

There's a new bully in the Bronx, at least for a day, and it's wearing white shoes.

The A's finally swung back on Saturday, and the Yankees flinched. Just like that, it's OK to be seen in public again. The A's won 4-3, at last halting their streak after losing 11 straight to the Yankees.

"Did we?" asked catcher Landon Powell, smirking and knowing full well how the A's have been dominated during the skid, which extended through Friday night's 17-7 energy-sapper and ended when Rich Harden and four relievers restricted the Yankees' big bats.

Josh Willingham and Hideki Matsui hit home runs, a rare example of the A's out-flexing the Yankees, whose only homer was a solo shot by Nick Swisher.

"You don't want that to linger too long," said reliever Grant Balfour, who got four key outs, "so it was nice to come out and get a win."

When Robinson Cano grounded out to third baseman Scott Sizemore to end the game, A's closer Andrew Bailey, born and raised in New Jersey, stuck his fist into his glove and got in the high-five line.

All things considered, it was a mild celebration, which might not be surprising bearing in mind ballplayers' one-day-at-a-time mentality. Nobody expressed a sense of relief over the end of the streak as much as a sense of relief over not permitting the Yankees to mount a comeback.

Before Bailey pitched the ninth and registered his 11th save, Balfour retired Cano to end the seventh (stranding Derek Jeter at third) and evaded another jam in the eighth when pinch-hitter Jorge Posada (4-for-4 in his career off Balfour) bounced into a double play.

The Yankees scored a ninth-inning run on Mark Teixeira's sacrifice fly, and Jeter again was stranded at third when the game ended.

Bailey said his first thought wasn't the streak's end as much as winning the series with a victory in today's matinee. After all, taking two of three from the Yankees would be significant for a last-place team with little chance to make noise in the season's final 10 weeks.

"You know where you stand," Bailey said. "There's a sense of playing for pride and playing for your teammates. We've got to compete, and that's the main thing. We're all professionals here and don't like to struggle. All in all, it's been a frustrating year all around. Coming here and winning a series would be big."

It's tough for many A's to comprehend the longevity of the streak, which began July 5, 2010, considering they weren't around for its duration. Balfour and Matsui, both signed in the offseason, experienced only the final four losses. Manager Bob Melvin, hired June 9, knew about just one.

"I wasn't really aware of that until right now," said Harden, who was on the disabled list when the Yankees swept in Oakland two months ago. "If that's the case, the team needed it."

Another streak is on the line today. The A's have lost nine straight series to the Yankees, an Oakland record.

### **A's Willingham, DeJesus leave trade talk to wives**

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Outfielders **Josh Willingham** and **David DeJesus** say they don't closely follow the latest trade rumors. They both have other sources to track that information.

"Just what my wife tells me," Willingham said.

Same with DeJesus, who said, "I leave that to my wife. She goes to the trade rumor sites."

Trade speculation is nothing new for either player. In fact, if DeJesus (as a Royal) hadn't broken his thumb a year ago Friday, pursuing a long fly by **Derek Jeter** at Yankee Stadium, the Giants might have traded for him.

Instead, he was dealt to Oakland in November.

"It was one of those freak things that happen in baseball," DeJesus said. "I don't ever ask 'what if?' I'm here now."

For how long? Scouts continue to follow the A's, knowing general manager **Billy Beane** could be a seller at the deadline. Willingham and DeJesus have been linked to several teams, including the Pirates.

"That's the way the game is. It's a business," DeJesus said. "If I'm not here, I had a great time here. But I plan to stay here and help this team out."

DeJesus is hitting .345 since the All-Star break. Willingham, since coming off the disabled list July 7, is hitting .293 with three homers and seven RBIs in 11 games. The Pirates reportedly are unsure about Willingham's health status, though Willingham said his Achilles is fine.

**Briefly: Hideki Matsui's** home run was the 501st of his career, counting Japan, and built the A's lead to 4-2 in the seventh - "501 was just as big as 500," manager **Bob Melvin** said, referring to Matsui's milestone homer in Detroit on Wednesday. "It took me a month to get 500," noted Matsui, "and 501 took two days. Hopefully, that'll continue." ... After failing to properly grip the ball in Friday's heat, **Joey Devine** tried "sweat shield," a cream that acts as a grip enhancer. Melvin had said he wouldn't hesitate to use Devine in the seventh inning Saturday but backtracked, saying, "I just didn't want to put him in that position after last night."

### **Leading off**

**Needs repair:** The bat rack in the visitors' dugout had a hole in it a day after a frustrated Coco Crisp whacked it with a bat after a strikeout. The damage is noticeable on the "a" in "Yankees.com."

### **Drumbeat: How Joey Devine will counter the Bronx heat**

John Shea from Yankee Stadium . . . 7/24/2011 9:13am

The A's will try to avoid another Bronx mugging and break their 11-game losing streak to the Yankees with Rich Harden on the mound.

"The best way to put that to bed is win a game," manager Bob Melvin said. "You go through streaks. This is a bit of a long one. You don't want it to get to the point where you're thinking about it, so the best way to put that one away is to win a game so we won't have to answer questions about it."

Are the A's thinking about it?

"Typically, when you lost that many games, you can't help but think about it," Melvin said. "But every game you don't win, the questions arise, and you have to think about having answers for them."

Melvin said he wouldn't hesitate today or tomorrow to use Joey Devine, who had no control Friday (18 pitches, six strikes) because he couldn't properly grip the ball with sweaty hands, caused by the Bronx heat. His first pitch to Brandon Laird sailed behind Laird, who was in the batter's box for the first time as a big-leaguer.

"That's the last thing I want to do to a kid making his major-league debut," Devine said.

If the A's have a late-game lead, Devine will be the seventh-inning guy, followed by Grant Balfour and Andrew Bailey.

"Everybody's pitching in the same situation," Melvin said, "so he's going to have to find a way to combat that."

Devine hopes he found a way. It's called "sweat shield," a cream applied to the skin that acts as a grip enhancer. Devine is using it today.

"Hopefully it works because the resin they have on the mound is almost like baby powder," Devine said.

As planned, catcher Kurt Suzuki and center fielder Coco Crisp are out of the lineup: 2B Weeks, SS Pennington, DH Matsui, LF Willingham, RF DeJesus, 3B Sizemore, CF Sweeney, 1B Jackson, C Powell.

### **Matsui homers as A's finally solve Bronx riddle**

### **Slugger goes deep in old stomping grounds to plate needed insurance**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

will derive from snapping an 11-game losing streak against the Yankees, other than the victory itself, will come from no longer having to dissect the miserable stretch.

A's manager Bob Melvin and his club will surely enjoy not taking part in such talk following Saturday's 4-3 win against a New York team that had also won 13 of the previous 14 played between the clubs in the Bronx.

"I haven't really had to talk about it too much," said Melvin, who took over on June 9 and missed 10 of the losses. "I only had a day's worth, but that was enough."

Some of his players, meanwhile, downplayed the losing stretch, a couple joking they were unaware of it and others, well, insistent they hadn't a clue about it.

"Did we?" Landon Powell asked, smiling.

"If that's the case," starter Rich Harden said, "then the team needed it."

Sunday's matinee finale still awaits the two clubs, but the A's will have nearly 20 hours to celebrate the most recent outcome, one that was propelled by homers off the bats of Josh Willingham and Hideki Matsui, along with a respectable showing from righty Harden and an even more impressive bullpen performance in the confines of a humid heat.

The A's still stand 12 games below the .500 mark and well out of contention in the American League West, but that doesn't take away from any win these days, especially one against a club that has essentially ruled supreme over them in recent years.

"We know where we stand," Andrew Bailey said. "There's a sense of playing for your pride and your teammates, and you have to go out and compete. We're all professionals here, and we don't like to struggle. I think, all in all, it's been a frustrating year all the way around, so I think coming in here and winning a series would be big."

Saturday's victory marked a pivotal step in that direction.

Following the previous night's 17-7 drubbing, Harden engaged in something of a pitchers' duel with Yankees right-hander A.J. Burnett for five innings, receiving some help in the form of several highlight-worthy defensive plays -- including David DeJesus' leaping grab of a Derek Jeter line drive in the first.

New York was first to reach the board in the second frame on a single by Russell Martin, but Oakland responded quickly in the third when Matsui singled and scored on Willingham's two-run blast to left field, marking his 13th homer of the season.

All remained quiet through the next two frames, with Harden and Burnett combining for seven strikeouts -- albeit struggling to maintain efficient pitch counts -- before the Yankees hurler departed with two outs in the sixth after loading the bases for Jemile Weeks.

Stepping to the plate against righty Cory Wade, the A's second baseman collected a single to extend the club's lead to two.

The cushion proved significant in the bottom half of the inning, when Nick Swisher tallied his second home run in as many days against his former ballclub. The outfielder's long ball, his 12th of the year, sent Harden to the showers and brought about the arrival of Brad Ziegler.

"I don't really like the way it ended," Harden said. "That last pitch to Swisher, he's a good hitter and has a good approach out there. They fouled off a lot of pitches and had a good approach at the plate. Overall, next time I want to go out and get ahead of a few more hitters."

Swisher, meanwhile, reciprocated the respect.

"If you hold this lineup down for just a couple of runs, you're doing something," he said. "You've got to give credit where credit is due. He pitched a good game for them."

Oakland's bullpen, which entered the day with the second-best ERA (3.10) in the American League only to the Yankees' 3.03 mark, was even better, holding the Bronx Bombers to one run through the final four frames to ensure a win for Harden, who was tagged with two runs on five hits and four walks with six strikeouts in 5 1/3 innings.

Matsui's long ball, a seventh-inning shot to right field off lefty Boone Logan, provided just enough insurance in the meantime and represented his eighth homer of the season and 501st of his career.

"In terms of the flow of the game, it certainly was an important part," Matsui said through translator Roger Kahlon. "It took me a month to get 500, but 501 took just two days, so hopefully that will continue on."

"Five-hundred-one was just as big as 500, to give us breathing room," Melvin said.

Righty Grant Balfour halted a Yankees seventh-inning threat by stranding a runner on third before coming out for the eighth and wiping away two baserunners with an inning-ending double-play ball. Adding to the dramatics was Bailey, who surrendered a run in the ninth before shutting it down for his 11th save of the season.

Maybe the frame was a little close for comfort, but by day's end it was all the same for Bailey.

"Hey, we won," he said, "and that's the biggest thing."

### **Devine struggles to adapt to Bronx heat**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

NEW YORK -- The New York heat has been well documented since the time of Oakland's arrival on Friday, but the high temperatures have affected some players more than others.

Count Joey Devine among them. The A's right-hander was brought in to the seventh inning on Friday to confine the damage against the Yankees but instead walked all three batters he faced -- two of whom ultimately scored later in the frame against Brad Ziegler. The A's were trailing by 12 runs at the time and went on to fall, 17-7.

On a night when the first-pitch temperature read 100 degrees, Devine's first toss soared behind the back of Yankees rookie Brandon Laird, who was making his Major League debut.

"You never want to do that to a guy making his debut," Devine said. "The rosin bag just gets worse and worse when it gets slick. I just couldn't get a grip."

As a result, 12 of the 18 pitches he threw were balls. Devine had walked just two in his previous 5 1/3 innings spanning seven appearances, and on Saturday he noted he's trying out a sweat shield.

"It's supposed to dry all the sweat up," he said. "It's one of those things where it could work for five minutes and then once you get going, it could stop, so we'll see how it goes."

Devine had never pitched in such heat -- "Not like that," he said -- but is expected to be available for Saturday and Sunday, as manager Bob Melvin isn't facing any qualms about placing the righty in his usual seventh-inning role for the remainder of the weekend.

"The way it lines up for us, he's our seventh-inning guy for the most part, with [Grant] Balfour for the eighth and [Andrew] Bailey in the ninth," Melvin said. "Everybody's pitching in the same conditions, so he's going to have to find a way to combat that. Every pitch, he was going to the rosin bag and trying to wipe his hand off, and then you start thinking about it, and it's not something you typically think about when you're on the mound and it just snowballed on him."

Most of the other relievers were also assumed available for Saturday, aside from Fautino De Los Santos, Melvin said. The young right-hander pitched two scoreless innings with four strikeouts in Friday's loss and has now fanned 10 in eight combined innings since his return from Triple-A Sacramento on July 1.

"He threw the ball well again," Melvin said. "One thing you worry about with him, a younger guy in a longer role, is not getting him consistent work. But looking at his numbers, what he's done to this point, he's been terrific. He's also working on things, like being quicker to the plate and some things, that are difficult to do at the big league level, but he's handled them well."

### **Worth noting**

- Joey Devine wasn't the only A's reliever to struggle Friday. Right-hander Michael Wuertz walked two and gave up a grand slam to Mark Teixeira following Trevor Cahill's early departure with no outs in the third inning. In theory, manager Bob Melvin said, the decision to send out Wuertz rather than Fautino De Los Santos was an easy one.

"We really don't have too many guys that give us length," he said. "So in a situation like that, it was going to a shorter guy to clean up that inning, then go to a longer guy to start a new inning fresh."

- The A's entered Saturday having lost 11 straight games against the Yankees, marking an Oakland record for longest losing streak against New York and the longest by an A's team since the Kansas City A's dropped 14 in a row from Sept. 13, 1956 to July 12, 1957.

"It's the continued losing that's a concern," Melvin said. "The best way to put that to bed is to win a game. You go through streaks, this is a bit of a long one, and you don't want it to get to a point where you're thinking about it, that's for sure. You have to win a game, so you don't have to answer questions about it."

- Outfielder Coco Crisp and Kurt Suzuki received scheduled off days Saturday and both are expected back in the lineup for Sunday's series finale.