

**A's rally past Tampa Bay Rays**

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

The A's haven't staged many late-inning rallies this season, but they haven't seen too many bullpens as ghastly as the Tampa Bay relief staff, either.

The key was being able to take advantage with an offense that has definitely seen a marked uptick since the All-Star break. Oakland rallied from a 5-2 deficit by scoring a single run in the sixth inning, three in the seventh and one more in the eighth to beat the rapidly fading Rays 7-5 at Q.co Coliseum on Monday night.

Tampa Bay's demise in the A.L. East has been largely due to their bullpen woes. In their last nine games counting this latest collapse, Rays relief pitchers have walked 30 batters in 292/3 innings, gone 0-4 with a 5.18 ERA and blown four saves.

But a number of the A's hitters are also swinging the bat a whole lot better, notably first baseman Conor Jackson, whose two-run double capped a three-run seventh inning rally.

"I've missed a lot of time the past two years," said Jackson. "For me to start playing consistently and getting a lot of at-bats in a row, I'm starting to feel more comfortable. It's starting to click."

Jackson is hitting .333 (13-for-39) in 10 games since the All-Star break with eight RBIs. He also hasn't shaved since, and he may have to keep his rapidly sprouting growth as long as his bat stays hot.

"I guess I have to, right?" he said. "It looks so bad, though. I look like I'm 40."

Another bat coming alive is David DeJesus, who went 2 for 5 including his 200th career double, a hit that started Oakland's comeback in the sixth. DeJesus is hitting .308 (12-for-39) since the break.

Then there's shortstop Cliff Pennington, who reached base all four times with a two-run homer, a single and a pair of walks. Something's definitely afoot with the Oakland offense.

"I think it's apparent that everybody's not chasing like we have in the past," Jackson said. "We're working counts, we're taking our walks and we're swinging at pitches in the zone. When you do that, it makes it more fun. I think our offense is really starting to come around."

"This is certainly what we've been building toward," said manager Bob Melvin. "You're seeing guys who struggled in the first half but have some track records starting to swing the bat well again. Just like it can be contagious when you're not swinging well, it can be contagious when you are swinging well."

Things definitely got contagious against the Tampa Bay pen. After the Rays' third pitcher, left-hander J.P. Howell, had gotten the Rays out of a sixth-inning jam with just one run scored against them, he was sent out for the seventh.

After an out, Hideki Matsui singled up the middle, Josh Willingham walked and DeJesus singled to right to score Matsui. Tampa manager Joe Maddon called on right-hander Joel Peralta to replace Howell (2-2), and Peralta promptly gave up a double off the left-center wall to Jackson that scored Willingham and DeJesus.

Oakland added yet another run off left-hander Cesar Ramos in the eighth on Coco Crisp's one-out RBI double.

The A's bullpen, in direct contrast to Tampa's shoddy relief corps, was superb after starter Guillermo Moscoso was knocked out of the game to open the sixth inning having allowed all five Rays runs. Michael Wuertz, Brian Fuentes, Grant Balfour and Andrew Bailey combined to pitch four scoreless innings heading into the ninth. Fuentes (2-8) got the victory and Bailey picked up his 12th save.

**A's Update**

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

The A's not only signed top draft pick Sonny Gray on Monday, they put the right-handed pitcher out of Vanderbilt University on the fast track by slotting him to Double-A Midland once he gets his arm ready.

Gray, the 18th overall pick, arrived in Oakland on Sunday night, took a physical Monday morning and signed his contract in the afternoon. He worked out with the A's before the game and will head to the A's Rookie League team Tuesday. But that'll be temporary. He expects to be in Midland by Aug. 5 and pitch with the Rockhounds the rest of the season.

Gray, 21, admitted being able to start at an advanced level was a powerful inducement for him to sign quickly. The A's believe he is ready for it, since he already has pitched three college seasons. He was 12-3 as a junior this year with a 2.12 ERA and made two appearances in the College World Series. He walked 46 and struck out 124 in 119 innings.

"I thought it was a great opportunity," he said. "They came up with the proposal to go to Midland, and we jumped on it. Going to Double-A is exciting. It's going to be a challenge, but it's something I'm looking forward to."

It's an unusual move for the A's but not unprecedented. Oakland's top 2007 pick, right-hander James Simmons, was sent to Double-A after signing but was sidetracked for two years with shoulder problems and is finally pitching again. One-time No. 2 overall pick Mark Mulder actually started in Triple-A, but the other two members of the Big Three, Tim Hudson and Barry Zito, started out in Class A.

At 5-foot-11, 165 pounds, Gray is in the Hudson mold and reputedly possesses a bulldog mentality like Hudson as well. Gray said he is most often compared to veteran right-hander Roy Oswalt.

If he makes it to the majors, he would be the first player named Sonny since former Sonny Siebert, who pitched for Cleveland and Boston and retired in 1975 after a brief stint with Oakland.

Pitcher Tyson Ross was activated from the disabled list and optioned to Triple-A Sacramento, where manager Bob Melvin wants him to pitch a few times before he considers bringing him back to the big leagues.

### **Chin Music: Sonny Gray could help A's to a sunnier future soon**

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune, 7/25/2011 7:08pjm

In for Joe Stiglich tonight ...

I've been spending the last few hours trying to think of some famous Sonny's. Tough. Sonny Bono. Sonny Barger. Sonny Boy Williamson. A lot of great saxophonists, for some reason: Sonny Rollins, Sonny Stitt, Sonny Criss. One of the Godfather's bullet-riddled offspring, of course, Sonny Corleone.

In sport, we've had a heavyweight champ named Sonny, Sonny Liston. A Hall of Fame quarterback, too, Sonny Jurgensen, and here's one A's PR man pulled out of his deep recesses – former Washington QB Sonny Sixkiller, one of the great names in the history of sports. Longtime Warriors fans will also remember swift swingman Sonny Parker.

But it's a rare name in baseball. In fact, the last two major leaguers of note who went by Sonny are from the 1960s: former Atlanta shortstop Sonny Jackson and one-time Cleveland pitcher Sonny Siebert. Siebert retired in 1975, and at least in my Baseball Reference search, nobody since.

Enter Sonny Gray, the A's top draft pick, who could end the drought sooner than later. The 18th overall selection, the right-handed pitcher not only signed Monday, Oakland immediately put him on the fast track. He'll head to the Rookie League in Arizona Tuesday, but he'll only be there for a week or two to get his arm ready. Then he'll make a big leap to Double-A Midland.

Gray, 21, was 12-3 with a 2.12 ERA and .200 opponents batting average in 18 games, all starts, for Vanderbilt University this year, including two appearances in the 2011 College World Series. In 119.0 innings, the junior struck out 124 and walked 46 while allowing just four home runs.

Gray said there was never any doubt he was going to sign with Oakland.

"One of the reasons I signed so soon is I'm going to go to Midland probably around Aug. 5-6 and stay there for the rest of the season," he said. "I thought it was a great opportunity. (The A's) came up with the proposal to go to Midland and we jumped on it. Going to Double-A is exciting. It's going to be a challenge, but it's something I'm looking forward to. Gray arrived in the East Bay Sunday, took a physical Monday morning and signed Monday afternoon. He suited up at O.co Coliseum before Monday night's game against Tampa Bay and worked out on the field with the major-league team. He's had to deal with ribbing throughout his baseball career about his name — he's aware it's an oxymoron — but he's used to it.

In college, going around from town to town, I kind of got yelled at a lot for that," he said. "Some of the Oakland guys were even asking me, 'What's your real name?'"

## **A's come back to beat Rays, 7-5**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Tuesday, July 26, 2011

The A's brought their hitting shoes home with them from the road.

After a road trip that was remarkable more for Oakland's offense than the team's mediocre results, the A's staged a late comeback Monday at the Coliseum, scoring three times in the seventh and picking up a 7-5 victory over the Rays.

Oakland is batting .308 and averaging 5.3 runs per game since the All-Star break. The A's averaged 3.42 runs per game before the break, and hit .233.

"It makes it a little more fun," A's first baseman Conor Jackson said. "I think definitely the offense is starting to come around."

Asked why that might be, Jackson said that the team is swinging at better pitches, but overall, he said, "There's no magical pill. There's no magical answer."

With the A's trailing 5-3 in the seventh, Hideki Matsui singled off Tampa Bay reliever J.P. Howell, Josh Willingham walked and David DeJesus singled home Matsui. Then Jackson faced right-hander Joel Peralta and drilled a two-run double to center to put the A's ahead. Coco Crisp drove in another run in the eighth.

Much has been made of Matsui's hitting since the break - he was named the American League Player of the Week on Monday after going 12-for-21 (.571) last week - and Jackson also has picked up the pace. He's hitting .333 with eight RBIs in 10 games in the second half.

"I'm starting to feel better," he said. "I missed a lot of time the last two years. Getting consistent at-bats, I'm starting to feel more comfortable."

Jackson started growing a beard during the All-Star break and asked if he'll keep it, he said, "I guess I have to."

Oakland starter Guillermo Moscoso gave up five runs, including solo homers by Ben Zobrist and Kelly Shoppach, and over his past two starts Moscoso has allowed 11 runs. The A's bullpen didn't allow a run Monday in four innings.

Cliff Pennington hit a two-run homer off Tampa Bay starter Jeremy Hellickson in the second.

Willingham was the designated hitter because he has a sore neck, something he said he awoke with the day before.

Willingham remains the top potential trade possibility for Oakland, followed by fellow outfielders Crisp and DeJesus. The Giants had scouts at Monday night's game, and the Pirates also had a scout on hand.

Willingham said Monday that he'd consider signing long-term in Oakland, but there have been no discussions. "For sure, I'd be interested," he said, "but they haven't talked to us about it. I don't know what they're going to do."

The A's have no plans to talk to any of their potential free agents about contracts until after the season, according to a team source.

### **A's prospect Sonny Gray checks in**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Tuesday, July 26, 2011

**Sonny Gray**, the A's newly signed top draft pick, knows that he has an unusual name.

"It's an oxymoron," he said, explaining that his first name is a nod to his grandfather.

"Oxymoron" is what fans would yell at Gray at SEC road games when the right-hander started for Vanderbilt, which might not be the most cutting insult of all time, and it doesn't bother Gray.

"I like my name," he said.

Gray, the 18th pick in the June draft, will get a signing bonus of \$1.54 million and he will go to Double-A Midland in August.

That's unusual for one of Oakland's June picks. The last to go straight to Double-A was **James Simmons** in 2007. **Mark Mulder** went straight to Triple-A in 1998.

In 1999, **Barry Zito** pitched at all three levels, perhaps the most apt comparison, because Gray isn't going immediately to Double-A; he'll spend two weeks or so at rookie-ball Arizona. He hasn't thrown off a mound since Vanderbilt was eliminated from the College World Series last month.

Wearing No. 20, Gray worked out with the A's on Monday. On Sunday night, he got to catch up with longtime friend and mentor **David Price** of the Rays, who played at Vanderbilt before Gray got there. They are from the same area of Tennessee and Price saw Gray pitch in high school.

"Pretty impressive," Price said. "He's like **Roy Oswalt**, only a little shorter. He will wow you."

**Anderson's day: Brett Anderson**, who had Tommy John surgery on July 14, said it was a big day for him Monday, because he got his stitches out and he got to take a shower.

One reason Anderson didn't have surgery immediately when he had elbow issues was that MRI exams did not show any tears. The surgery was necessary, though. "The ligament was stretched so thin and it was so worn, it was like gum," Anderson said.

Recovery time is at least a year.

**Briefly:** Outfielder **Michael Choice**, the A's top pick 2010, will miss seven to 10 days at Class A Stockton with a quadriceps strain. ... **Jemile Weeks** recorded his 50th hit in his 39th game, fastest ever by an Oakland player. **Mitchell Page** needed 41 games in 1977. ... The A's have fewer than three men on the disabled list (two) for the first time since 2006.

**A'S LEADING OFF**

**Ross optioned:** Tyson Ross (oblique) came off the disabled list after missing two months and was sent to Triple-A Sacramento. Manager Bob Melvin said the team would like Ross to have some good results there.

### **Drumbeat: A's top pick Sonny Gray signs, works out with team**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 7/25/2011 5:41pm

The A's top draft pick last month, Vanderbilt right-hander Sonny Gray, signed earlier today after taking a physical - and getting pizza at Zachary's - and he was in a uniform and working out with the team today.

Gray will go to rookie-ball Arizona tomorrow morning and stay there two weeks or so - and then the plan is for him to go to Double-A Midland. That's a high level for a June pick; the last A's June pick to go to Double-A was James Simmons in 2007. Barry Zito immediately went to Double-A after being drafted, and Mark Mulder went to Triple-A.

Gray said that one of the reasons he signed so quickly was the prospect of going to Midland; I'm told it was a proposal by the team, not something that came from Gray or his agent, Bo McKinnis.

"I'm excited about that," he said. "That will be a challenge but it's something I'm looking forward to."

Of his tweet the other day about getting an apartment at Vanderbilt for the fall, Gray smiled and said he plans to work out there during the offseason - it wasn't a negotiating ploy.

Asked about his unusual name - Sonny is in honor of his grandfather - he acknowledged that, yes, "It's an oxymoron." Opposing fans actually yell "Oxymoron!" at him at road games, he said. For the record: He likes his name.

David Price of the Rays, also from Vanderbilt, is from the same county in Tennessee and the two are close friends. Price has served as a mentor to Gray, which is good thing - Price is a solid pro, a solid citizen, and the Rays writers tell me he's been a mentor to young Tampa Bay pitchers, too.

Here's the lineup: Weeks 2b, Crisp cf, Matsui lf, Willingham DH, DeJesus rf, Jackson 1b, Sizemore 3b, Suzuki c, Pennington ss

### **A's rally past Rays on Jackson's double**

By Tom Green / MLB.com | 7/26/2011 3:10 AM ET

OAKLAND -- Conor Jackson will be keeping his two-week-old beard, so long as he keeps hitting and the A's keep winning.

Jackson smashed a two-run double in the seventh inning Monday to help the A's come from behind and down the Rays, 7-5, to open the four-game set. It marked the second straight home game that Jackson has capped off a big inning for the A's, as he finished off an eight-run first inning against the Angels with his first career grand slam on July 17.

"I'm starting to feel better," Jackson said. "I've missed a lot of time the last two years, so I think for me to start playing consistently and getting a lot of at-bats in a row, [I'm] starting to feel more comfortable. It's been a while since I've strung a lot of at-bats together. It's starting to click."

Jackson is hitting .333 (13-for-39) with eight RBIs since the All-Star break -- which coincides with the growth of his beard, and his seventh-inning double -- his 13th of the season -- capped a three-run rally off Rays lefty reliever J.P. Howell. The A's trailed by as many as three runs and were down 5-3 heading into the seventh.

Hideki Matsui, fresh off earning American League Player of the Week honors, got the rally started with a one-out single off of Howell (2-2). Josh Willingham followed with a walk before David DeJesus singled in Matsui to cut the lead to one, prompting a pitching change for the Rays.

Righty Joel Peralta relieved Howell, and worked a 1-2 count to Jackson before the A's first baseman drilled the fifth pitch he saw to finish off the rally.

"Getting behind, that's a no-no with me," Howell said. "If I attack them, if I'm in the zone, the hitters don't want to see me in the zone early on. If I get behind they get a little more confident naturally. And that does a lot as you saw tonight."

"[Jackson's] just getting better pitches to hit -- David DeJesus, too," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "Those are guys in the middle of the order, for the most part, who we expect to drive in runs.

"We're getting better pitches to hit and I think we're a little more relaxed at the plate, and just as a group, we're more confident."

Jackson's swing, and the A's late-inning rally, helped erase another rough outing from righty Guillermo Moscoso, who has struggled to find his form since being recalled from Triple-A Sacramento after the All-Star break.

The righty lasted five-plus innings Monday, surrendered five earned runs and allowed the Rays to go yard twice -- once in the first and again to lead off the sixth. He tied a season high in walks with four, and failed to record a strikeout for the first time in 12 starts this season.

In two starts since the break, Moscoso is 0-1 with a 10.24 ERA. He has allowed 11 earned runs on 17 hits, surrendered four home runs and has seen his season ERA jump to 3.47 -- a stark contrast to his production during the first half, when the righty went 3-4 with a 2.16 ERA in 10 outings.

"Maybe not his best two performances the last couple times, but he's been pretty strong before that," Melvin said.

"Everybody's going to have a couple outings where they're not at their best, and that's the way I see it."

But Moscoso's struggles were wiped away by the A's suddenly resurgent offense, which following the rally, tacked on an insurance run in the eighth off a Coco Crisp double, which was the club's 10th base hit of the night.

Since the break, the A's as a team are hitting .308 and averaging 5.3 runs per game, which is up considerably from the club's .233 batting average and 3.42 runs per game before the Midsummer Classic.

"There's no magical pill, there's no magical answer," Jackson said. "I think it's just apparent everybody's not chasing like they have in the past. We're working counts, we're taking our walks and we're swinging at pitches in the zone. When you do that it makes it a little bit fun.

"Obviously, I think our offense is definitely starting to turn around."

And Melvin sees that turnaround, too, for his club, which improved to 12-21 in games decided in the seventh inning or later, and to 6-4 after the break.

"It's the halfway point and you're looking at the numbers, sometimes it's difficult to do because you know you're not going to be able to get your average moved that much with as many at-bats, but you just have to put that behind you," Melvin said. "Sometimes the second half can be that gap where you try to put everything like, 'This is the second half, let's start fresh, let's start over,' and looks like that's the case."

## **A's ink first-round Draft pick Gray**

By Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The Oakland A's on Monday officially added another color to their green and gold -- Gray.

The club signed Vanderbilt University right-handed pitcher Sonny Gray, their 2011 first-round selection and the 18th overall pick in the First-Year Player Draft. Gray and the A's agreed to a \$1.54 million bonus, slightly higher than the recommended slot of \$1.422 million for the pick.

"This is a day you look forward to," Gray said. "You look forward to Draft day and you look forward to signing. Thankfully we got a deal done and I'm happy to be here."

Gray stopped by the A's clubhouse Monday and joined the team during batting practice to loosen up with the pitching staff, and will fly to Arizona on Tuesday to get back into pitching shape before joining Double-A Midland for the rest of the season, likely at the beginning of August.

"I thought it was a great opportunity," Gray said. "They came up with the proposal to send me to Midland and we jumped on it and we were excited about that. Going to Midland and going to Double-A is exciting, but it's going to be a challenge. It's something I'm looking forward to."

Gray, who said he is often compared to Phillies pitcher Roy Oswalt, went 12-3 with a 2.12 ERA and a .200 opponents batting average in 18 games (all starts) for the Commodores. They advanced to the semifinals of the 2011 College World Series, in which Gray made two appearances.

Gray hasn't thrown from a mound since his trip to Omaha, Neb., but he struck out 124 batters in 119 innings and allowed only four home runs as his team cruised to a 54-12 overall record.

The College World Series was a fitting caper for Gray's decorated Vanderbilt career. Gray, who is 5-foot-11 and weighs 200 pounds, was a second-team All-SEC selection in 2010. He also was named as having the best secondary pitch among college pitchers by Baseball America.

"One of his best attributes is his makeup," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "He's a tough kid who loves to compete. That doesn't show up in the stat sheets. The stats were good, but I think what was recognized was what type of competitor he is."

That competitive nature, Gray said, is part of what drove him to getting a deal with the club finished before the Aug. 15 deadline.

"I was sitting at home being bored and having nothing to do, so we wanted to get something worked out where I could go play right now," Gray said. "We got it worked out, and it's a little bit of that, too, just wanting to get out and compete and play."

The A's have now signed or agreed to terms with 26 players from the Draft, including 19 of their first 25 picks.

## **Matsui named AL Player of the Week**

By Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's designated hitter and left fielder Hideki Matsui was named the American League Player of the Week on Monday after leading the Majors last week in batting average.

Matsui hit .571 (12-for-21) for the week, and had seven RBIs while knocking two doubles and a pair of home runs -- including the 500th of his career (combined between Japan and the Major Leagues). The slugger also led the Majors with a .591 on-base percentage and was second with a .952 slugging percentage.

"It's well-deserved," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "The numbers he put up would suggest he would be in the running for it. Congratulations to him for being the Player of the Week."

The award marks the fourth time in his career Matsui has been named the AL Player of the Week, and he is the second A's player to earn the honor this season, joining left-handed pitcher Gio Gonzalez.

Matsui has reached base safely in each of his eight games since the All-Star break, which has helped the slugger break out of a 5-for-42 slump that began after he hit home run No. 499.

But during his offensive tear, Matsui eclipsed the milestone he often downplayed when he launched a home run against the Tigers during a 3-for-4 performance last Wednesday, snapping a 24-game homerless drought.

It was Matsui's 168th home run in nine Major League seasons, adding to the 332 he hit in 10 seasons with the Yomiuri Giants of Japan's Central League.

Two games later he added another round-tripper, and then capped off the week with a 5-for-5 performance with two doubles and an RBI in Sunday's series finale against the Yankees.

"There might be some part of me, subconsciously, where I was paying attention to [the milestone]," Matsui said through translator Roger Kahlon. "Personally I'm not aware of that, but that might have played a role in some of the struggles.

"I hope I continue to play the way I've played the last week or so."

### **A's activate Ross, option righty to Triple-A**

By Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- After spending more than two months on the disabled list with a strained left oblique, right-handed pitcher Tyson Ross was reinstated and promptly optioned to Triple-A Sacramento on Monday.

Ross injured his oblique eight pitches into his outing May 19 against the Twins, and experienced a couple of setbacks during his recovery process.

The righty made four rehab starts, including three with the River Cats and one with Class A Stockton. Over those four outings, he went 0-1 with a 13.50 ERA in 9 1/3 innings and opponents hit .413 against him.

"You want to have some success before you come here," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "He'll get a couple more starts under his belt or whatever, and I don't want to say earn his way here, but certainly anybody in the big leagues has to earn his way here."

In the absence of Ross, who was 2-2 with a 2.61 ERA in six starts before sustaining the injury, righty Guillermo Moscoso has filled the void in the A's rotation. Moscoso, who took the mound in the series opener against the Rays, entered Monday with a 2.96 ERA in nine appearances (seven starts) for the A's.

"Moscoso has pitched well and at this point it just didn't seem like the right thing to do [to replace him with Ross in the rotation]," Melvin said.

Ross, who had his rehab interrupted and had to take a few steps back at times, will continue to be stretched out until he can consistently throw around 90 pitches -- up from the 70 or so he is able to throw now -- and will remain in a starting role with Sacramento. But Melvin didn't rule out the righty returning to the A's rotation at some point this season.

"I think anybody is a possibility up here," Melvin said. "He's certainly a guy, talent-wise, who has pitched well at times at the big league level."

The A's skipper also didn't shoot down the idea of Ross returning in a relief role to bolster the club's bullpen, where he spent most of his rookie campaign last season. Ross made 26 appearances for the A's in 2010, with 24 of them coming out of the bullpen.

With Ross' activation from the disabled list, the club now has just two players sidelined, marking the first time since the end of the 2006 season that fewer than three A's are on the disabled list.

### **A's keeping pressure on scuffling Rays**

By Aaron Taube / MLB.com | 7/26/2011 2:15 AM ET

With the Rays falling further and further behind in the American League playoff race, left-handed pitcher David Price knows Tampa Bay needs to start winning games in bunches -- and fast.



That burden will be on his shoulders as he takes the mound Tuesday night at Oakland, where he will try to even the Rays' four-game series with the A's.

"We need to put some games together, some series together," Price said. "Hopefully we can mix in some sweeps in order for us to get back in this thing. We have to start winning some more ballgames. And I feel like everybody in here knows that. I feel like everybody knows that we can all step it up a little bit."

Price has given up a home run in each of his past four starts, including three on July 15 against the Red Sox. He'll have help keeping the ball in the park at pitcher-friendly Oakland Coliseum.

Though Price's record is just a smidge over .500, he feels as if he's pitched better than his numbers show this season. Still, he knows he needs to focus not on his stat line, but on helping his team win ballgames.

"This happens," Price said. "It happened to [Matt] Garza in '09 and [James] Shields last year. It happens. Shields is one game over .500 and he's a Cy Young contender. That's just how it happens sometimes. Obviously, you wish you could change and you could score 15 runs a game, but that's just not going to happen. ... We need to win."

One particularly hot hitter Price will need to contend with is Oakland's Hideki Matsui. "Godzilla" was named American League Player of the Week on Monday after going 12-for-21 with seven RBIs and a pair of homers last week. Though Matsui bats left-handed, he has hit seven of his eight homers this season against lefties. Given that Price is a lefty who has already given up 15 home runs this season, Matsui can't be overlooked Tuesday.

"I think it's the fact he's had success for years doing that," A's manager Bob Melvin said of Matsui's success against lefties. "The reason lefties don't have as much success against lefties is you don't see as many of them, especially coming up in the big league level. Typically, unless you're a type of player like Matsui is, you're sitting on the bench against left-handers -- those are your days off."

The A's will combat price with righty Brandon McCarthy, who has struggled in his first two starts after the All-Star break, allowing six earned runs in 10 1/3 innings. McCarthy is 1-2 with a 4.18 ERA in seven career appearances -- six starts -- against the Rays.

### **Rays' young guns to tie record**

When Price takes the mound for the Rays on Tuesday night, it will be the 704th consecutive game Tampa Bay has started a pitcher under the age of 30, tying a Major League record established by the Washington Senators from 1913-1917. The last pitcher aged 30 or older to start for the Rays was Jae Seo, who pitched on his 30th birthday on May 24, 2007.

"I think it's awesome," Price said. "It's pretty special and good to be a part of something like that."

### **A's sign first-rounder Gray**

On Monday, Oakland signed its 2011 first-round Draft pick, Vanderbilt right-handed pitcher Sonny Gray. He was the 18th overall pick in the First-Year Player Draft and netted a \$1.54 million signing bonus, a little higher than the recommended slot of \$1.422 million.

Gray went 12-3 with a 2.12 ERA in 18 starts for the Commodores, who made it to the semifinals of the College World Series.

## Worth noting

- Monday was a rare loss for Tampa Bay after the Rays went ahead with a run in the top of the first. The Rays are 39-13 when they score first this season.
- The A's did not hit a home run Monday night, marking the 73rd straight game they have hit two home runs or fewer. The streak is Oakland's longest since going 86 games with two home runs or fewer from July 5, 1978-April 10, 1979.

## A's rally past Rays, 7-5

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Conor Jackson hit a two-run double in the seventh inning and the Oakland Athletics rallied from three runs down to beat the Tampa Bay Rays 7-5 on Monday night.

Cliff Pennington homered for the second time in four games and David DeJesus added two hits, including an RBI single to start the A's uprising against Tampa Bay's bullpen.

Ben Zobrist homered and doubled twice for the Rays, who lost for the third time in four games and dropped to 4-7 since the All-Star break.

The A's managed only four hits off starter Jeremy Hellickson but had no problems once they knocked the rookie right-hander out of the game.

Oakland trailed 5-2 but scored once off Hellickson in the sixth then took the lead with a three-run seventh.

Hideki Matsui, named AL Player of the Week earlier in the day, started the rally with a one-out single against reliever J.P. Howell (2-2). Josh Willingham walked and DeJesus followed with his single to drive in Matsui.

Joel Peralta replaced Howell and promptly gave up Jackson's double to center. Willingham scored and DeJesus slid in to home with the go-ahead run just ahead of the tag of catcher Kelly Shoppach.

Oakland's bullpen did the rest.

Brian Fuentes (2-8), the second of five A's pitchers, worked two-thirds of an inning for his first win since April 27. Andrew Bailey gave up two-out double and walk but retired Matt Joyce on a called third strike for his 12th save in 14 tries.

Every Oakland starter except Jemile Weeks and Scott Sizemore had at least one hit. Coco Crisp doubled in Pennington with an insurance run in the eighth.

Hellickson was in line to become the first rookie pitcher in the majors with 10 wins this season before the Rays' bullpen blew up.

The 24-year-old rookie, coming off victories against the Cardinals and Yankees, gave up Pennington's two-run home run in the second inning and allowed another run in the fifth. Hellickson walked four but left with only his second no-decision of the season.

Zobrist homered with two outs in the first off Guillermo Moscoso, who allowed five runs and eight hits with four walks.

Pennington's home run off Hellickson in the second extended his hitting streak to nine games and gave the A's a 2-1 lead.

Desmond Jennings' RBI double in the third tied the game before Johnny Damon scored on Jemile Weeks' throwing error in the fifth to give Tampa Bay the lead. B.J. Upton also tripled in the inning to drive in Matt Joyce.

Shoppach homered against Moscoso leading off the sixth to make it 5-2.

Jennings had two hits, including an RBI double in the second. The Tampa Bay outfielder is batting 6-for-11 (.545) since being called up from Triple-A Durham before Saturday's game against Kansas City.

Notes: Damon's double was the 505th of his career and left him one shy of tying Babe Ruth for 47th on baseball's career list. Zobrist has 40 RBIs on the road this season compared to 13 at Tropicana Field. ... Evan Longoria walked four times in five plate appearances, the first four-walk game of his career. ... The A's reinstated RHP Tyson Ross from the disabled list and

optioned him to Sacramento (PCL). ... DeJesus' double in the sixth was the 200th of his career. ... Oakland signed RHP Sonny Gray, the 18th overall player selected in this year's draft, and plan to have the right-hander report to Arizona for two weeks of conditioning before moving on to Double-A Midland in August. Gray went 12-3 with a 2.12 ERA and had 124 strikeouts with 46 walks in 119 innings this past season at Vanderbilt.

### **Jackson rallies the A's past the Rays for the win**

Malaika Bobino, Oakland Post

Oakland, CA – It's what they have been looking for all season. The A's offense came alive and it was a team effort from all. But it was Conor Jackson's two-run double in the seventh frame which was the game's biggest play.

Oakland rallied past the Tampa Bay Rays for the 7-5 victory of the first of a four-game series. Down by two Hideki Matsui leadoff the inning with a single off Rays pitcher J.P. Howell. Josh Willingham followed with a walk before David DeJesus's RBI single cut the lead 5-4.

The Rays immediately made a pitching change replacing Howell with Joel Peralta. Next at bat was Jackson who calmly waited until the fifth pitch to blast a double to give the A's back the lead 6-2. It brought the crowd to their feet and the offense continued to shine.

"I'm starting to feel better," Conor said. "I've missed a lot of time the last two years, so I think for me to start playing consistently I'm more comfortable. Things are starting to click and it's been awhile since I've strung a lot of at-bats together."

There's one word to describe the offense tonight, "contagious"! At least every starter got on base and the end result is that everyone is feeding off each other. Despite being 14 games out of first place in the American West League, Oakland is moving at their own pace to get back on top.

"This is certainly what we've been building toward," said A's manager Bob Melvin. "You're seeing some guys who struggled in the first half but have some track records starting to swing the ball well again. Just like it can be contagious when you're not swinging well, it can be contagious when you are swinging well."

DeJesus bats is also improving, his leadoff double began the comeback in the sixth. David went 2-for-5 for the night and recorded his 200th double in his career. His hitting average is .308 (12-for-39) since the All-Star break.

"I think it's apparent that everybody's not chasing hits like we have in the past," explained Jackson. "We're working counts, we're taking our walks and we're swinging at pitches in the zone. When you do that, it makes it more fun. I think our offense is really starting to come around."

Tampa got going early when Ben Zobrist blasted a solo home run in the first giving the Rays a 1-0 lead. But Cliff Pennington launched a two-run homer to right field to give the A's a 2-1 lead bottom of the second. Top of the third Guillermo Moscoso found himself in a jam when Sean Rodriguez began the third with a single to left field and Desmond Jennings followed with a RBI-double to tie the game 2-2.

Moscoso gave up two walks back-to-back to load the bases. Next at-bat was B.J. Upton who grounded out to second to end the inning leaving runners stranded. In the last two starts since the break Guillermo is 0-1 with a 10.24 ERA. In his first outing facing Tampa he gave up eight hits, five runs (all earned), four walks, two home runs and no strikeouts in five innings.

"Maybe not his best two performances the last couple of times but he's been pretty strong before that," said Melvin. "Everybody's going to have a couple outings where they're not at their best and that's the way I see it."

Since the break Oakland is hitting .308 as a team and averaging 5.3 runs per game which has improved from the club's .233 batting average and 3.42 runs per game in the first half of the season. The Rays bullpen collapsed despite having some offense. They have now lost nine of the last thirteen games.

"We didn't get our normal pitching tonight," Rays manager Joe Maddon said. "I mean [Hellickson] with better command had a chance to go a lot deeper in that game. We need him to do that to set up the bullpen properly. I couldn't let him go any longer than what he did."

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **Taylor erupts as Sacramento crushes Reno**

By Zeke Fine / Sacramento River Cats

The River Cats annihilated the Reno Aces in 10-1 on Monday night at Raley Field.

The contest got off to a quick start as the first 16 batters were retired and the minimum number of hitters came to the plate until the top of the fourth.

River Cats starter Graham Godfrey was in control all night, not allowing a base hit until two outs in the fourth inning when Cole Gillespie hit a single down the right-field line. Godfrey allowed only two hits in the first 5.0 innings.

"I've definitely improved my confidence," said Godfrey, who has a 9-2 record and 2.40 ERA with the River Cats. "I built that up during winter ball, and have just carried that on through this year."

The right-hander pitched 7.0 innings overall, allowing one earned run on five hits while striking out eight and walking none.

Though it took a few innings to get the bats going, the River Cats made up for lost time in the fourth inning, when they exploded for five runs. The scoring started with a three-run home run by Kevin Kouzmanoff, his 11th of the season and fourth in three games. Michael Taylor drove in the other two runs with a two-out double, giving Sacramento a 5-0 lead.

The Aces struck back in the sixth, when Mark Hallberg hit Godfrey's first pitch of the inning over the left-field fence for his third home run of the season, making the score 5-1. The River Cats responded with a three-run frame in the bottom of the sixth. Taylor added to his terrific night with a two-run bomb to left field, his 11th of the season. Taylor was 3-for-3 on the night with a home run, double, single, walk and five RBIs.

"Everything I've been working on with (Hitting Coach Todd Steverson) came together tonight at the plate, and I was able to relax and not have to think about what I was doing with my hands or feet or anything really," Taylor said.

The River Cats scored again in the sixth to make the score 8-1 when Jermaine Mitchell lined a single to left to drive in Anthony Recker, who had doubled earlier in the inning.

Though the seven-run cushion would have been enough for the win, the River Cats tacked two more runs on the scoreboard in the seventh inning. After Jai Miller walked and Josh Donaldson reached base on an error, Aces reliever Ryan Cook threw a wild pitch, enabling both runners to advance one base. Chris Carter then grounded out to score Miller. Michael Taylor came up with two outs in the inning to drive in Josh Donaldson, collecting his fifth RBI on the night and finalizing the score at 10-1.

Godfrey was relieved by Jerry Blevins, who threw a perfect eighth inning. Vinnie Chulk took over for Blevins in the ninth to throw a hitless inning, allowing one walk while striking out two.

The win gives the River Cats a 4-1 series victory, and a 9-7 record against Reno on the season.

The River Cats will head to Washington state Tuesday (7:05 start) for a four-game series against the reigning Pacific Coast league-champion Tacoma Rainiers.

### **San Antonio drills RockHounds**

Jordan Mason, Midland Reporter-Telegram

When multiple defensive lapses put the Midland RockHounds behind the San Antonio Missions in the fifth inning Saturday, the RockHounds were able to recover and win in 12 innings.

But on Monday, San Antonio learned its lesson, burying the RockHounds after two errors in the first staked them to an early lead in a 14-2 rout at Citibank Ballpark.

"Eventually with the type of team we have the hits are going to come," Missions shortstop Andy Parrino said. "We just try to score runs as much as we can."

The Missions bats had help Monday as the RockHounds fell behind early thanks to the same type of routine fielding errors that helped the Missions erase a four-run deficit Saturday.

It started with two men down in the first, when a double steal by Jedd Gyorko and Blake Tekotte put them on second and third respectively.

Later in the at-bat, Sawyer Carroll hit a routine grounder to short that Tyler Ladendorf scooped up but threw low to first, leading to Michael Spina mishandling the throw, which allowed Tekotte and Gyorko to score.

"Just an uncharacteristic throw from Ladendorf who's been solid, and Spina's been really good about picking balls," RockHounds manager Steve Scarsone said. "Out of 100 times I think we didn't really see that twice. That seemed to set the tone for some reason."

The errors continued in the second with San Antonio still up two, when Tekotte lined out straight to pitcher Gary Daley who turned and whipped it to second looking for a double play.

Ladendorf wasn't able to handle his throw then tried to go to first but whipped the ball out of play, allowing Bryan Altman to score on the two-base error.

Daniel Robertson, who advanced to third on the error, scored on the next at-bat, an RBI single by Parrino that put the Missions up 4-0.

The next batter, Jaff Decker crushed the first pitch he saw off the bullpen wall in left to score Parrino and the rout was on.

"We were just trying to get a good pitch to hit," Parrino said. "He made some mistakes early, and we took advantage of it."

The Missions added five runs in the next two innings, including a full-count solo shot to center by Parrino followed by back-to-back triples by Carroll and Jason Hagerty, who later crossed the plate on a wild pitch to make it 10-0 in the fourth.

All these runs came at the expense of RockHounds starter Gary Daley, who allowed eight runs -- six earned -- on nine hits.

The Missions added insult to injury by tacking on three runs in the ninth, including an RBI single by Parrino, who finished 3 for 5 with three RBI and two runs.

Missions starter Simon Castro, though, was nearly flawless Monday going eight innings, only giving up runs on a Grant Green two-run blast in the sixth.

"We were taking pitches early in the count for strikes, which leads you to believe that he's hitting his spots and using multiple pitches," Scarsone said. "We got a pretty good piece of him last time in, and tonight he seemed to get us."

The RockHounds have now lost two straight, and will look to rebound in a brief road series against the Frisco RoughRiders, which begins today.

Jordan Mason can be reached at [jmason@mrt.com](mailto:jmason@mrt.com)

'HOUND BITES: The RockHounds head to Frisco today for a three-game series before returning home for a seven-game homestand. ... Friday, the first game of the homestand, will be Adult Jersey Night with the first 1,000 fans over the age of 14 receiving a free replica RockHounds jersey. ... RockHounds starter Gary Daley has now had poor outings in his last two meetings with San Antonio. He allowed seven earned runs on eight hits in 1 2/3 innings in his last meeting with the Missions, and allowed six earned in three innings Monday. ... Michael Spina was a bright spot for the RockHounds at the plate, getting hits in his first three plate appearances and finishing 3 for 4 on the night.

TODAY'S PROBABLES: A.J. Griffin (2-2, 4.84) is expected to open the series against Frisco today while the RoughRiders are expected to start LHP Robbie Erlin (5-2, 4.37)

### **Stockton Snaps Losing Streak**

Stockton Ports

The Stockton Ports ended a three-game set against the Bakersfield Blaze with a 7-1 victory, effectively snapping Bakersfield's nine-game winning streak, as well as ending their own five-game losing streak. The Ports would take an early lead and ensured their win with a four-run rally in the fifth inning.

After Ports starter Dan Straily retired three quickly in the top of the first, second baseman Conner Crumbliss led off in the bottom half with a home run, just his second of the season. With the Ports on the board, Blaze starter Mark Serrano walked

his next two batters, and first baseman Anthony Aliotti would take a bouncing pitch to the knee to load the bases. The Ports would only get one more run out of the situation, when Rashun Dixon grounded into a fielder's choice that allowed center fielder Myrio Richard to score.

Three throwing errors in the top of the second would allow the Blaze to get a run back. Second baseman Brodie Greene reached on the first error after laying down a bunt fielded by Straily. Greene reached second when a pick-off attempt got away from Aliotti. Straily would come back to strike out two before third baseman Alex Buchholz singled up the middle. Coleman fielded the ball but his throw went into the home dugout, allowing Greene to score.

No one would score again until the bottom of the fifth, which began with a double by Richard. Designated hitter Michael Gilmartin drew a walk and Aliotti singled, scoring Richard. Serrano would exit the game and make way for Jason Braun on the mound for the Blaze. Facing Braun, catcher Petey Paramore reached on a fielder's choice, and Dixon singled, bringing in the second run of the inning. Left fielder Mitch LeVier would be intentionally walked to set up a force at any base, but Braun would also walk Dusty Coleman to bring in a run. A sacrifice fly by Leonardo Gil brought the Ports' run total to six before the inning's end. The Ports would get a seventh run in the sixth. Aliotti drew a two-out walk and scored on a double into left field by Paramore.

Straily pitched spectacularly through six innings, allowing just one unearned run on three hits. He struck out a new season high 11 batters, eight of those in a row. Omar Duran would take the mound for the Ports in the seventh. The Blaze got two runners on by way of a walk and a single, but the Ports would turn two to get out of the inning. Mace Thurman would take the hill for Bakersfield in the seventh, Braun having gone two innings, giving up two runs on three hits. Thurman gave up two hits over his two innings of work, but the Ports wouldn't extend their lead any further.

Aliotti would leave the game in the eighth, Gil take his place at first and Jason Christian coming in to play third base. Duran would also hold the Blaze to their one run into the ninth, getting his first Cal League strike out to end the eighth.

A.J. Huttenlocker would take the mound in the ninth to close, retiring three batters in a row with one strike out to secure Stockton's victory.

The Ports get a well-deserved rest before heading on the road for a week to finish off the month of July. The road trip starts with a four-game series against Visalia.

### **Dragons Complete Three-Game Sweep**

By Jon Versteeg, Burlington Bees

DAYTON, OH- The Dayton Dragons (22-8) scored three runs in the sixth inning to snap a 2-2 tie and earn a 5-2 win over the Burlington Bees (9-21) before 8,035 fans at Fifth Third Field on Monday night.

The Bees scored a run in the third inning. 2B Nino Leyja (3-4) singled and moved to second base on a ground out. Leyja stole third base and scored on a single by 3B Tony Thompson (1-4) for a 1-0 lead.

The Dayton Dragons scored two runs in the fourth inning on a two-run home run by 1B Donald Lutz (2-3). 3B David Vidal (1-4) hit a two-out single and Lutz pulled a first-pitch fast ball from Hassebrock over the right field wall for a 2-1 Dragons lead.

DH A.J. Kirby-Jones (2-3) hit a solo home run to lead off the sixth inning for Burlington to tie the game at 2-2.

In the sixth inning Dragons SS Billy Hamilton (0-3) led off the inning with a walk. He went to second when 2B Ronald Torreyes (2-4) grounded out. Hamilton moved to third base when RHP Drew Tyson (4-3) was charged with a balk. DH Jaren Matthews (0-4) grounded out to score Hamilton for a 3-2 lead. Vidal reached on an error and Lutz smacked a two-run home run over the center field wall to make it 5-2.

The Burlington Bees return home to start a three-game series with the Beloit Snappers, the Midwest League Affiliate of the Minnesota Twins on Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. "It's Kids Eat Free Wednesday" with all kids 12 and under getting a hot dog and drink voucher at the game. The Snappers will send LHP Ryan O'Rourke (2-2, 2.11) to the mound against RHP Jonathan Joseph (2-3, 5.89) for Burlington. Pre-game coverage begins at 6:10 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at [www.gobees.com](http://www.gobees.com)

2011 Bees tickets are on sale now! To purchase season tickets, bonus books or single game tickets, please give the Bees a call at (319) 754-5705 (319) 754-5705 , go online to [www.gobees.com](http://www.gobees.com), or stop by the box office at Community Field during normal business hours

### **Lake Monsters Take Series Finale 2-1**

By Paul Stanfield / Vermont Lake Monsters

BURLINGTON, VT --- The Lake Monsters collected just five hits for the third straight game, but four Vermont pitchers combined to allow just three hits and strikeout 10 Jammers in a 2-1 New York-Penn League victory over Jamestown on Monday night at historic Centennial Field.

After a 58-minute rain delay at the start, the two teams both scored a run in the third inning. Maquise Cooper led off the Jamestown third with a walk, moved to second on a passed ball and to third on a wild pitch before scoring an unearned run as Pedro Mendoza bounced into a 6-4-3 double play.

Vermont quickly tied the game in its half of the inning as Jordan Tripp led off with a double and scored on a Michael Fabiaschi one-out RBI single to right. The Lake Monsters scored the go ahead run in the fifth as Diomedes Lopez led off with a walk, advanced to second on a wild pitch and third on a sacrifice bunt before scoring on another wild pitch.

Lake Monster starter Drew Granier allowed just the unearned run on one hit with three walks and five strikeouts over four innings. Including his last two starts for the Arizona League Athletics, Granier went 14 1/3 innings without allowing a hit until a two-single by Austin Barnes in the fourth inning Monday.

Reliever T.J. Walz (4-0) took over for Granier in the fifth and allowed just one hit with four strikeouts in three innings for the victory. Drew Bailey tossed a scoreless eighth and Tanner Peters a 1-2-3 ninth inning for his seventh save. Jamestown starter Helpi Reyes (0-3) was charged with two runs on three hits over five innings for the loss.

Fabiaschi was 2-for-2 for the Lake Monsters, who won two of three games against Jamestown despite scoring six runs on just 15 hits in the series. The Jammers also scored six times on 18 hits, none of which were for extra-bases.

Vermont (19-17) closed out the six-game homestand 3-3 and won its first series since a two-game sweep at Brooklyn July 6-7. The Lake Monsters are off on Tuesday before beginning a three-game series at Williamsport on Wednesday. Vermont returns to Centennial on Saturday to begin a seven-game homestand against Brooklyn and State College.