

Pennington drives victory

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

To locate the major leagues' hottest hitter, scan down to the bottom of the A's batting order.

That is where you will find Cliff Pennington, who continued his post-All-Star break tear in a 6-1 victory over the Tampa Bay Rays on Tuesday night.

The switch-hitting shortstop went 3 for 3 and played a part in three of the A's four scoring rallies against Rays left-hander David Price.

That gave Pennington a majors-best .500 batting average (18 for 36) in 11 games since the All-Star break.

"That's cool," Pennington said with a smile. "It's a small sample. If we finish the season and (I'm) still leading the league in hitting for the second half, that would be a good thing."

He wasn't the only hero for the A's, who continued their offensive resurgence and got a terrific eight innings from starter Brandon McCarthy (3-5).

But Pennington, doing his damage from the No. 9 spot, is the most pleasant surprise. He hasn't recorded an out since the eighth inning of Sunday's loss to the New York Yankees when he grounded out to second.

In eight plate appearances since then, he has notched a homer, a double, three singles and three walks. Pennington also extended his hitting streak to a career-high 10 games, during which he has raised his season average from .235 to .264.

"To me, it looks like he's just shorter to the ball," A's manager Bob Melvin said before the game. "Sometimes you get a little long and try to do too much, and you'll get out of whack a little bit. The ball's jumping off his bat. He's just getting much better swings."

The A's are batting .308 since the All-Star break, second in the majors behind Texas (.314). They are averaging 5.36 runs per game since the break compared with 3.42 before.

They jumped on the board in the third inning off Price (9-9). Pennington's one-out single moved Scott Sizemore to third, and Jemile Weeks hit a sacrifice fly.

The A's led 2-0 when Pennington led off the fifth with a single to center. Weeks bunted him to second, and Pennington scored on Hideki Matsui's double.

With Sizemore on first and two outs in the sixth, Pennington ripped an RBI double to left for a 4-0 lead.

That was plenty for McCarthy, who scattered six hits over eight innings. His only run came on Ben Zobrist's homer in the eighth.

"That's as good as I've seen him," Melvin said.

A's starters had pitched less than six innings in the previous six games, and Melvin talked before the game about his bullpen needing a break.

"It was nice to get them rest," McCarthy said. "Since I came back (from the D.L. on July 3), I hadn't gone as deep in the game as I liked."

With Oakland's hitters starting to click, the question is whether this group will continue playing together after Sunday's non-waiver trade deadline.

The Giants, Pirates, Diamondbacks and Rockies were among the teams scouting Tuesday's game.

But there are no trades percolating right now for the A's, and indications from within the organization are that there is no urgency to make any deal.

Josh Willingham, who has been linked to the Pirates among other teams, is considered the A's top trade chip. He received a cortisone shot for neck pain Monday night and has served as D.H. the past two games.

Oakland A's update: Daric Barton mulls season-ending surgery

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

First baseman Daric Barton confirmed that he has a torn labrum in his right (throwing) shoulder and faces the possibility of season-ending surgery.

Barton, whom the A's optioned to Triple-A Sacramento on June 22, is scheduled to visit Dr. Lewis Yocum in Southern California on Wednesday to decide the best course of treatment.

Barton said he originally hurt his shoulder in early April, while diving back to second base during a series in Minnesota.

A's shortstop Cliff Pennington underwent surgery for a labrum tear in his left (non-throwing) shoulder in October. He was playing in exhibitions by March -- roughly a five-month recovery period -- to give an indication of Barton's potential recovery time were he to have surgery.

The injury might partially explain why Barton struggled so badly with Oakland before his demotion. He hit .212 with no homers and 21 RBIs in 67 games and committed eight errors, some coming on bad throws.

Barton is hitting just .197 with no homers and four RBIs in 17 games with Sacramento.

Left-hander Brett Anderson is back with the A's after having elbow ligament replacement surgery two weeks ago.

He's wearing a large black brace -- and will do so for the next four to five weeks -- to keep his arm immobilized.

Anderson also had a bandage around his right leg, as doctors took part of a tendon from his hamstring and used it to build the new ligament for his left elbow.

"Tommy John" surgery typically sidelines pitchers 12-18 months, and Anderson has come to grips with the long comeback trail he faces.

"It sucks, but it's a part of baseball," he said before Tuesday's game against Tampa Bay. "Sometimes you get hurt, but the good thing is the track record of success with this surgery has been pretty good. That's kind of comforting in the back of your head."

A's manager Bob Melvin said he envisions infielder Adam Rosales returning to the major league club "at some point pretty soon." Rosales entered Tuesday hitting .265 with two homers and nine RBIs for Sacramento in 13 games.

Tampa Bay D.H. Johnny Damon notched his 506th double in the fifth inning, tying Babe Ruth for 47th on the all-time list.

Chin Music: A's need strong start from McCarthy; Barton has torn labrum in shoulder

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 7/26/2011 6:55pm

The A's are looking for a strong pitching performance to support the impressive hitting they've been getting. ... Wait, did I just write that? It's true. Oakland suddenly is a team swinging the bats well, while the starting pitchers have struggled a bit. The starters have tossed fewer than six innings in each of the last six games and are 1-3 with an 11.13 ERA over that time. Overall, the pitching staff has a 5.30 ERA over the last 14 games. Brandon McCarthy takes the hill tonight trying to turn things around. The bullpen could certainly use some rest ...

--First baseman Daric Barton confirmed to me that he has a torn labrum in his right (throwing) shoulder, and that he's visiting Dr. Lewis Yocum in Southern California on Wednesday. Surgery is a definite possibility, and that would all but certainly end Barton's season. Shortstop Cliff Pennington had a 5-6 month recovery period when he had a labrum tear repaired on his left (non-throwing) shoulder last offseason.

Barton said he originally hurt his shoulder diving back into second base during the A's series at Minnesota in early April, so it's something that he's been dealing with all season and perhaps is partly to blame for his struggles. He hit .212 with no

homers and 21 RBIs with the A's and got demoted to the minors June 22. Since then, he'd hit just .197 in 17 games with Triple-A Sacramento.

The lineups:

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

Rays – Jennings LF, Damon DH, Zobrist 2B, Longoria 3B, Kutchman 1B, Upton CF, Joyce RF, Chirinos C, Rodriguez SS; Price LHP.

A's whip Rays 6-1 in latest offensive outburst

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Baseball people talk about "regressing to the mean" when a player's numbers fall back in line with his established norms, but in the second half, the A's hitters are reversing that - they're ascending to the mean.

In a 6-1 victory over Tampa Bay on Tuesday, Oakland kept up its improved second-half attack, and Cliff Pennington stood out with three hits, including an RBI double, extending his hitting streak to a career-high 10 games. The A's also got a nice outing from starter Brandon McCarthy, who allowed six hits and one run in eight innings at the Coliseum.

Pennington, who also drew a walk in the eighth, is batting a major-league-leading .500 since the All-Star break, after he hit .235 in the first half. But he's not alone: Almost every regular had first-half totals well below his career average, and now each appears to be making up for lost time. The A's are hitting .308 in the second half.

On Tuesday, they scored single runs in the third, fourth, fifth and sixth innings, and Kurt Suzuki hit a two-run double in the eighth. Scott Sizemore reached base four times and scored three runs.

"If we focus on the next game, the next series and do what we're supposed to do, I think we will be back in it," Pennington said before the game, talking about the AL West race. "But we have to do that for a long stretch."

A second-half push might not be enough to keep the team intact the rest of the way - but a slow trade market might. Before Tuesday's game, A's general manager Billy Beane said he would not be surprised if the team makes no moves before Sunday's non-waiver trading deadline.

Oakland outfielders Josh Willingham, Coco Crisp and David DeJesus will be free agents after the season, and there was thought that the A's would deal at least one of them. And though there also is interest in several A's relievers, Beane said he does not have any desire to part with players cheaply.

"We've accepted calls on players, but we made it clear we're not going to give these guys away," Beane said. "We don't have any monetary issues, and we're not looking to dump payroll. If we did anything, it would have to help us significantly moving forward, not some team's prospect No. 37.

"In respect for Bob Melvin, we're not going to strip-mine things for two months for players of no consequence."

Beane said he believes that two months' more service from the A's pending free agents, plus any potential draft compensation picks for losing them, would be more valuable than the types of proposals he has seen.

According to a major-league source, one team has called about reliever Brad Ziegler and found the A's demands reasonable, making a potential deal possible.

Daric Barton says he has tear in shoulder

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

First baseman **Daric Barton**, demoted to Triple-A Sacramento five weeks ago, has a torn labrum in his right shoulder and said he is scheduled to see Dr. **Lewis Yocum** today in Southern California.

Barton said that he believes the injury is similar to the labrum tear that shortstop **Cliff Pennington** had last season and that it has had a similar effect: Pennington played with it the final two months and hit .220 in the last 68 games. Barton hit .212 with no homers in 67 games with the A's and is batting .197 with no homers in 17 games at Sacramento.

Pennington required offseason surgery, and Barton believes he also will need surgery. The recovery time is three to six months.

"It definitely sucks, but it's also a relief in a way," Barton said by phone, referring to the tear as a possible explanation for his struggles.

Barton said he believes that the injury occurred in the A's second game at Minnesota in April when he dived back to a base on a pickoff attempt, and he said he wished the torn labrum had been discovered then because he'd be halfway through rehab.

"It would have been easier in a lot of ways," Barton said.

However, the team had no reason to believe that the injury was significant, according to general manager **Billy Beane**, who said team orthopedist Dr. **Will Workman** examined Barton's shoulder in Minnesota and prescribed a series of shoulder exercises.

According to trainers' logs, Beane said, Barton received treatment for three days and said the shoulder was better. He was logged in for shoulder exercises six times between May 6 and May 17 and reported that the shoulder improved as a result, and then the team did not hear anything else about it until just recently.

Beane said he has an e-mail from the training staff showing there had been an extra effort to get Barton in for shoulder exercises, but Barton did not comply.

"A trainer who has 25 guys to work on isn't going to go drag one away from his iPad if he doesn't bother to come in," Beane said. "When a player clears himself from the trainer's room, the assumption is he's fine."

Barton, who had told reporters while in Oakland that there was no physical component to his slump, said in a follow-up text message to The Chronicle that he did the shoulder exercises once per series but did not feel they were helping.

"It's not a big deal," he said in the text. "We know what the problem is now, and I'm looking forward to taking care of it and coming back in the same good shape I did last year. It's all over and done."

Leading off

Rosales back? Adam Rosales was sent to Triple-A Sacramento to get a lot of at-bats. He has played 11 games for the River Cats. Manager Bob Melvin believes the utilityman is close to returning to his role with the A's.

Drumbeat: A post-game Pennington post - A's shortstop is on fire

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 7/26/2011 10:15pm

A quick post-game Drumbeat - the third Drumbeat of the day - in recognition of Cliff Pennington, who is batting a big-league best .500 since the All-Star break. He was a long time in getting back to his locker after the game, probably working out or getting treatment, so I didn't get a chance to speak to him after the game, but I did talk to him before the game, and I don't want to give him short shrift considering how crazy hot he is.

I asked Pennington what's behind this second-half resurgence - he's 18 for 36 - and he said what he usually does when he starts swinging the bat well, which is that he's doing exactly the same things he always does and the ball is just falling in.

"I'm trying to be aggressive, trying to get a good pitch to hit," Pennington told me. "I was feeling good before the All-Star break and I wasn't getting hits. I feel the same way now as I did then."

When a few members of a lineup start to click, the rest of the team benefits, and the A's have several men who are really faring well at the moment, including Pennington and Hideki Matsui, who contributed an RBI double tonight. Conor Jackson is swinging the bat better, Scott Sizemore was on base four times tonight, even guys who didn't get hits, such as Jemile Weeks, contributed; the rookie had a sacrifice bunt and a sacrifice fly.

"When balls are falling in, and the pitcher is in trouble, you're going to get more to hit," Pennington said. "We're starting to get going. We're a lot better team now that we were in the first half. The first half wasn't what anyone what anyone expected."

I asked manager Bob Melvin about Pennington after the game, and he noted that Pennington, a switch hitter, is having equal success from both sides of the plate, and in all kinds of counts. And as another media member noted, it's not like Pennington is getting cheapies - he's stinging the ball. That equates to a hot streak, and Pennington does tend to be streaky.

"I don't like being streaky," he told me. "I do like the hot streaks, though."

Drumbeat: A's pre-game tidbits: Willingham's neck, Rosales' status and more

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 7/26/2011 5:50pm

Josh Willingham remains at DH tonight because of a sore neck that required a cortisone shot last night, and Hideki Matsui is back in left. Matsui tried to make a plunging catch last night on a sinking liner by Johnny Damon and got it on the bounce, and tried to sell it as a catch - a nice effort. At this point, I think Matsui is a better option in left than Willingham right now - Willingham is moving slowly out there, and Matsui has great instincts, gets good reads. His speed isn't the best, but he seems to get to almost everything, certainly everything he should.

I know they don't want to run Matsui out there too much and wear him out, but I'm happy to see him out there any time.

Here's the lineup, same as last night except Conor Jackson and David DeJesus are flipped with a left-hander on the mound: Weeks 2b, Crisp cf, Matsui lf, Willingham DH, Jackson 1b, DeJesus rf, Sizemore 3b, Suzuki c, Pennington ss. Brandon McCarthy is on the mound for the A's and David Price for the Rays.

Manager Bob Melvin said that Adam Rosales might be close to returning to the A's - the team wanted him to go to Triple-A Sacramento and get consistent at-bats after missing spring training and the first two months of the season; he's done that, and the A's still love him in a bench role, so he'd replace Eric Sogard sometime in the near future. Rosales is batting .256 during this stint at Sacramento, but I don't know how important results are as far as the A's are concerned. They just wanted him to get in several weeks of at-bats, and they know what he can do when here.

Some leftovers from last night: Conor Jackson has been growing a beard since the All-Star break and he said he's going to keep it, because he's hitting so much better (.333). One reporter mentioned that Brian Wilson began his famous beard last

year during the break, and I then noted that Jackson is actually the one who needs to put Just For Men in the beard - he's got a lot of gray in there.

"I know, it looks terrible, I look like I'm 40!" Jackson said, a remark that made more than half the group of reporters feel very old.

I asked about the decision to send No. 1 pick Sonny Gray to Double-A Midland in August, and assistant GM David Forst told me the A's believe he can handle it, both in terms of ability and in terms of innings - he threw 119 innings for Vanderbilt, and Forst said the team believes he'd be OK going up to 150-155 innings.

Plus, Forst said, going to Double-A is a reward for Gray's willingness to sign early, before the Aug. 15 deadline, and get out and playing right away.

If you missed the earlier Drumbeat, [Daric Barton has a torn labrum in his right shoulder](#) and he is visiting Dr. Lewis Yocum tomorrow.

Drumbeat: Daric Barton has torn shoulder labrum, likely to need surgery

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser, 7/26/2011 1:54pm

I just spoke to first baseman Daric Barton, who was sent down to Triple-A Sacramento five weeks ago and now his season gets worse: Barton has a torn labrum in his right shoulder and he will visit Dr. Lewis Yocum in Southern California on Wednesday.

"It's a little labrum tear," Barton told me by phone. "Nothing big."

Barton believes the injury, discovered via an MRI last week, will require surgery, and he thinks that the problem is probably one reason he has struggled this year. He hit .212 with no homers in 67 games with the A's this season and was batting .197 with no homers in 17 games at Sacramento.

"It definitely sucks, but it's also a relief in a way," Barton said. "With a torn muscle or ligament, it's hard to perform at that level."

Barton compared the labrum injury to the one Cliff Pennington incurred last season, which Pennington played through until the end of the season although it clearly affected his offensive numbers. Pennington had offseason surgery and Barton expects that he is also likely to require surgery. The recovery time is three to six months, with three full months before any throwing is allowed, so he would not play again this season.

McCarthy dominates as A's outshine Rays

By Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- With a .308 team batting average, the A's offense has been among the best in the Majors since the All-Star break, but their starting rotation hasn't lived up to its billing as one of the best in the league.

On Tuesday night against the Rays, Brandon McCarthy did his best to fix that.

McCarthy was impressive as the A's downed the Rays, 6-1, at the Coliseum. The righty tossed eight solid innings, allowing one run while limiting Tampa Bay to six hits on the night for his best start since May 2, when he shut out the Rangers over six frames.

"That's as good as I've seen him," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "I think his top [pitch count] was 110 this year, so to be able to go that deep, obviously he's economical on top of that. Terrific performance."

The righty didn't have his curveball or changeup at their most effective, but managed to stymie a struggling Tampa Bay offense with a steady diet of sinkers and cutters on both sides of the plate while keeping the ball down in the strike zone all night.

He walked just two batters, struck out three and induced twice as many groundouts (10) as he did flyouts (five). The only blemish on an otherwise stellar night was a home run from Rays second baseman Ben Zobrist with one down in the eighth.

"McCarthy did pitch well," Rays manager Joe Maddon said. "I don't want to take anything away from him. He put up the picket fence against us with a bunch of ones and we were unable to overcome that."

The outing was a refreshing change for the A's rotation, which had allowed 41 earned runs in 53 innings of work since the break. It also marked the longest outing for McCarthy (3-5, 3.52 ERA) since returning from the disabled list with a stress reaction in his right shoulder, and gave the A's bullpen some welcomed rest.

"To get them the rest is nice," McCarthy said. "And since I had come back, I hadn't gotten as deep into games as I would like, so that was kind of a priority tonight. I wanted to make sure I got as deep as I could, so I think it worked well on two fronts."

While McCarthy got the A's rotation back to its first-half form, the offense kept up its second-half surge against Rays ace David Price (9-9, 3.76 ERA), tagging the southpaw for four runs and chasing him after six innings.

"We didn't miss pitches," Melvin said. "When [Price] threw the ball in the middle of the plate we hit them. Going into a game like that against a pitcher like that, runs are usually at a premium and if you get one good ball to hit in the at-bat -- which typically you're not going to get too many more than that from him -- you got to get them."

Setting the pace once again were Cliff Pennington, who has hit .500 (18-for-36) with two home runs and eight RBIs since the break, and Hideki Matsui.

Pennington stayed hot Tuesday, finishing the night 3-for-3 with an RBI double and one run scored, while Matsui -- the reigning American League Player of the Week -- continued to keep his bat alive with an RBI double of his own in the fifth to score Pennington.

It was Matsui's 12th RBI of the second half, and the slugger is now 17-for-40 (.425) with four doubles and a pair of homers during that span.

"Matsui had a pretty good week last week, but [Pennington] -- right- and left-handed, behind in the count, up in the count -- he's getting some good balls to hit," Melvin said. "You're seeing a confident player who is being very productive at this point."

Although Pennington and Matsui are easily the A's hottest hitters, they were hardly the only ones to produce Tuesday. Pennington combined with Scott Sizemore and Kurt Suzuki -- the bottom three hitters in the order -- to go 5-for-8 with three RBIs and four runs scored on the night.

Sizemore reached base in all four plate appearances, drawing a career-high three walks and scoring three runs, and Suzuki tacked on a two-run double in the eighth as the A's scored four or more runs in a season-high six straight games and improved to 7-4 since the break.

"That was great," Melvin said. "That was a complete game for us today. It was good to see."

Shields looks to ignite Rays in Oakland

By Doug Miller / MLB.com

When Tampa Bay Rays right-hander James Shields takes the hill Wednesday against the A's in Oakland Coliseum, he'll do it with a sense of urgency because his team needs to sizzle the rest of the way if it's going to make the postseason out of a tough American League East.

The same urgency applies to A's righty Trevor Cahill, who will be trying to rebound from the worst start of his career.

Shields sparkled in his last outing, allowing one run in eight innings against the Yankees to pick up his ninth victory of the year.

"I feel good really good right now," Shields said. "My body feels great. So I'm going to keep doing what I've been doing."

But he acknowledged that the Rays have to start winning games in bunches and finding different ways to prevail if they're going to contend into October.

"We've got to keep grinding it out and try to get these W's," Shields said. "We have to win these one-run ballgames. That's the only way to be successful.

"We've got to go by game by game, but we have to win them right now. We can't lose. With the other two teams ahead of us right now, they're not losing. And that's the difference. They're not losing, they're winning consecutive games."

Meanwhile, the A's are going to need Cahill to return to the form that made him a Cy Young Award contender last year. In his previous outing, against the Yankees in New York, the young sinkerballer was spotted a two-run lead but allowed 10 runs in two-plus innings and is now 0-4 with a 13.50 ERA in four career starts against the Bombers.

"It's kinda embarrassing," Cahill said, "and you feel like you let your team down when you can't get past two innings and they showed early that they're going to put some runs on the board for you."

Cahill hasn't fared much better against Tampa Bay, going 1-1 with an 8.44 ERA vs. the Rays in two career starts.

"Our starting pitching hasn't been as good here recently since we've started swinging the bats a little better," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "But the pitching has been so good this year I think it's time for the offense to pick the pitchers up a little bit."

Rays: Rare record looms

Once Shields delivers the first pitch Wednesday night, the Rays will establish a Major League record of 705 consecutive starts by pitchers under 30 years of age. The record dates back to the 1913-17 Washington Senators, who went 704 games without starting a pitcher over 30 years old. When asked if he will throw the baseball to the dugout after his first pitch Wednesday so the Hall of Fame can have it, Shields smiled.

"I might do that, yeah," he said. "That's almost a 100-year-old record."

- Designated hitter Johnny Damon ranks 67th all-time in the Major Leagues in hits with 2,675 and is two shy of Luis Aparicio for 66th place. Damon has 506 doubles for his career, too, which is tied with Babe Ruth for 47th on MLB's all-time list. Damon doubled Tuesday to pull ahead of Tony Perez.

- Third baseman Evan Longoria has 37 RBIs in the 38 games since June 11. During this span, he's batting .333 (17-for-51) with runners in scoring position after starting the year 4-for-25 in such situations through 35 games.

A's: Pennington on a tear

Shortstop Cliff Pennington is leading the resurgence of the A's offense. Pennington, who's hitting .500 (18-for-36) with two homers and eight RBIs since the All-Star break, batted .235 prior to the break.

"I think they're just starting to fall for him," Melvin said. "You're constantly searching, mechanically, for the right thing to do and what's best for you. ... The ball's jumping off his bat, which means he's extended. He's just getting much better swings."

- The A's have hit two home runs or fewer in each of the last 74 games, which is the longest streak by an A's team since an 86-game stretch from July 5, 1978-April 10, 1979. The A's last three-homer game was May 2 vs. Texas.
- Reliever Grant Balfour has not allowed a run in eight games (8 1/3 innings) since being reinstated from the 15-day disabled list July 7.

Worth noting

- Rays outfielder Matt Joyce hit .377 from April 1-May 27 but is batting .188 (28-for-149) since then.
- The A's are batting .308 (117-for-380) since the All-Star break, which is second-best in the Majors to Texas. The A's hit .233 as a team before the break, which was second-worst in the American League and third-worst in the Majors.

A's gather to help Breslow's foundation

By Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Craig Breslow and his Strike 3 Foundation hit one out of the park Tuesday when they presented a \$25,000 grant to Children's Hospital & Research Center Oakland.

Breslow, two-time A's All-Star closer Andrew Bailey -- the foundation's developmental director -- and with several other teammates and their significant others presented the check in the Atrium of Children's Hospital's Outpatient Center. The grant will fund two new programs within the hospital's psychology oncology program -- a teen cancer support program and a siblings program, both of which will help with the counseling and therapy sides of cancer treatment.

"A cancer diagnosis can be wrenching for a family," Breslow said. "It's important that there are support systems in place to help, not only those children who are diagnosed with cancer, but their siblings."

And Breslow knows how crippling a diagnosis can be for a patient's family members. When the A's reliever was 11, his 13-year-old sister, Lesley, was diagnosed with cancer. Lesley has survived her battle for more than 15 years, and was the inspiration for Breslow's foundation, which he established in 2008.

The Strike 3 Foundation, which heightens awareness, mobilizes support and raises funding for childhood cancer research, has an aggressive fundraising campaign in the Bay Area, New York and Connecticut. Breslow decided if they were going to raise money in the community, it would only be right to return some of those dividends back into the area, and felt the two programs at Children's Hospital & Research Center Oakland were a worthwhile cause.

Breslow; Bailey and Bailey's wife, Amanda; Eric Sogard and his fiancée, Kaycee; Jemile Weeks; Trevor Cahill and his girlfriend, Jessica; Brian Fuentes and his wife, Barbara; and David DeJesus and his wife, Kim, were all in attendance. But more than present the grant to the hospital, the group spent time with several patients.

"Presenting a check and funding a project is one thing," Breslow said, "but seeing the way the kids responded to your visit is something that nothing really compares to."

Among the young patients the group spent time with, two in particular stood out to the former Ivy Leaguer: a 7-month-old infant who underwent six rounds of chemotherapy and was released from the hospital cancer-free on Tuesday, and another toddler who was sporting an A's cap and shirt.

"All the kids were pretty upbeat, pretty enthusiastic," Breslow said. "Things like that are very touching, and that far supersedes shaking hands with the hospital staff and presenting a check."

The young cancer patients weren't the only ones the group spent time with Tuesday, though. Much like the grant his foundation presented, Breslow and his teammates were there to support the families of those patients and spend time with them, too.

"They were equally excited," Breslow said. "We took as many pictures with brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers as we did with patients themselves. I think that's important. A lot of times brothers and sisters or mothers and fathers are kind of neglected in this whole process."

"The fact we were able to meet with a 2-year-old kid but also meet with his 6- or 7-year-old brother or sister is pretty important."

Rosales sharpening up at Triple-A

By Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Adam Rosales is finally getting his hack at Spring Training this season, so to speak.

The A's utility player missed the club's traditional Spring Training due to offseason surgery to repair a stress fracture in his right ankle, and was sidelined until June 6. When he returned to the club, he struggled, hitting just .121 in 12 games before being optioned to Triple-A Sacramento on July 16.

"One thing that really hampered him is when he came back he didn't have too many games under his belt and didn't really have a Spring Training," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "When you're a bench player or a role player, when you come out of Spring Training those guys are ready to play because they're getting consistent at-bats every day."

But consistent at-bats were something Rosales wasn't able to get in the month-plus that he was active for the A's. He got just 33 at-bats during that time.

"He just didn't have the Spring Training, the at-bats to be comfortable here, especially in the kind of role that he's in," Melvin said.

Since being optioned, though, Rosales has been able to get the at-bats he needs with the River Cats. Entering Tuesday, Rosales was hitting .256 in 10 games at Triple-A, and he had eight RBIs to go with a pair of home runs.

"I do think he'll be back here at some point pretty soon," Melvin said. "He's getting a little more comfortable with a lot of at-bats and playing more."

Matsui gets another nod in left

OAKLAND -- For the second straight game on Tuesday, Hideki Matsui started in left field for the A's while slugger Josh Willingham was slotted as the designated hitter.

"That wasn't by design," A's manager Bob Melvin said of the lineup.

Willingham has been dealing with a nagging pain in his neck the last couple of days, and Melvin said the move was just precautionary after Willingham had a cortisone injection following Monday's 7-5 win over the Rays.

"We're probably better off DHing him so hopefully he'll be that much more healthy to go [Wednesday] and play left field," Melvin said.

But the A's aren't losing too much with Matsui playing in the outfield. The reigning American League Player of the Week made his 12th start of the season at the position Tuesday, and has flashed his glove at times during his limited time there. He hasn't made an error and has recorded two outfield assists this year.

Anderson staying positive after TJ

OAKLAND -- A's lefty Brett Anderson, who underwent Tommy John Surgery on July 14, was sporting a large brace on his arm in the A's clubhouse, and tried to remain upbeat about his season-ending injury.

"It [stinks] but it's a part of baseball," Anderson said. "Sometimes you get hurt, but the good thing is the track record on the success of the surgery has been pretty good, obviously not only on this team, but other teams. That's comforting in the back of your head."

A's defeat Rays again

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Cliff Pennington had three hits to remain the hottest hitter in the major leagues since the All-Star break, Brandon McCarthy pitched eight strong innings and the Athletics beat the Tampa Bay Rays 6-1 on Tuesday night.

Conor Jackson went 3 for 4 and Hideki Matsui added an RBI double as Oakland won for the third time in four games. The A's are 7-4 since the break.

Ben Zobrist homered and Johnny Damon hit his 506th double to tie Babe Ruth for 47th on baseball's all-time list but the Rays continued to struggle with men on base and lost for the 10th time in 14 games.

Pennington singled twice and had an RBI double in the sixth, extending his career-high hitting streak to 10 games. He raised his average to .500 (18 for 36) since the All-Star break.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

River Cats top Rainiers, lead division by 10 games

Sacramento River Cats

Sacramento continued its road domination Tuesday, topping host Tacoma 6-4 and increasing its division lead to a season-high 10.0 games over Las Vegas.

The first-place River Cats are now 33-15 on the road, the best road record in the Pacific Coast League, and have won four in a row overall.

Anthony Recker and Michael Taylor each hit two-run homers and Jai Miller went 3-for-4 with a double as Sacramento led 6-0 after six innings. Taylor's home run was his 12th of the season, doubling his 2010 total with more than a month remaining in the season. Recker's blast was his 13th of the season, surpassing his previous River Cats season high of 12 homers in 2009.

Starting pitcher Josh Outman pitched 5.0 scoreless innings for the second consecutive outing. He struck out five and didn't allow a walk, yielding three hits and improving to 7-1 with a 3.49 ERA this season.

Sacramento relievers Justin Souza, Neil Wagner and Fernando Cabrera each threw scoreless innings before Bruce Billings faced trouble in the ninth. Billings gave up two singles and two walks, allowing two runs to score and leaving two on base before being relieved by Willie Eyre.

Eyre walked a batter, and a Recker error allowed two runs to score before Carlos Peguero grounded out to end the game. Eyre earned his eighth save of the season.

Homeruns Deflate Hounds In Frisco

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

In the opening game of their 7-game home stand (last Friday), the Frisco RoughRiders hit eight home runs ... in one game ... against the Corpus Christi Hooks. The RoughRiders "only" hit three against the RockHounds Tuesday, but each was a big time blow, the last breaking a 3-3 tie in the eighth inning and boosting the 'Riders to a 7-3 win.

The RockHounds scored twice against Robbie Erlin, the Texas Rangers' # 4 prospect, in the top of the first. The 'Hounds have had a great deal of success against the outstanding lefty, who entered the game 2-0 against the RockHounds, but with a 9.31 ERA, allowing 18 hits in 9.2 innings, far higher than his "line" against the rest of the Texas League.

Erlin settled in, and Jonathan Greene ripped a 2-run home run to tie the game in the second ... followed by Tommy Mendonca's solo shot leading off the forth, which game Frisco its first lead, 3-2. Mendonca also made two tremendous plays at third base, twice robbing Adam Heether of an extra base hit and, in one case, saving at least two runs.

Erlin went 7.0 innings, while 'Hounds starter A.J. Griffin went six-and-two-thirds. The two pitchers had virtually identical lines, allowing three runs (earned) on seven hits and one walk, with four strikeouts. Erlin also hit one batter.

Ryan Ortiz (see below) led off the Rockhounds' seventh with a walk, but Tyler Ladendorf bounced into an around-the-horn double play. Moments later, Wes Timmons belted a solo home run, tying the game.

Frisco's last homer was a solo shot from Davis Stoneburner, leading off the eighth and snapping the 3-3 tie. The 'Riders went on to load the bases and scored three more insurance runs to secure the win.

- Michael Spina went 2-for-4, extending his on-base streak to 16 games (he has hits in 14 of those games).

- Ryan Ortiz was 0-3 with a walk and has now reached based in each of his 17 games with the RockHounds (correcting the length of his streak).

ROCKY TOWN - The RockHounds play at Frisco Wednesday and Thursday, then come right back home to begin a home stand which includes adult jersey night (Friday) and post-game fireworks (Saturday). Check out all the details at www.midlandrockhounds.org.