

Tampa Bay Rays Clips



July 28, 2011

James Shields, Tampa Bay Rays crushed by Oakland Athletics 13-4

By Marc Topkin, St. Petersburg Times

OAKLAND, Calif. — James Shields began Wednesday's game as the shining example of the Rays' successful stable of young starting pitchers, as with his first delivery the team broke the major-league record with its 705th straight game started by a pitcher under 30.

But at the end of the ugly night — a 13-4 loss to the A's that dropped the Rays 11½ games from first place in the AL East — he was being mentioned with some old pitchers from their dark Devil Rays days.

Shields gave up nine runs in the fourth inning — joining the legendary trio of Rob Bell, Travis Harper and Tanyon Sturtze as Rays to do so in one inning — and a career-high-tying 10 in one of the worst of his 173 starts as a Ray.

"An all-around terrible job," Shields said. "That's pretty much what it was."

The loss was the Rays' 16th in their past 25 games and fifth in six games on the road trip to Kansas City, Oakland and Seattle, during which they expected to make up ground and get back in the race for a playoff spot.

Instead, the dismal effort appeared to have extinguished their chances and may accelerate their efforts to trade a number of players before Sunday's 4 p.m. deadline for nonwaiver deals.

Especially as poorly as they have played, with not only the repeated struggles by their offense but a significant dropoff in performance by their worn-out bullpen and a spike in mistakes, mental and physical, all around the field.

"It's not any fun," manager Joe Maddon said. "We're not playing horribly. ... We're in one of those unlucky moments. We have to keep pushing until we turn it around."

The Rays (53-50) had just eight hits Wednesday and were close to being shut out for the 10th time in their past 49 games, and 11th overall, before Matt Joyce homered in the ninth. They snapped an 0-for-18 skid with runners in scoring position when rookie Desmond Jennings singled in a run and are 3-for-29 for the series.

"The hitting is just not there," Maddon said. "It's like at the beginning of the season. When we don't hit, everything else seems to be flat."

Shields, who has been having a tremendous season, is one of the players being mentioned in various trade rumors, with the Reds hot recently. But Shields said the trade talk was not an issue — "Not at all" — on Wednesday.

"I was leaving the ball up, I was making mistakes and they were hitting it," Shields said. "I wasn't sharp all night, right from the gates. I felt really, really good in the bullpen and right in the first inning I didn't feel too good."

Shields gave up a couple of hits in the early innings day then a run in the third. But the fourth was a mess as he gave up the nine runs on seven hits — including home runs by Hideki Matsui and Ryan Sweeney — two walks and an embarrassing error by rightfielder Joyce, who overran a ground ball and later misplayed another ball in the corner.

"I came in hard and tried to make a play and try to throw a runner out but the ball snaked on me and, shoot, I missed it," Joyce said. "It's a tough thing to go through. It's even tougher to see one of your best pitchers out there and make a mistake."

Shields joined some special company. Bell, in an April 18, 2005, game at Yankee Stadium, gave up a team-record 10 runs in the second inning. Sturtze allowed nine in the third at Boston on July 23, 2002, and Harper nine in the eighth on June 21, 2005, at New York.

The only good thing to come out of the night was that the Rays ended up using only two relievers after Shields, just-promoted reliever Rob Delaney (sent down after the game) and Brandon Gomes, though they had outfielder Justin Ruggiano in the bullpen at one point.

With B.J. Upton already being rested — or held out in advance of a trade — the Rays took third baseman Evan Longoria out of the game in the fifth.

"We've had a tough two weeks," Joyce said. "We have to pick ourselves up and grind through it."

Tampa Bay Rays bring up another fresh arm for bullpen in Rob Delaney

By Marc Topkin, St. Petersburg Times

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Rays seem to have found a way to make their shorthanded bullpen work.

They keep bringing in fresh arms.

For the second straight day, and the fourth time in 10 days, the Rays on Wednesday brought up a reliever from Triple-A Durham to take a spot on the six-man staff, and they will do so again for today's game.

"We thought we could deal with it," manager **Joe Maddon** said. "And we have been able to, the fact that we have all these different candidates that can fulfill that role."

The new reliever of the day Wednesday was RHP **Rob Delaney**, who worked three innings in their 13-4 loss to Oakland. Delaney took the place of RHP **Jay Buente**, who came up Tuesday and worked two innings after LHP **Cesar Ramos** had been sent down. (All three have been in the same locker.)

The Rays went through a similar routine last week, when they brought up LHP **Alex Torres** and pitched him, then replaced him with RHP **Dane De La Rosa**, then sent him down to make room for RHP **Wade Davis'** return from the disabled list.

Delaney, 26, who was put right to work as starter **James Shields** lasted only four innings, didn't stick around long, as he was sent back to the minors after allowing three runs. The Rays did not announce who would be coming up today.

"Rob sucking up those three (innings) were huge for us," Maddon said.

Delaney pitched extremely well for the Bulls, working on a 172/3-inning scoreless streak. He was 2-0 with two saves, 18 strikeouts and three walks in 10 July appearances (14 innings) and allowed a .109 average. Overall he was 4-1, 1.78 in 35 games for Durham. He spent two weeks with the Rays in May, making three appearances, two good, the other not so much.

Delaney got a call at 9:30 Wednesday morning that he was being called up, caught a 12:40 p.m. flight to Detroit and then another to San Francisco and arrived a half-hour before the game. Afterward, he was making plans to head back this morning.

"It went by fast," Delaney said.

Maddon said he didn't get word from executive VP **Andrew Friedman** until well after Tuesday's game that they were making the latest change, so he had to deliver the news to Buente in unusual fashion. Buente, who had flown from Durham to Miami and then to San Francisco, had already gone back to the hotel, and since Maddon wanted to talk in person he found Buente in the hotel bar.

The Rays are going with six relievers because they are using six starters as a way to limit innings. They believed it would work given how infrequently RHP **Andy Sonnanstine**, the seventh reliever for the first half of the season, was used.

MOORE WOWS: Top prospect **Matt Moore**, in his second Triple-A start, struck out 13 Gwinnett Braves in eight innings and allowed only three hits and two walks and one runner past first. He threw 104 pitches. ... SS **Reid Brignac** was 3-for-4 in his first game for the Bulls after his Friday demotion. He had one three-hit game for the Rays all season.

DRAFT BREEZE: Third-round draft pick SS **Johnny Eierman**, an LSU commitment from Warsaw High in Missouri, signed for \$550,000 according to *Baseball America*, more than double the recommended slot bonus.

MISCELLANY: Ben Zobrist extended his hitting streak to seven games. ... **Elliot Johnson** is scheduled to start at shortstop today. ... Maddon, who has had issues with several calls this season, said he was pleased to see MLB issue a statement acknowledging the blown call in Tuesday's Pirates-Braves game. ... According to Stats Inc., 3B **Evan Longoria** this week became the fourth player in the past 55 years to strike out four or more times one day and draw four or more walks the next.

Trade market for Tampa Bay Rays' B.J. Upton may be growing clear

By Marc Topkin, St. Petersburg Times

OAKLAND, Calif. — B.J. Upton said Wednesday that his gut feeling is that he won't be traded by the Rays before Sunday's 4 p.m. deadline for nonwaiver deals.

"I think I'll be here," he said. "I don't think I'm going anywhere."

If so, it might be an upset, given a series of events over recent days that suggest a deal is in the works, topped by Upton being unexpectedly held out of the lineup on Wednesday night.

Or the result of an injury, as Upton told teammates he had been feeling tightness in his left quad. He spent several hours in the trainers room Wednesday afternoon, didn't come on the field for batting practice, and was in the trainers room again when the clubhouse opened after the game.

Manager Joe Maddon acknowledged Upton was "a little beat up" but said there was nothing that would have prevented him from playing Wednesday and he will be in their lineup for today's matinee.

"Watching him move out there, I just think he needs a little bit of a break," Maddon said.

The market for Upton is being shaped as the result of several deals made Wednesday. Carlos Beltran, the top outfielder on the market, is set to go from the Mets to the Giants, and Colby Rasmus — whom the Rays reportedly offered Jeff Niemann, J.P. Howell and a prospect for — was shipped from St. Louis to Toronto as part of an 11-player, three-team deal.

The Nationals have long coveted Upton and are considered by some the leading candidate to acquire him. With the Giants out of the mix, the market for Upton would appear to include the Braves (who have an additional need to make a deal with catcher Brian McCann's bat out of their lineup for a while due to injury), the Indians (who were reportedly shunned by Beltran), the Nationals (whom the Rays have been scouting closely) and the Pirates, along with the Phillies and Reds.

There was no deal in place as of the end of Wednesday's game, and Upton said he was not aware anything was close: "There's nothing going on."

Maddon said there had been a lot of talks on a lot of different possibilities, and "I really don't know how this is all going to shake out." He also said he would "love" for Upton, who is hitting .227 with 15 homers and 53 RBIs, to stick around.

But there was plenty of circumstantial evidence, starting with the decision to hold Upton out of the lineup, that a deal could be close. Also, that the Nationals held out two of their young players — shortstop Ian Desmond and catcher Wilson Ramos — who would be the type of players the Rays could want back in a deal. The Pirates pulled one of their top prospects, outfielder Starling Marte, from his game. And the reported offer for Rasmus would indicate the Rays were seeking a replacement for Upton.

Maddon insisted it was just a matter of wanting to give the 26-year-old a break (and to get playing time for Sam Fuld) and that Upton — who was also out of the lineup on Sunday — would play today. "I've just been looking for moments to give B.J. a little bit of a rest, get him off his feet," Maddon said. "He's been going after it pretty hard."

Upton said it was Maddon's decision and that he felt fine.

Maddon acknowledged the potential impact the rumors have had, as Upton was hitting .079 (3-for-38) over his past nine games: "I know all these different things that are being swirled about have got to have some kind of an impact on him, too."

Upton said he had stopped paying attention to the possibilities and didn't even know of the Beltran deal until he got to the stadium. "I'm not looking at what teams and what they're doing, it's got nothing to do with me," he said. "It's to the point now there's so many teams and so many rumors I don't even worry about it."

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported the Rays offered a package of Niemann, Howell and an unnamed prospect for Rasmus, but the Cards wanted Jeremy Hellickson or James Shields, whom the Reds reportedly remain interested in. ESPN's Buster Olney reported the Rays offered the choice of Niemann, Wade Davis or rookie Alex Cobb.

Shields shelled; Rays drubbed by A's, 13-4

By Roger Mooney, The Tampa Tribune

OAKLAND -- There was a time not too long ago when this road trip to Kansas City and the West Coast was seen as a bit of a breather for the Rays, a chance to recharge their batteries against three of the weaker teams in the American League.

Ha. Was that wishful thinking.

Instead, this trip has erased all hope of the 2010 American League East champions returning the postseason.

James Shields, the best pitcher on the staff, was hammered Wednesday night by the A's.

The offense was a no-show against Trevor Cahill.

Final score: A's 13, Rays 4.

Ouch.

"We're in one of those unlucky moments and we have to keep pushing until we turn it around," manager Joe Maddon said after the Rays lost their third straight and fell to 1-5 on this 10-game road trip.

Correction: The Tampa Tribune called Tuesday's 6-1 loss by the Rays as a "stinker." The Tribune regrets the error, because Wednesday's performance made Tuesday's game look like a nail-bitter.

Shields was cuffed around for nine runs in the fourth inning and allowed 10 runs in a start for the third time during his career.

"It was an all-around terrible job, that's pretty much what it was," Shields said. "I was leaving the ball up, I was making mistakes and they were hitting it."

He was the fourth pitcher in team history to allow at least nine runs in one inning.

Rob Bell allowed a team-record 10 runs in one inning against the Yankees in 2005. Travis Harper (2005) and Tanyon Sturtze (2002) also allowed nine.

Shields allowed seven hits and two walks during the nine-run fourth that included a two-run double by Scott Sizemore, an RBI triple by Jemile Weeks and a three-run homer by Hideki Matsui, who finished the night with five RBIs.

Shields, who has now lost five of his last six starts, fell to 9-9 on the season while his ERA rose to 3.03, the first time it's been above 3.00 since April 24.

And this on the night when the Rays extended their streak of games started by pitchers under the age of 29 to a major league-record 705.

"Terrible job," Shields said.

Shields four-inning performance followed a six-inning start by David Price on Tuesday, in which Price allowed four runs and fell to 9-9 with the loss.

It's kind of tough to climb back into a playoff chase when your 1-2 punch gets floored.

"You look at James and David (Tuesday night), you're expecting more innings out of those guys," Maddon said. "We just didn't get 'em."

The loss dropped the Rays to 11 1/5 games behind the first-place Red Sox. They remain 8 1/2 behind the Wild Card-leading Yankees, who lost to the Mariners.

They are 0-3 in this four-game series against the A's that wraps up this afternoon. After this, the Rays head to Seattle for three games against the Mariners, who snapped a 17-game losing streak Wednesday with their win at Yankee Stadium.

"To their credit (the A's have) swung the bats well. They're playing with a bunch of energy right now," Maddon said. "Starting (today) we have a chance to turn this around."

When asked how he would describe how his team is currently playing, Maddon said, "Not horribly. We're still playing our defense. It's like the beginning of the season, when you don't hit, everything appears to be flat. When you don't hit, it always gives a team a flatness about it, and that's not always the truth. We need to pitch well (today) and get a couple of appropriately timed hits, and all of a sudden this can really change."

The Rays avoided their 10th shutout in their last 49 games when Matt Joyce, heckled unmercifully by those sitting in right field at the O.co Coliseum, hit a two-run homer in the ninth inning.

Also, they managed a hit with a runner in scoring position for the first time since they reached Oakland. Desmond Jennings's RBI single with Justin Ruggiano on third and two-out in the ninth snapped a team-wide 0-18 with runners in scoring position.

After Jennings moved to second on a wild pitch, Johnny Damon delivered another hit with RSIP to cap a four-run inning.

Rob Delaney, called up from Triple A Durham before the game to add a fresh arm to the bullpen, pitched three innings in relief of Shields.

He was optioned back to Durham afterwards as the Rays will call up another fresh arm today. Delaney found a small cooler filled with ice and cans of beer when he returned to his locker after the game, his reward for saving the bullpen.

His trip to Oakland began with a 12:40 flight from Durham to Detroit where he connected to a flight to San Francisco. He arrived 30 minutes before game time and headed directly to the bullpen, where he knew he would be the first pitcher in if Shields faltered.

Delaney allowed three runs in his first two innings. At one point, Maddon sent Justin Ruggiano to get ready to pitch, because Maddon wasn't going to burn another reliever in a hopeless cause.

But Delaney righted himself.

After the game, he was told he was heading back to Durham.

"Went by fast," he said of his second tour this season with the Rays.

Rays notes: Delaney up, Buente down as bullpen shuffle continues

By Roger Mooney, The Tampa Tribune

OAKLAND, Calif. -- RHP **Jay Buente** pitched himself back to Durham on Tuesday night, though it had nothing to do with the two runs he allowed in the eighth inning of the Tampa Bay Rays' 6-1 loss to Oakland and everything to do with the 35 pitches he threw during the two innings.

Without a long man in the bullpen, the Rays are in need of a fresh arm, and for Wednesday, that arm belonged to RHP

Rob Delaney, whose contract was purchased from Durham.

Like Buente did Tuesday, Delaney made the cross-country flight to join the Rays at the O.co Coliseum before game time.

Delaney relieved **James Shields** in the fifth inning and gave up three earned runs over three innings (66 pitches), striking out one and walking three. Oakland won 13-4 after Shields was shelled for nine runs in the fourth inning.

Manager **Joe Maddon** said flying in bullpen help from Durham could be a daily experience as long as the Rays are committed to a six-man rotation and 13 position players.

"Yep. (Executive vice president of baseball operations) **Andrew (Friedman)** and I discussed this when we decided to go with the bullpen the way it is right now and maintain the integrity of the lineup the way it is on the field," Maddon said. "We felt pretty comfortable being able to do this. The only problem with this part of it is we're on the west coast. That makes it a little more uncomfortable for those who are shuttling."

Buente arrived Tuesday during the fifth inning, warmed up in the sixth and entered the game in the seventh.

Maddon introduced himself to Buente when the pitcher returned to the dugout after the seventh inning. After the game, Maddon looked Buente up in the lounge of the team hotel to tell him he was headed back to Durham.

When asked if that was the first time he sent a guy down while in a bar, Maddon said: "I think so. I have had conversations with players in a bar before. I've instructed players in a bar before. But I never sent a guy down in a bar before."

More trade talk

RHP **Wade Davis**, RHP **Jeff Niemann** and LHP **J.P. Howell** were rumored to be involved in trade talks between the Cardinals and the Rays.

Howell, struggling with his command since returning from the disabled list in May, said he wasn't surprised to see his name mentioned.

"I guess I should be shocked, huh? But I'm not for some reason," he said.

Howell, who came to the Rays in a trade with the Royals, said this is a part of baseball, especially when the non-waiver trade deadline is 4 p.m. Sunday.

"No, it could happen every single year, really. That's how you think as a player," he said. "Everyone's trying to make the pennant race, and if there's a way they feel they can better the team, sometimes it doesn't include you. It's more of a shock when it actually happens."

Matty Ice

LHP **Matt Moore** struck out 13 batters in eight innings Wednesday for the Durham Bulls in a 4-0 victory against Gwinnett.

He allowed three hits, walked two and didn't allow a runner past second base. That was Moore's first victory for the Bulls since being promoted after the All-Star break.

Record staff

The Rays hold the record for consecutive starts by a pitcher 29 or younger after Shields started against the A's on Wednesday, passing the mark of 704 set by the Washington Senators between 1913 and 1917.

Price disappointed

A little help from the offense might have changed things Tuesday night for LHP **David Price**, who took the loss despite allowing four runs in six innings. He hurt himself by walking four batters, including two who eventually scored.

"I don't know. It's just not there right now," said Price, who dropped to 9-9. "It's getting old."

Noteworthy

UTL **Ben Zobrist** entered Wednesday's game leading the majors in doubles (33) and extra-base hits (51). ... DH **Johnny Damon** tied **Babe Ruth** for 47th on the all-time doubles list Tuesday with his 506th {+} ... The Rays were 0-for-7 Tuesday with runners in scoring position. Since July 17, the Rays are batting a major league-worst .154 with RISP, including .150 (9-for-60) during the first five games of this trip.

Rumors keep swirling, but Upton's still a Ray

By Roger Mooney, The Tampa Tribune

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Tampa Bay Rays center fielder B.J. Upton wasn't in the lineup for Wednesday's 13-4 loss at Oakland.

Just a day off, Upton said.

"I wanted to get Sammy involved," Rays manager Joe Maddon said. Sam Fuld started in left field and Desmond Jennings, recently brought up from Triple-A, started in center.

Upton said the day off had nothing to do with his health, though he told teammates he has a tight left quad.

"I'm fine," Upton said.

Meanwhile, shortstop Ian Desmond and catcher Wilson Ramos of the Nationals, two players mentioned as possible players to be traded to Tampa Bay for Upton, were not in the lineup Wednesday.

So, let's review: With Sunday's 4 p.m. Eastern time deadline for non-waiver trades looming, Upton received his second day off in four days. He said he's healthy. A possible trading partner with the Rays didn't play a pair of players rumored to be on the block.

Kind of seems like there is something going on.

"That's what it would seem like, but it's not," Upton said.

Rays executive vice president of baseball Andrew Friedman, who does not comment on trade talks, has indicated he is not under pressure to move Upton at the deadline and could carry talks into the offseason when he can deal with 29 teams rather than the handful that are looking for help for a playoff run.

Because Friedman doesn't deny or confirm rumors allows them to gain steam, especially on days when Upton gets another day off, which is why Upton said he spent the open locker room portion of Wednesday afternoon inside the trainer's room hoping the locker room would be cleared of reporters when he returned to his locker.

It was not.

Despite maintaining he is healthy, Upton did not participate in batting practice.

"I'm certain (the rumors) would wear you down a bit," Maddon said. "It would wear me down. That's part of what's going on, I'm sure."

Maddon said the fact today's game is a 12:37 p.m. start local time (3:37 in Tampa) and the fact the A's were throwing Trevor Cahill on Wednesday, who is tough on Upton, influenced his decision to give the struggling Upton another day off.

Upton, who has had just two hits on this road trip, is batting .079 in his last nine games.

"Overall I've just been looking for moments to get B.J. a rest, get him off his feet," Maddon said. "He's been going at it pretty hard. I know all these different things being swirled about. It's got to have some kind of an impact on him too, so I just want to give him a rest once in a while."

Also, Maddon said he wanted to get some playing time for Fuld, whose playing time took a hit when the Rays recalled Jennings on Saturday.

A busy day of trading eliminated the San Francisco Giants as a possible destination for Upton, when the defending World Series champions traded for New York Mets right fielder Carlos Beltran.

But the Atlanta Braves, Pittsburgh Pirates, Philadelphia Phillies, Cincinnati Reds and, of course, the Nationals are still being bandied about as teams with high interest in Upton.

As he has said nearly every day for the past week, Upton said he is not concerned with the rumors.

"It's to the point now where there's so many teams and so many rumors I don't even worry about it," he said.

Also Wednesday, pitchers J.P. Howell, Jeff Niemann and Wade Davis popped up in a report out of St. Louis about a rumored trade between the Cardinals and Rays that fell apart when the Rays wouldn't part with pitchers James Shields or Jeremy Hellickson.

"That's five years in a row my name has come up," Davis said.

Maddon said he talks often with Upton – Maddon told Upton on Tuesday he wasn't playing on Wednesday – but said has not specifically talked to the center fielder about all the rumors.

"He's been through the ringer before with all this stuff almost on an annual basis now," Maddon said. "But it's a little bit different based on his contract status, his experience, all those things make it a little different this time around. But that's baseball."

Ask for his gut feeling of where he will be after Sunday's deadline, Upton said, "Here. I think I'll be here. I don't think I'm going anywhere."

When asked the same question, Maddon said, "I have no gut feeling. Andrew and I talk about things a lot, and Andrew is always working to make our team better. I really don't know how this is going to shakeout, I honestly don't."

Rays routed in Shields' worst start of 2011 **Right-hander watches A's uncork nine-run fourth, cruise to victory**

By Bill Chastain, MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Even the Rays' one-two punch is misfiring now.

A night after David Price took his lumps against Oakland, James Shields took his worst beating of the year Wednesday in a 13-4 romp by the A's with 18,640 watching.

"It's not any fun," Rays manager Joe Maddon said when asked about seeing his top two starters come up empty.

In defeat, the Rays fell to 53-50 on the season and 1-5 on their 10-game road trip. The only bright spot of the evening came in the fact they did not lose ground to the Wild Card-leading Yankees, who lost to the Mariners. Tampa Bay is 11 1/2 games behind Boston and 8 1/2 behind New York.

Through July 7, the Rays were 49-39, matching their season-high-water mark of 10 games over .500 and 3 1/2 games behind in the American League East. The club has now lost nine of its past 12 games.

If there has been one bright light for the Rays this season, Shields has been it. He entered the game with seven complete games under his belt and a 2.53 ERA, good for fourth in the AL among qualified leaders. Yet Shields lasted just four innings in Oakland, and by the time the dejected right-hander headed for the visiting clubhouse with his shirttail pulled out, he carried with him an ERA that swelled to 3.03.

"It was an all-around terrible job," Shields said. "That's what it was. Leaving the ball up, I was making mistakes and they were hitting them."

Shields didn't look his sharpest in the early going, but a couple of dazzling plays by Rays fielders appeared like they might help him smooth out the rough spots.

Left fielder Sam Fuld threw out Ryan Sweeney at home for the third out of the second and center fielder Desmond Jennings made a nice sliding catch for the second out in the third. After that, Shields found himself on a slippery slope.

Hideki Matsui doubled home the first run of the game with two out in the third. The floodgates then opened in the fourth, when the A's unloaded on Shields for nine runs, highlighted by Matsui's three-run homer and a two-run jack by Sweeney. The nine earned runs were the most allowed in one inning by a Rays pitcher since Travis Harper allowed nine runs in the eighth inning on July 21, 2005, at Yankee Stadium.

"[Shields] stays away a lot and throws a lot of changeups out over the plate," Sweeney said. "I'm kind of a guy that doesn't try to pull the ball a lot and takes the pitches where I get them. The one that I hit out was just a changeup in, and I just turned on it."

Shields allowed a career-high-tying 10 runs on 12 hits in four innings to take his ninth loss of the season.

"I wasn't sharp all night, right from the gates," Shields said. "I felt really, really good in the bullpen. But in the first inning, I didn't feel too good. Pitches up in the zone all night, I wasn't making my pitch, I wasn't executing my pitch."

With Sunday's non-waiver Trade Deadline looming, Shields has been mentioned in many rumors, which can often be a distraction for a player. Shields did not use that as an excuse for his performance.

"No, no, not distracted at all, just not pitching well," Shields said. "It was a terrible job."

Shields' departure did not quiet the Oakland bats, which seemingly squared up most any pitch that crossed the plate. Rob Delaney, who was selected by the Rays from Triple-A Durham before the game, allowed two runs in the fifth and another in sixth as the Rays fell behind by 13.

Like Jay Buente, who arrived from Durham for Tuesday night's game only to be sent back down the next day, Delaney received a return trip to Durham after pitching three innings in Oakland. The right-hander did earn Maddon's praises for helping save the bullpen on a night when five innings needed to be killed.

"Rob sucking up those three for us is huge for us moving forward," Maddon said. "If he was not here and not able to do that, we would have had to expend many of our bullpen guys in that kind of a loss, which would have really been not a good thing."

Tampa Bay's offense continued to struggle, though the Rays managed to score four in the ninth. Two of the runs came via Matt Joyce's 15th home run of the season. Despite the late surge, the team's struggling offense is giving off a similar vibe to the one it had during the team's 0-6 start.

"It's just something we're grinding through," Joyce said. "I think if we were in any other division, we would have a totally different mindset instead of putting so much pressure on ourselves to really try and keep up with the Yankees and the Red Sox."

"Right now, we just really have to grind through it, take the positive from the ninth inning and roll it into the next game."

Maddon, Upton address trade speculation **Outfielder out of Rays' lineup vs. A's, doesn't expect to be moved**

By Bill Chastain, MLB.com

OAKLAND -- B.J. Upton was not in the lineup on Wednesday night, which further fanned the flames of speculation that the Rays' center fielder will be traded.

Not so fast.

Rays manager Joe Maddon insisted nothing was in the works other than him wanting to get Sam Fuld into the lineup against A's right-hander Trevor Cahill.

"Looking at the schedule, I wanted to get Sammy involved," Maddon said. "It was either tonight or tomorrow. Put B.J. back out there tomorrow against [Rich] Harden. Overall, I've just been looking for moments to get B.J. a little bit of a rest. Get him off of his feet. He's been going out there pretty hard."

Upton is only 26 and had the day off Sunday in Kansas City, too, which didn't seem to add up. Maddon addressed Upton getting a second day off in a week with Sunday's non-waiver Trade Deadline looming.

"[Sunday] was in 100-degree weather, and he looked like he really needed it. This is different of course," Maddon said. "I just think he could use a little bit of time. I think he needs a little bit of a break. But B.J. will be back out there tomorrow."

Maddon also pointed to the mental aspects of Upton's situation as a contributing factor to his needing rest.

"I know all of these different things that are getting swirled about," Maddon said. "That's got to have some kind of an impact on him too. So I want to give him a rest once in a while. But more importantly, I want to get Sam involved. We use everybody here all the time. When we do pinch-hit, I want to make sure guys have at-bats. Like tomorrow, you're going to see Elliot Johnson at shortstop. So that's what it is, I want to get Sammy out there. There's nothing else going on."

Maddon allowed that he felt for Upton having to deal with constant trade rumors.

"I wouldn't think it would be easy, especially if you're reading that stuff all the time," the skipper said. "Maybe if you've been through the wars a bit, it might not bother you as much. And it's more expected. I think B.J. likes it here. He's been part of us for a long time here. And I'm sure he doesn't want to go anywhere else."

"For all those reasons, it's got to be tough to read the conjecture on a daily basis. And I'm sure that would wear you down a bit. That would wear me down, I really believe that. That's part of what's going on, I'm sure."

Maddon said he has no gut feeling on whether Upton would remain a member of the Rays.

"Andrew [Friedman, Rays executive vice president of baseball operations] and I talk about things a lot, and Andrew is always working to make our team better," Maddon said. "I really don't know how this is all going to shake out."

"So many times this time of the year with us, as with other teams, things are discussed, and at the end of the day, nothing ever happens. For me, personally, I'd love it if he stayed. He's been a big part of our success in the past."

Upton, who spent most of the time prior to batting practice inside the trainer's room, addressed the fact that he's not typically a guy who needs two days off in a week.

"That's what it would seem like," Upton said. "But [there's nothing going on]."

Upton said he did not ask for the day off. Maddon "gave it to me," Upton said.

Upton also ran in the outfield prior to the game under the watchful eye of Rays personnel. But he denied any speculation that he might have a minor injury.

"Just getting loose," Upton said. "I do it from time to time."

Upton confessed that he is tired of all the speculation, adding, "There's nothing I can do about it."

A lot of trade activity took place in the Major Leagues on Wednesday, but Upton said he did not follow that activity.

"I'm not really looking at it," Upton said. "I'm not looking at what different teams are doing. It has nothing to do with me. It's to the point now that there are so many teams and so many rumors, I don't even worry about it."

Pressed for an answer on where he thought he would be once the non-waiver Trade Deadline passes, Upton smiled.

"Here. I think I'll be here," Upton said. "I don't think I'm going anywhere."

Continued youth sets Major League record **Rays start 705th consecutive game with pitcher under age 30**

By Bill Chastain, MLB.com

OAKLAND -- James Shields delivered the Rays' first pitch of the game at approximately 7:17 p.m. PT -- a strike to Jemile Weeks. And just like that, Tampa Bay made Major League history by starting a pitcher under the age of 30 for the 705th consecutive time.

In the process, the Rays broke the record established by the 1913-17 Washington Senators, led by Hall of Famer Walter Johnson.

Jae Seo made the last start by a Tampa Bay pitcher of 30 years or older when he took the mound on his 30th birthday on May 24, 2007. Shields started the following day against the White Sox and took a no-decision in a 5-4 loss, and he was the culprit again in Wednesday's 13-4 defeat.

During the life of the streak, the Rays have used only 14 starters, the fewest in Major League Baseball over that same period. Entering Wednesday night's game, the Rays were 377-327 through those 704 games.

Shields has started the most games during the streak with 143. Matt Garza and Andy Sonnanstine rank second and third on the list with 94 and 80 games started, respectively.

Delaney called up to Rays, optioned after loss

OAKLAND -- The Rays optioned right-hander Jay Buentte to Triple-A Durham on Wednesday and replaced him on the 25-man roster with fellow righty Rob Delaney, who was promoted from Durham.

Delaney came on in relief of James Shields in Wednesday's 13-4 loss to Oakland and hurled 66 pitches over three innings. He struck out one but yielded three runs on four hits and three walks, and was sent back down to Durham after the game as the Rays look for another bullpen arm.

"Rob sucking up those three for us is huge for us moving forward," said Tampa Bay manager Joe Maddon. "If he was not here and not able to do that, we would have had to expend many of our bullpen guys in that kind of a loss, which would have really been not a good thing."

Buentte, 27, who was selected off waivers from the Marlins on May 25, surrendered two runs on two hits and two walks vs. the A's on Tuesday in his Rays debut.

Maddon did not get the news that the Rays were sending Buentte back to Durham until after Tuesday's 6-1 defeat, and the team had already arrived back at the hotel.

"I ran down Jay, sat down with him actually outside the lounge, and explained to him the whole thing," Maddon said. "Told him what I thought about the performance last night, what I saw. And he was very good. He was very gracious about the whole moment. He was not surprised or affected by it, which I appreciated. But I wanted to tell him that face-to-face, as opposed to a phone conversation, and I was able to."

"I know how that is, and how hard that is," said Tampa Bay reliever J.P. Howell. "Buentte came up here from Durham to Miami to here and back. That's a stomach turner for him. But it's part of the game. We've all done that. I think one year I went up and down nine times."

"It's not a lot of fun, but it's a good opportunity each time you get called up. I'll go all the way from Florida to Seattle for a callup."

The 26-year-old Delaney was 4-1 with a 1.78 ERA and two saves in 35 appearances with the Bulls, holding opposing hitters to a .206 average. He appeared in three games with the Rays in May, allowing three runs on no hits and four walks in two innings pitched.

Andy Sonnanstine worked as the team's long man throughout the first half of the season and rarely saw action. But lately the bullpen has been in a lurch, which has prompted quick callups -- several of which were short stints -- for Brandon Gomes, Alex Torres, Dane De La Rosa, Buente and Delaney.

"I think that Boston game [a 16-inning, 1-0 Rays loss on July 17] had a lot to do with it," Howell said. "We've been scrapping. That was a lot of innings to cover. Then we had the Yankees in town. The second-half hill got a little larger after we went 16 innings.

"That's just the business. It stinks for [the pitchers going on the shuttle system]. I don't ever want to go down, but it does help. Delaney's fresh. That helps, knowing we've got a guy who's fresh, and mentally, too. It's exciting for him and gives energy to us."

Rays, A's trending in opposite directions

By Jesse Sanchez, MLB.com

The A's are playing some of their best baseball of the season, and they have the numbers to prove it.

Wednesday's 13-4 victory over the Rays was the club's third win in a row and seventh in its past 10 games. The A's are one victory away from completing a four-game sweep and have scored four or more runs in a season-high seven straight games.

On Thursday, it will be up to Tampa Bay starter Wade Davis to stifle Oakland's hot-hitting offense. Davis was activated from the disabled list on Friday and pitched against Kansas City that night, taking the loss in a 10-4 final that saw him allow five earned runs on 11 hits in 5 1/3 innings. He did not walk a batter in the outing and deserved a better fate after several balls were misplayed by his defense during the early-evening sun.

Davis said the tightness in his right forearm that put him on the DL and prevented him from throwing his slider is no longer a problem. He called his last outing "a crazy game."

"Just the shadows, the way the game was going," Davis said. "It was one of those quicksand games, where the harder you try, the worse it got. I felt good. Physically, everything was good. And the slider was great. That's something I can definitely carry into this game."

Davis was one of the Rays' most effective pitchers in the second half of 2010, when he went 6-1 with a 3.28 ERA after the All-Star break. He's looking forward to another strong finish.

"I'm going to put my foot on the gas pedal and go," he said. "It's a key point in the season right now. I'm strong and healthy. It's a good time for all of us pitchers to step up." The A's will counter with Rich Harden, who is 3-2 with a 5.01 ERA in six career starts against the Rays. He's 1-0 with a 3.65 ERA in two starts since the All-Star break and is holding opponents to a .200 batting average in those starts.

Rays: Staff enters annals of history

- On Wednesday, Tampa Bay made Major League history by starting a pitcher under the age of 30 for the 705th consecutive time. The Rays broke the record established by the 1913-17 Washington Senators, who were led by Hall of Famer Walter Johnson.

- The Rays optioned right-hander Jay Bunte to Triple-A Durham on Wednesday and replaced him on the 25-man roster with fellow righty Rob Delaney.

Delaney was 4-1 with a 1.78 ERA and two saves in 35 appearances with the Bulls, holding opposing hitters to a .206 average. He appeared in three games with the Rays in May, allowing three runs on no hits and four walks in two innings pitched. He relieved starter James Shields on Wednesday and allowed three runs on four hits in three innings.

A's: Trade Deadline a distraction?

- The A's are 11 1/2 games back in the American League West, the non-waiver Trade Deadline is approaching and some wonder if the A's will be sellers this week.

"The best thing to do is to try not to pay any attention to it," said A's manager Bob Melvin. "Wherever you are, depending on the situation your team's in, whether you're adding or subtracting -- there seems to be a lot of teams this year that are kind of in between and don't really know. It's just the time of year. At least in my standpoint -- I don't pay too much attention to it."

Worth noting

- Oakland's David DeJesus was given the day off and was out of the lineup Wednesday. Ryan Sweeney made the start in right field and went 3-for-4 with a double and his first home run since last May.

- A's shortstop Cliff Pennington went 1-for-3 Wednesday to extend his hitting streak to 11 games.

Carpenter unhittable in Minors debut

Rays seventh-rounder dominates in five frames for Renegades

By Danny Wild, MLB.com

It was only last week that Ryan Carpenter was on the field in Cape Cod for the Orleans Firebirds, a Tampa Bay draftee without a contract pitching in a college summer league.

"I went to the Cape for four or five weeks and got a couple starts so they could watch me a little bit," Carpenter said. "But it's good to start playing."

Exactly a week later, the Rays got to see what they bought -- Carpenter threw five hitless innings Wednesday, throwing 61 pitches and striking out three for Class A Short-Season Hudson Valley in a 3-1 loss to Auburn.

"It was nice, it was good to get the first start under my belt," he said. "I got to experience my first pro start, and I'm glad I could help out."

Carpenter, humble after a dominating effort, was the Rays' seventh-round pick in the June Draft. His return to the Cape delayed his Minor League debut a few weeks. And with all the time to think about his eventual first start, was the lefty from Gonzaga nervous at all?

"A little bit, but I was kind of built up for this a little bit," he said. "I was ready for it, but then again, there's some nerves. I'm glad I got it under my belt."

Carpenter, in fact, had a few no-hitters under his belt -- he threw two of them in his senior year at Cactus High School in Peoria, Ariz., before attending Gonzaga University. The Rays selected him in the 21st round of the 2008 Draft, but he opted to stay in college, setting himself up for a higher round selection this summer.

The Rays assigned the 6-foot-5 starter to Hudson Valley, an affiliate that has seen Evan Longoria and Jeremy Hellickson suit up in recent years. Carpenter said his first taste of the Minors was a good one.

"It's hard to know what to expect, but I'm having a blast," he said. "The guys are great, the coaches are great, so I couldn't ask for more from the experience."

Carpenter retired the first four batters he faced before Caleb Ramsey reached on second baseman Raymond Church's fielding error. Carpenter got out of the inning and erased a leadoff walk in the third when he picked Connor Rowe off first. He set down the final eight batters he faced before reaching his pitch count after five.

"I mainly relied on my fastball and tried to get ahead of hitters later in the at-bats with my change-up and breaking pitches," he said. "I used the change to try and get the hitters off balance a little, and that seemed to work well for me."

Carpenter, 20, said he knew he had the no-hitter working well before taking a seat in the dugout.

"It was always in the back of my mind," he said. "Every pitcher kind of notices it as they go on, but I knew I had a pitch count limit and I just wanted to do my best."

Carpenter, who said he had a few missed calls from friends and family when he got to the clubhouse, understood why the Renegades pulled him.

"It's my first start, no need to push it too far. But then again, the circumstances are a little different," he said. "It was fun, I'm glad I got to do what I did."

He added that he hasn't set any expectations this early on for his first Minor League season.

"Just progress as much as I can ... just experience pro ball and adjust and work hard in everything I can."

Moore fans 13 in second Triple-A start **Top Rays prospect allows three hits over eight shutout innings**

By David Heck, MLB.com

It didn't take Matt Moore long to figure out how to pitch at Triple-A.

MLB.com's **No. 4 prospect** tied a career high with 13 strikeouts over eight innings in his second International League start Wednesday as the Durham Bulls blanked the Gwinnett Braves, 4-0.

Moore (1-0), who yielded only three hits and two walks, also fanned 13 during a six-inning outing for Class A Advanced Charlotte last Aug. 7.

"It feels good," said Moore, who **struck out seven** in his Triple-A debut on Friday. "It's definitely something good for the confidence, knowing I haven't had to make a whole lot of major adjustments through the course of the game. It was just kind of pitch to pitch. That part felt real good."

The 22-year-old left-hander faced one batter over the minimum through four innings. He allowed singles in each of the next two frames, but neither baserunner reached second base.

The only G-Brave to make it past first base against Moore was Tyler Pastornicky, who walked and stole second in the opening inning.

"It seemed like when I was throwing strike one, that was when all my pitches came alive," Moore said. "If I was behind, I might try to come with something off-speed and miss a bit. I had to make some good pitches to get back into the count. All three pitches, I seemed to have a pretty good feel for them when I was ahead in the count."

Moore (1-0) outdueled Mike Minor, who began the season as MLB.com's **No. 21 prospect**. The 23-year-old southpaw gave up four runs -- two earned -- on five hits over seven innings.

"I had heard of him," Moore said. "I never actually put him on a team and had to square up against him. It's definitely nice to match up against good guys. Either way, it's going to be a duel and a competition. It makes it a little more exciting."

A 2007 eighth-round pick, Moore has led the Minors in strikeouts each of the last two seasons. He fanned 176 in only 123 innings for Class A Bowling Green in 2009, then punched out 208 over 144 2/3 frames in the Florida State League last year. In doing so, he became the first Minor Leaguer to eclipse the 200-strikeout plateau since Francisco Liriano in 2005.

This season, Moore is tied for second in the Minors with 151 strikeouts over 115 1/3 innings between Double-A Montgomery and Durham. He's averaged better than a strikeout an inning in all five of his professional seasons.

"What I try to do against every hitter is throw strike one and make a quality pitch," Moore explained. "That way, if they're swinging at the first pitch, the odds of it being a hit aren't in their favor. Quality strike for strike one and if I miss, I've got to come back and make sure I get it with the second pitch."

The highlight of Moore's season came on June 17, when he tossed a nine-inning no-hitter against Mobile. He also pitched for Team USA at the All-Star Futures Game, striking out one in a perfect inning.

Despite his success, the Rays' top prospect still believes he has plenty of work to do.

"Overall, fastball command and consistency with all three pitches," Moore said. "I walked two tonight. As soon as the command tightens up a little bit, the walks will go away. It's possible those pitches could've cost me going into the ninth and giving the bullpen a full night off. It's little things like that."

Moore said his plan with Durham is to continue to work on those little things, the same way he did at Montgomery. The ultimate goal, of course, is to reach the Majors.

"I don't plan on being a Minor League player my whole career," he said. "Every year, [reaching the Majors] seems to become a little bit more of a reality. Without thinking too much about it, I try to prepare mentally if that is the case. Otherwise, I'll continue with the day-to-day work that I've done."