

Minnesota Twins defeat Oakland A's 9-5

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

Gio Gonzalez, the A's best pitcher most of the year and their lone All-Star, has hit his first major bump in the road this season.

Gonzalez labored through 5 1/3 innings Friday night, gave up nine hits and five runs and committed a throwing error as the Minnesota Twins whipped Oakland 9-5 at [O.co](#) Coliseum.

Gonzalez (9-8) has lost three of his past four starts and allowed at least five runs in all three losses. The nine hits allowed matched his season high. He walked three and struck out five and ended his 112-pitch night with a bases-loaded walk.

"I'm in one of those streaks, but it's part of baseball, everybody goes through it," Gonzalez said. "I'll just have to put this one behind me, keep working hard and get ready for my next start."

So what was the problem against the Twins?

"I'd say more my command," he said. "I'd get ahead of them, then I'd fall behind on them. I have to get back to facing one batter at a time, getting one out at a time and keep pushing forward."

Gonzalez's struggles offset a huge night for A's left fielder Josh Willingham, who hit his 14th and 15th home runs -- his first multiple-homer game with Oakland -- and drove in all five runs with a two-run homer in the first inning and a three-run shot in the eighth. Alas, the A's trailed 9-2 when Willingham hit his second homer.

The question now is what it will mean for the A's and Willingham as the Sunday non-waiver trade deadline approaches. The veteran has been mentioned in rumors involving Atlanta and Pittsburgh, and if nothing else, he may have significantly enhanced his trade value with this performance if the A's are inclined to deal him.

Willingham said he is oblivious to the rumors and will deal with whatever comes this weekend.

"I'm going to be here (Saturday) as far as I know, and (Saturday) is all I'm worried about," he said.

Willingham did say the left Achilles tendon injury that has nagged him for the better part of two months has been feeling much better in recent days, which could improve the likelihood of a trade to a National League team because he can play the outfield again.

Manager Bob Melvin refused to speculate what might happen with Willingham or any of his players this weekend.

"You play the hand you have right now," Melvin said. "But certainly (Willingham) has been a force in our lineup."

Gonzalez's rocky night started early, as the left-hander gave up two first-inning runs on Jason Kubel's two-run double to left-center with Trevor Plouffe and Joe Mauer aboard.

The A's bounced back in the bottom of the first against Twins starter Francisco Liriano (7-8) when Coco Crisp stroked a one-out single and Willingham slammed a two-run homer on a 3-0 pitch to tie it.

But the Twins kept chipping away at Gonzalez, scoring single runs in the third, fifth and sixth. Gonzalez exited when he walked Ben Revere with the bases loaded in the sixth.

Meanwhile, the A's had several chances to score against Liriano after the first, but two rallies were killed when David DeJesus hit into double plays, and another went awry when Crisp fouled out with two runners on.

The Twins broke it open with four runs in the top of the eighth against Michael Wuertz, culminated by Michael Cuddyer's 16th homer of the year.

It served to negate Willingham's blast in the bottom of the eighth after Crisp walked and Hideki Matsui, who had three hits and raised his average to .251, singled.

Oakland A's update: Closer Andrew Bailey is drawing some interest as trade deadline approaches

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

Of all the A's potential trade possibilities, Andrew Bailey would seem to be an unlikely hot topic. But less than 48 hours before Major League Baseball's non-waiver trade deadline, the closer is the only Oakland player creating much buzz. That buzz isn't very loud, either.

The Dallas-based DFW Sports Beat reported Friday that the Texas Rangers are pursuing Bailey, and the Dallas Morning News reported that the Rangers are engaged in talks with the A's about relievers.

Bailey was aware of the rumors but said he had heard nothing from his agent or the A's about anything that might be in the works. He admitted it wouldn't surprise him, however.

"Our bullpen is one of our strong points, and other teams' G.M.s are just doing their due diligence to find the best arms out there," Bailey said.

Bailey, 27, is under the A's control through 2014, so a deal -- particularly to a division rival -- would seem improbable.

Bailey said he'd prefer to remain with the A's since it's the only organization he's ever known, but he wouldn't be averse to a trade to a contender.

"I love this organization," he said. "Obviously, the name of the game is winning, and I want to be part of that. We have a lot of young talent and something to build around. But to maybe go somewhere and have an opportunity to win now would be cool, as well."

The A's started Friday 20-22 under interim manager Bob Melvin, and Melvin was asked before the game if the A's had initiated any discussions to remove the interim tag and offer him a long-term contract.

"They have not," he said. "When I came in here, I came on an interim basis and that's where I'm at."

Would he like to receive an extension before season's end?

"I don't know that it's possible," he said. "I think there's been some scenarios before where an interim manager has been extended, but I think the hiring process is in part to do with where I am right now. Nothing's been promised to me, and I take it day to day, and that hasn't changed since the first day I've been here. "... I'd like to be here long-term, and they know that."

The A's honored Hideki Matsui with a crystal trophy before the game for his 500th professional home run, hit last week in Detroit.

Chin Music: Bailey addresses trade rumors, Melvin sidesteps extension talk

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune, 7/29/2011 5:35pm

In for Joe Stiglich tonight. I sense a pattern here; he's always taking the fireworks nights off ...

It's rather puzzling that of all the A's players you would be expecting to get buzz two days before the MLB trading deadline, Andrew Bailey would be far down the list. But right now, he might be the hottest. The word out of Texas is that the Rangers are working the cellphones hard regarding Bailey, along with Padres closer Heath Bell. Another Texas news outlet said the Rangers are looking at A's relievers without mentioning Bailey specifically.

As Joe noted in his blog post right before this one, you can see both sides of the argument as far as the notion of the A's trading Bailey. Yes, he's under A's control through 2014, he's making a pittance (although he'll be due a hefty raise in his first arbitration next year), and — oh yeah — he's a pretty darned good closer when he's healthy.

On the other hand, this is a team that believes it can sign or develop a closer whenever it needs one. It's a team that traded a young closer in Huston Street just a few years ago. Bailey has also had elbow issues, which might prompt the A's to strike

while the iron is hot if the right deal drops in their laps. It's highly unlikely they're pushing a Bailey trade, but it makes sense that they'd listen.

I would doubt the A's will be shipping Bailey somewhere, particularly to a division rival. But you never know, especially if Billy Beane sees a young prospect he covets.

So how does Bailey feel about being mentioned in trade talk?

"I think our bullpen is one of our strong points and other teams' GMs are just doing their due diligence to find the best arms out there," he said. "It's a little different, since I've only known this organization. So we'll see what happens."

Bailey straddled the fence on whether he would welcome a trade. On one hand, he doesn't want to be excised from what the A's may be building. On the other hand, if he could play with a contender now ...

"I love this organization," he said. "Obviously, the name of the game is winning and I want to be part of that. We have a lot of young talent and something to build around. But maybe go somewhere and have an opportunity to win now would be cool as well."

Bailey said he's only heard what he's read on Twitter and elsewhere online, so he's not getting too nervous yet.

"Right now, it's all media speculation, I assume," he said. "I haven't heard one thing from the organization or my agent."

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Get ready for the every-day-or-so update on Bob Melvin's status as manager beyond this year. The A's are 20-22 under Melvin (they'd be .500 without yesterday's bullpen abomination) and seem to have responded to his leadership. Then again, Oakland actually started the season 22-20 under Bob Geren — their high-water mark over .500 this year — so he hasn't exactly moved the needle that dramatically yet.

Whatever, this is what Melvin had to say about his situation in Oakland and whether the A's have approached him about a long-term deal.

"They have not," he said. "When I came in here, I came on an interim basis and that's where I'm at."

Would he like to receive an extension before year's end?

"I don't know that it's possible," he said. "I think there's been some scenarios before where an interim manager has been extended, but I think the hiring process is in part to do with where I am right now. Nothing's been promised to me and I take it day to day, and that hasn't changed since the first day I've been here. I came in under those terms, so obviously, I'm fine with that."

But isn't it something Melvin would want resolved quickly once the season was over?

"Sure," he said. "I think in my position, anybody would like to be considered the answer long-term. I'd like to be here long-term and they know that."

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Grant Balfour was hit in the small of the back by a baseball during batting practice earlier in the week. Melvin said he had him up in the bullpen during Thursday's game and he wasn't feeling very good. He's hoping Balfour will be available tonight, but wasn't sure before the game.

Tonight's lineups:

A's: 2B Weeks, CF Crisp, DH Matsui, LF Willingham, 1B Jackson, RF DeJesus, 3B Sizemore, C Suzuki, SS Pennington. P Gonzalez

Twins: CF Revere, 2B Plouffe, 1B Mauer, RF Cuddyer, DH Kubel, LF Young, 3B Hughes, SS Tolbert, C Butera. P Liriano

"They have not

Oakland pushes ahead with new stadium plan for Raiders, solo or shared

Angela Woodall, Oakland Tribune

Oakland officials didn't let the NFL lockout stand in the way of their plans to transform the city's gray and sagging Coliseum into a new stadium and entertainment district that some supporters are calling Oakland Live.

The clock started ticking on the plans when Gov. Jerry Brown threatened to commandeer redevelopment money. But the pace really picked up when it looked like the NFL deal sealed this week could help deliver money for the project. The city had already begun to buy up land to "control the destiny" of the area, which is part of the Coliseum Redevelopment Project district, said Oakland City Councilmember Larry Reid.

"But to get there, we have to spend money to show there is a vision," said Reid, whose Elmhurst-East Oakland district includes the Coliseum area.

The aging complex is co-owned by the city and Alameda County. But the city now controls all the land between Coliseum Way and San Leandro Street except several parcels occupied by, among others, Denny's, a church and a trucking company.

Then the council authorized \$4 million in redevelopment funds this month to pay for a design plan and an environmental impact report.

"If we don't do something, we might end up losing all our franchises," Reid said.

He has long cherished the plan to create Oakland Live, named and modeled after the sprawling \$2.5 billion entertainment complex in Los Angeles next to Staples Center.

He appears to have the support of the Raiders.

The team has backed a redevelopment plan since 2009 when the Raiders and city began to evaluate the chances of success. The support has not changed, said Raiders Chief Executive Officer Amy Trask in an email interview.

The Coliseum, she said, is a "tremendous location," centrally located and accessible from all over the Bay Area by public transportation, including BART.

As for the 49ers, she said the Raiders are keeping an open mind about sharing a stadium as details for a Santa Clara facility unfold.

Prospects of a two-team facility dimmed after 49ers owner Jed York backed off this week. He said the team can build a stadium in Santa Clara without sharing with the Raiders because the NFL is offering a handout large enough to satisfy several teams. The league announced plans to create a financing pool teams could dip into for loans needed to build a new stadium. The NFL would put 1.5 percent of all league revenue earned in a year into the pool. That could generate as much as \$150 million annually based on NFL revenues of \$10 billion a year, which the league is close to earning already.

The Raiders could play in Santa Clara without needing voter approval.

Conversely, if the Santa Clara deal falls apart, O.co Coliseum could be an option for the 49ers.

The Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum Board, which oversees operations at the Coliseum complex, commissioned an analysis independent of the Oakland Live proposal.

"(The) addition of the 49ers dramatically increases the economic viability of the project," according to an October 2010 report by Minnesota-based Conventions, Sports & Leisure, which the city of San Jose hired to analyze the potential A's ballpark in that city.

According to the analysis, there is \$145 million in outstanding principal on a Coliseum bond debt that helped pay for renovations demanded by Raiders owner Al Davis in 1996. The debt will have to be resolved before the stadium can be torn down to make way for a new one.

Because the Oakland stadium plan involves redeveloping the surrounding area, the project could also be eligible for federal funding if it can be classified as a transit village, according to At-Large Councilmember Rebecca Kaplan.

She announced the new stadium plans on July 20, catching some of her fellow council members off guard because they didn't know the stadium had become a definite part of the plan. She also surprised Coliseum board members.

Commissioner Scott Haggerty said he knew nothing of the plan, but supports the concept of a new stadium. The A's, who share the existing stadium with the Raiders, may have to be factored into the plan if Major League Baseball blocks the team from moving to San Jose.

Co-owner Lew Wolff said this week by telephone that he has no information about the plans.

"We've seen nothing," he said. The Coliseum area, he added, is a great site, but a new stadium would not persuade him to stay in Oakland.

Reid said the plan doesn't include a new arena for the Golden State Warriors, who have a contract to play at the Coliseum until 2017. But the new owners have made it clear they want a new facility in Oakland -- or possibly in San Francisco.

The next step is to issue a request for proposals from companies to perform an environmental impact report. Then Reid and Kaplan will have to convince the rest of the Coliseum board and county supervisors.

"We're just at the starting point," Reid said.

Strong pitching deserts A's in 9-5 loss to Twins

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

What happened to those familiar all-pitch, no-hit A's?

They started hitting.

Then they stopped pitching.

Gio Gonzalez, Oakland's lone All-Star, has struggled in back-to-back starts, failing again Friday night to last six innings. He was pulled after a bases-loaded walk in the sixth, and two Josh Willingham home runs were wasted in a 9-5 loss to the Twins.

Entering the game, the A's had the majors' top batting average (.317) since the All-Star break, a span of 13 games. They also had the highest on-base percentage (.389) and fewest strikeouts (72).

On the other hand, Oakland pitchers had posted a 6.58 ERA in nine games since July 19.

The trend continued in the series opener against Minnesota. Willingham hit two homers for the first time with the A's and drove in all of Oakland's runs, and Hideki Matsui had three more hits on a night when he was honored for joining the 500-homer club (including his 332 in Japan).

But between Willingham's homers in the first and eighth innings, the offense did little off Francisco Liriano despite putting two runners aboard in the fourth, fifth and sixth. David DeJesus ended two of those rallies with double-play grounders to second base.

Willingham admitted his Achilles tendon injury, which put him on the disabled list until July 7, has bothered him until the past few days. Perhaps a bigger issue is whether he'll still be with the A's after Sunday's trade deadline, considering his name has been mentioned in trade rumors.

"Has it been mentioned? I didn't know," Willingham said without a grin. "I'm going to be here tomorrow as far as I know, and I'll worry about tomorrow. That's all."

Gonzalez had his second straight rough start. A victim of two-out rallies at Yankee Stadium in his previous start, he coughed it up again in the first inning. Jason Kubel's two-run double came with two away.

Trevor Plouffe scored an unearned run in the third by reaching on Scott Sizemore's error, advancing two bases on Gonzalez's error and scoring on a double play. Plouffe also drove in a fifth-inning run.

Gonzalez lost it in the sixth, giving up two singles and issuing two walks. His line (5 1/3 innings, nine hits, five runs, four earned) would have been worse if Fautino De Los Santos hadn't bailed him out.

"Two bad starts," Gonzalez said. "In my opinion, it happens to anybody. Not to say it's a streak or anything like that. Just two bad starts."

There was no bailing out Michael Wuertz in the eighth. The reliever got rocked for four runs, three on a homer by Michael Cuddyer, after which Wuertz walked two batters and hit another. Wuertz has an 18.70 ERA in six appearances since the All-Star break.

Matsui is just the opposite. Since the break, he's hitting .462 (24-for-52), raising his season average from .209 to .251. It's the first time he's been above .250 since May 3.

A's manager Bob Melvin likes his roster

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Saturday, July 30, 2011

Manager **Bob Melvin** knows he could be losing a player or two by Sunday, the trade deadline. He said he'd prefer to keep his guys aboard.

"I like the team right now, but I also understand that, especially in our market with our budget, you're looking to improve, whether it's short term or long term," Melvin said. "Where we are (in the standings), we're a little more long-term minded."

Oakland's starting outfielders, especially **Josh Willingham**, have been mentioned in various trade rumors. But while scouts say Willingham is slower on defense and on the bases since his Achilles tendon injury, an emerging target for teams seeking a well-rounded outfielder is **Coco Crisp**, whose defense, speed and pop at the plate could boost a contender.

The Braves spoke internally about Willingham, but it was learned they have interest at some level in Crisp, who has remained healthy (appearing in 94 games, second most on the team) while hitting .314 (11-for-35) over his past nine games, stealing 27 bases and scoring a team-high 48 runs.

Andrew Bailey has been mentioned as a possible closer for teams that don't acquire San Diego's **Heath Bell**, and the Rangers reportedly are on the prowl, though it's questionable whether general manager **Billy Beane** would gift-wrap a two-time All-Star closer to a division rival.

Beane said this week that he won't part with players (including free agents-to-be) on the cheap and isn't eager to dump payroll, adding, "In respect for Bob Melvin, we're not going to strip-mine things for two months for players of no consequence."

Melvin, hired June 9 on an interim basis, said Friday, "I would like to be here long term, and they know that."

Briefly: Hideki Matsui received a plaque in a pregame ceremony acknowledging his 500-homer milestone, including his time in Japan. ... Reliever **Grant Balfour** was questionable after getting plunked in the back before a recent game.

Leading off

1st impression: Could Conor Jackson be a fixture at first base? "He hasn't done anything defensively that suggests he's not an everyday first baseman," manager Bob Melvin said.

Drumbeat: Bob Melvin on life in the long term

John Shea from the Coliseum . . . 6:36pm 7/29/2011

Bob Melvin was asked about Conor Jackson's long-term status as a first baseman, and he said Jackson "hasn't done anything defensively that suggests he's not an every day first baseman."

Of course, Melvin couldn't get into specifics because his future status with the A's hasn't been clarified. He's an interim manager and wants to stick around, but he's on trial just like some players. It could be said for Melvin that he hasn't done anything managerially that suggests he's not the long-term manager.

When asked about his own status, he didn't mince words.

"I would like to be here long term, and they know that," Melvin said.

With Sunday's trade deadline coming, GM Billy Beane apparently has no plans for a fire sale. In fact, he hinted to Susan Slusser the other day he could keep the team intact.

"In respect for Bob Melvin, we're not going to strip-mine things for two months for players of no consequence," said Beane, adding he's not going to part with players cheaply.

How has it been so far for Melvin?

"It's been great," he said. "I've had a good time. The players have made it easy for me. They play hard every day. That's the one thing I ask when I got here. Run balls out and play hard every day. The team on the other side has to know we're coming for 27 outs. It's a cliché, but it's important to me our club plays that way. Sometimes it's difficult for a club in a position we are to be motivated to play hard every day, every out, and they continue to do that regardless."

Beane could still pull off a trade or two if it'll significantly help the team in 2012 and 2013. His outfielders remain in the trade rumors, and Andrew Bailey-to-Texas gains Internet steam, though it's highly questionable that Beane would help a division foe by gift-wrapping a two-time All-Star.

Hideki Matsui is being honored for reaching the 500-homer milestone (including his time in Japan). Grant Balfour might be unavailable after getting plunked on the back in BP yesterday.

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

Gio struggles as defensive lapses undo A's

By Jane Lee / MLB.com | 7/30/2011 3:00 AM ET

OAKLAND -- Josh Willingham's focus clearly remains on the field. The task of monitoring all of the trade rumors about him is left to his wife, Ginger.

Following the outfielder's two-homer, five-RBI showing in a 9-5 A's loss to the Twins on Friday, the couple is likely to awaken to more speculation on Saturday, potentially in the form of continued interest from a Braves team in dire need of an outfielder by Sunday's 1 p.m. PST non-waiver Trade Deadline.

Maybe so, but Willingham can't be bothered by such chatter these days.

"Has it been mentioned?" he questioned, slyly, after the game. "I didn't know."

Blame the attention on the .311 average, five home runs and 14 RBIs he's compiled in 17 games since he was reinstated from the disabled list on July 7 -- numbers obviously attractive to contending teams looking for a difference maker.

Whether those contenders choose to pay what is most likely a high asking price has yet to be seen. But Willingham's plans for Saturday, meanwhile, remain the same.

"I'm going to be here tomorrow, as far as I know. And I'll just worry about tomorrow, that's all I can worry about," he said.

Friday marked Willingham's 10th career two-homer game, and the eighth time -- second of the season -- he's tallied at least five RBIs. He has 15 long balls on the season, most of any A's player. When healthy, he has represented the club's biggest threat -- making his possible departure all the more daunting for an Oakland team that fell 12 games below the .500 mark with its most recent loss.

"He's been a force for us this year," manager Bob Melvin said. "You take away the games he has been out and look at his production on top of that. He's been, as has [Hideki] Matsui for a good portion of [his time] here, the two stabilizing forces in the middle of our lineup. Those are the guys you count on to drive in runs, and when Josh has been healthy, he's driven in a lot of runs. Like I said earlier, you play the hand you have right now, and certainly he's a force in our lineup."

The post-All-Star-break version of the A's has featured mixed results -- the good coming in the form of a sudden offensive outburst, the bad on display via mediocre pitching performances.

The former, luckily, has outweighed the latter. As a result, the A's entered Friday's series opener against the visiting Twins boasting an 8-5 record in that timespan, with Melvin hoping for a combined effort from his ballclub to ensure win No. 9.

But the sloppy effects felt in Thursday's late-inning loss to the Rays, which featured a disastrous bullpen meltdown, carried over into Friday's affair. Inconsistent defensive and pitching performances spoiled Willingham's big night were responsible, in large part, for the loss.

Lefty Gio Gonzalez stood at the forefront of the pitching problems -- with a less-than-stellar outing that led to five runs (four earned), nine hits and three walks in only 5 1/3 innings, despite throwing 112 pitches. Gonzalez was partly responsible for one of the unearned runs, after committing the second of back-to-back errors in the third.

Gonzalez is now 1-3 with a 5.57 ERA over his past four starts, after posting a 3-0 record and 1.29 ERA over his prior four outings.

"The stuff still looks good, you just go through some periods where you don't have your best starts. And I think that's all it is right now," Melvin said.

Gonzalez was mum on the slump, simply stating he needs to "keep moving forward."

The All-Star southpaw, coming off his worst statistical start of the season at Yankee Stadium, proved shaky from the start, allowing three consecutive baserunners to reach before ultimately surrendering a two-run double to Jason Kubel to hand the Twins an early 2-0 lead.

Oakland responded in the bottom half of the frame, getting two runs of their own on Willingham's first home run of the night -- a two-run blast to left field off Minnesota lefty Francisco Liriano that plated Coco Crisp.

But Scott Sizemore's throwing error in the third allowed leadoff hitter Trevor Plouffe to reach base, and Gonzalez's wide throw to second on Joe Mauer's ensuing grounder moved Plouffe to third. Plouffe scored on Michael Cuddyer's double-play groundout to push the Twins ahead, 3-2.

"We had seen [Gonzalez] before, and he's definitely a great pitcher," said Plouffe, who went 2-for-6 with three runs. "We laid off some pitches that he wanted us to chase. If you can lay off those pitches and get into hitters' counts, I think you can be successful, and that's what we did today."

Minnesota scored again in both the fifth and sixth innings, paving the way for Gonzalez's departure. The Twins then unloaded in the eighth against Michael Wuertz, who surrendered four two-out runs -- three of which came on Cuddyer's three-run shot to left-center.

Liriano, meanwhile, went seven innings for the Twins, giving up just two runs on six hits, before reliever Jose Mijares entered in the eighth and surrendered Willingham's second long ball -- this time a three-run homer that brought in Crisp and Matsui, who collected three hits and is batting .462 since the break.

Oakland, which posted eight hits, has tallied at least that many in each of the 14 games since the break. But the pitching staff has posted a 6.72 ERA during that time.

"Our timing just hasn't been as good, as far as the offense and the pitching," Melvin said. "And we didn't play very good defense today, either. We made a couple errors and it got Gio's pitch count up, and there were a lot of things involved with not making the plays. Other than two homers from Josh, not our best day all the way around."

A's GM Beane not looking for a Deadline purge

With payroll not an issue, team content to hang on to players

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The A's enter their weekend series against the Twins essentially out of contention and more than 10 games below the .500 mark. But that is hardly cause for general manager Billy Beane to simply purge his team of several notable players with Sunday's non-waiver Trade Deadline looming.

In fact, Beane wouldn't be surprised if the team makes no moves before that time, set for 1 p.m. PST. That doesn't mean the A's GM, notorious for last-minute deals when given the right offer, isn't involved in discussions with other clubs.

"This is the time of year you have conversations -- whether you plan on doing something or you don't plan on doing something," he said Friday. "Everybody is in the mood to have conversations about trades, but it doesn't necessarily mean you're going to do something. It's just that you want to make sure that you don't miss any opportunities that may be out there because of the time of year."

Beane isn't one to delve into specifics, but that hasn't stopped the usual rumors from circulating about his club. The most recent have involved All-Star closer Andrew Bailey, under team control through 2014, and the division-rival Rangers. But it

would likely take a megadeal, one involving a high-caliber prospect such as shortstop Jurickson Profar, for either team to blink. The odds of that happening are slim, and Bailey could quickly exit the picture should the Rangers bring aboard Padres closer Heath Bell.

Free agents-to be outfielders Josh Willingham, Coco Crisp and David DeJesus were thought to be prime candidates to be dealt, as were several other relievers.



Because the club has no need to ease payroll, the current thinking is that there's no sense moving a player who could potentially be productive through the remaining two months and subsequently ensure the A's compensation draft picks -- a la Willingham, who projects as a Type-A free agent. Moreover, the outfielder's season has already been hampered by a nagging Achilles injury, thus potentially affecting the level of interest from teams -- like the Braves, Pirates and Indians -- that have been linked to him.

Crisp, meanwhile, has reportedly drawn heavy interest from the Reds, and the A's have the outfield depth to cover his absence -- possibly even with Minor League prospect Grant Green, whose shift from shortstop to center field in recent weeks has been viewed as a possible precursor to Crisp's departure.

Manager Bob Melvin admittedly wouldn't mind if the A's stayed course through Sunday, especially in the wake of a post-break surge that had the offense entering Friday with a Major League-leading .317 average since the All-Star break. But, at the same time, Melvin understands the motive should the organization choose to act otherwise.

"I think it would be great," he said, of keeping the roster intact. "We had some guys, their numbers were down in the first half, and they're starting to pick it up in the second half.

"I like the team, right now. But I also understand the fact that, especially in our market with our budget, you're looking to improve -- whether it's short term or long term. I think we're a little more long-term minded where we are. If we were two games out, you'd probably be looking the other way, where you're trying to add something in the short term."

Beane has been just as pleased, though the production hasn't necessarily changed his pre-deadline approach.

"Well, it's at least changed my mood in the last week," he joked. "I'm very pleased with the way the guys have played, particularly how well they've swung the bats. But I also think we have to still be somewhat realistic, as to where we currently stand and what we're up against, which doesn't mean that we have plans to move guys just because we're in third place."

Once the non-waiver Trade Deadline has passed, deals involving players on the 40-man roster cannot be made unless the players already have cleared waivers. In other words, the player must be offered to the other teams in reverse order of the standings, and if he is claimed by one of the teams, he cannot be traded. The club that placed the player on waivers can either withdraw the request and keep the player, or let the player go to the claiming team.

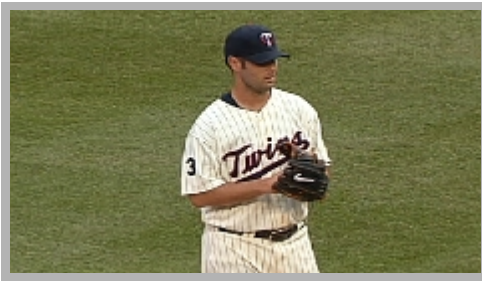
Hurlers enter middle game looking to bounce back

By Laura Myers / MLB.com | 7/30/2011 3:15 AM ET

• [Comments](#)

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KC@MIN: Blackburn hurls seven shutout frames

After struggling through the first half of the season, Oakland's bats have started working for the A's. But the pitching the club relied on hasn't kept up.

The A's starter for Saturday, Guillermo Moscoso, illustrates that trend. In the first half, he was 3-4 with a 2.16 ERA. In his last six starts before he was optioned to Triple-A Sacramento on July 7, he had a 1.75 ERA. Since he was recalled on July 19, though, he is 0-1 with a 10.24 ERA in two starts.

The A's entered Friday's game with a staff ERA of 3.42. But over the last nine games, that mark has been 6.48.

As the A's look to rebound from Friday's 9-5 loss to the Twins in the second of their three-game series on Saturday, they will need Moscoso to get back on track.

"That's always the recipe: You try to get the timing right. I don't think there's a letdown by any stretch by the pitching. The pitching numbers are still good. Just here in the second half, they're a little bit higher," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "We expect our pitching numbers to be consistent. And if we do that and start swinging the bats better, the wins should come more often. That's what we'd like to do."

While the A's look to find a way to put it all together, the Twins have been doing just that. They are 5-1-2 in their last eight series, and started the current series strong on Friday.

But pitcher Nick Blackburn, who starts for the Twins on Saturday, is looking to recover from a rough start on Monday against the Rangers, when he allowed nine runs (six earned) on 11 hits in just 2 2/3 innings.

"I don't think I threw more than two or three strikes below the knees the entire night," Blackburn said. "Being a sinkerball pitcher, that's not a very good way to be successful and get some outs."

Twins: Mauer to catch on Saturday

- Joe Mauer played first base on Friday to stretch his legs after a long plane ride on Thursday night. Saturday, he will be back behind the plate.

"We have a lot of baseball and a lot of the season left, so the more I can get him out from behind the plate and give his legs a break -- to play first base or DH -- it's really good," manager Ron Gardenhire said. "So this series alone, I can catch him in the middle game, and give him a day off and play him at first in the other, too."

A's: Defense haunts team

- The A's added two more errors to their tally on Friday night, resulting in one run being unearned for starter Gio Gonzalez. Since the All-Star break, the A's have committed 13 errors in 14 games. With 85 errors on the season, the A's are tied with Texas for the most flubs in the American League, and the 58 resulting unearned runs are highest in the Major Leagues.

Worth noting

- The Twins have won their last three games against Oakland, and are 11-5 against the A's dating back to Sept. 13, 2009.

Jackson settling in at first for A's

By Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Since Daric Barton was optioned to Triple-A Sacramento, the A's have found a new everyday answer at first base: Conor Jackson.

While much has been made of Jackson's offense since the break -- a .353 average with two home runs, including a grand slam, and 11 RBIs in 13 games entering Friday -- he has quietly impressed with his glove.

"I have no anxiety whatsoever when I see him over at first base," A's third-base coach Mike Gallego said. "I think he's a heck of an athlete, and as far as defensively at first base, every day he's getting better and better."

Jackson has committed just one error in 38 appearances at first this season, including 32 starts, while becoming the club's everyday player at the position.

"He is a versatile guy, but I think the focus for any position player is try to be an everyday player at one position," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "A few of the aspects that kind of get in the way from day to day aren't there for him anymore. He knows he's going to be in there and knows he's going to be at first base."

But it's not just Jackson's recent play that has Melvin and the rest of the A's staff confident in him as a first baseman. Jackson has a track record at the position with Melvin, who said Jackson "has done well for me in the past." The last time Jackson saw regular time at first was when he was with Arizona in 2007, when Melvin was still managing the D-backs. That season Jackson started 107 games at first and had a .988 fielding percentage, a season removed from sporting a .990 fielding percentage in 129 appearances at the position.

While he hasn't played there regularly in four seasons, being in a utility role mostly at the corner outfield spots, the transition back to first has been a smooth one for Jackson, who Gallego said puts in as much work as he needs to and isn't afraid to ask questions.

"Do I think he can be an everyday first baseman? He is, in my mind," Gallego said. "Obviously, the more he plays the more comfortable he gets at that position."

"He hasn't done anything defensively that would suggest he's not an everyday first baseman," Melvin added. "I couldn't tell you next year, the year after what's going to happen. I know he's the first baseman right now, and I know he's pretty happy about running out there every day."

Extra defensive work pays off for Suzuki

OAKLAND -- Kurt Suzuki hasn't had the best season defensively for the A's behind the plate.

But lost in the events of Thursday's 10-8 loss to the Rays -- which saw the A's rejuvenated offense continue to soar and the bullpen have an uncharacteristic meltdown -- was a stellar defensive performance by Suzuki.

The young backstop threw out the first two runners who attempted to steal second -- Desmond Jennings and Ben Zobrist -- with a pair of frozen ropes. Although the Rays successfully stole twice later in the game, one runner just narrowly beat out another sharp throw by Suzuki.

It's no coincidence that Suzuki found more success in throwing out runners. It's something he has been working on recently in the second half, specifically during his off-days, which have been more frequent since Bob Melvin took over as A's manager.

"In your off-days, you usually like to rest a little bit. But he's a pretty energetic kid and wants to get things right," Melvin said. "It's probably been three or four times -- a couple in the second half -- when he comes out and throws because he wants to get things right."

But Suzuki isn't working on his mechanics in his spare time. For Suzuki, it's just about repetitions and being precise with the throws.

"I've been doing it a couple times so far in the second half, just throwing on down to second base and working on footwork, basically just keeping sharp," Suzuki said. "It's tough to really get a lot of work in because, when you're catching every day,

it takes a toll on your body. So you just try to find time on another day where you can go out there and make a few throws and keep yourself sharp."

"Over the course of a season, sometimes things go askew for awhile," Melvin said. "If you're a worker and you're a perfectionist, you want to make sure you take care of those things, and certainly [Thursday] was a good day for him behind the plate."

Worth noting

- Right-handed setup man Grant Balfour was hit in the lower back with a ball during a mid-week batting practice and was unavailable in Thursday's game because of discomfort, but might be available on Friday.
- Melvin was asked on Friday if the A's front office had approached him about signing a long-term deal to remain with the team beyond this season, and the skipper said there have been no discussions as of yet.

"I would like to be here long term and they know that," Melvin said.

- Prior to Friday's game, the A's honored Hideki Matsui for his 500th career home run (total between Japan and the U.S.). He was presented with a trophy, and a video montage of his career was shown on the Coliseum's video board.
- Third baseman Scott Sizemore and relievers Andrew Bailey, Brian Fuentes, Brad Ziegler, Trystan Magnuson and Craig Breslow joined 250 local youth on Friday at Laney College as part of the Major League Baseball Players Trust's City Clinic program.

The children received free hands-on instruction from the players, participated in a question and answer session, and also received shirts, autographs and lunch.

A's fall to Twins, 9-5

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Published: Friday, July 29, 2011 at 3:00 a.m.

OAKLAND — Francisco Liriano rebounded from his worst start of the season to go seven innings, Michael Cuddyer hit his team-leading 16th homer of the season and the Minnesota Twins beat the Oakland Athletics, 9-5, Friday night.

Trevor Plouffe scored the go-ahead run on a double play in the third and added a pair of RBI singles, and three other players had two hits apiece.

The Twins won for the third time in their last four games.

Josh Willingham homered twice but the A's didn't do much else and dropped their second straight.

Plouffe had only two hits but was on base all five times up and scored three runs. He reached by fielder's choice in the first against A's starter Gio Gonzalez, on a throwing error by Oakland third baseman Scott Sizemore in the third, and on another fielder's choice in the sixth.

Sandwiched in between was his run-scoring single that drove in Ben Revere in the fifth which gave the Twins a 4-2 lead. Plouffe also had an RBI single during a four-run eighth.

Michael Cuddyer added a three-run homer in the eighth, as Minnesota beat Oakland for the fourth time in six games this year.

Liriano (7-8) wasn't sharp but did enough to beat the A's for only the second time in nine career starts, finishing with four strikeouts and two walks.

The Minnesota lefty, who was knocked out of his previous start by Detroit after just 2½ innings, pitched in and out of trouble and had runners on first and third with one out in the fourth and sixth. Both times, Liriano got David DeJesus to ground into inning-ending double plays.

Oakland went into the game with the highest team batting average since the All-Star break but had only eight hits against the Twins, three of which didn't leave the infield.

Willingham's home run off Liriano in the first briefly tied the game at 2-2. He added a three-run shot in the eighth against Jose Mijares to make it 9-5.

Hideki Matsui went 3 for 4 for the A's but the rest of the offense did little.

They didn't get much help from their pitching, either.

Gonzalez (9-8) allowed five runs and nine hits over 5½ innings. He threw 112 pitches, but only 62 for strikes. Oakland's All-Star left-hander struck out five but walked three and made a costly throwing error in the third which led to Minnesota's go-ahead run.

Plouffe reached safely when Sizemore's throw pulled first baseman Conor Jackson off the bag. The next batter, Joe Mauer, hit a comebacker to Gonzalez but the A's pitcher threw wildly into center field, allowing Plouffe to move to third.

Cuddyer then grounded into a 4-6-3 double play, Plouffe scoring to give Minnesota a 3-2 lead.

The Twins opened the fifth with three straight singles to make it 4-2. Ben Revere had an infield hit, stole second then scored on Plouffe's single.

Gonzalez continued to struggle in the sixth, allowing a pair of singles before issuing back-to-back walks to Drew Butera and Revere, the second forcing in Delmon Young.

Minnesota broke it open with a four-run eighth when Cuddyer hit his 16th homer of the year.

Jason Kubel's two-run double in the first gave the Twins a 2-0 lead.

NOTES

It's the 10th time in Willingham's career he's hit two home runs.

Liriano is 4-3 since coming off the disabled list June 6.

Matsui was honored by the A's in a pre-game ceremony commemorating his 500th career home run.

Oakland SS Cliff Pennington extended his career-high hitting streak to 13 games.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Red-hot River Cats return home with victory

Sacramento River Cats

The dog days of summer aren't getting to these Cats.

Darren Bush's Sacramento club is hitting its stride at the right time, with eight wins in its last 10 games after Friday night's 6-5 victory over the host Tacoma Rainiers.

Jai Miller and Kevin Kouzmanoff hit back-to-back home runs in the first inning and Matt Carson added a solo blast late as the River Cats won three-of-four games in Tacoma. Miller's blast was his 26th of the season, moving him into sole possession of seventh place on the team's single-season home run leader board.

Sacramento returns to Raley Field on Saturday night to face the Colorado Springs Sky Sox in a four-game series. The homestand opens with a Sutter Health Postgame Fireworks show.

The River Cats improved to 35-16 on the road this season, the best road record in all of Major League-affiliated baseball (Single-A-through-MLB). Sacramento has won eight road series, lost one and split four. Sacramento has also won five of six at home.

Reliever Bruce Billings, making only his second start of the season, allowed one run over 4.0 innings. Neil Wagner pitched 2.0 scoreless innings to earn the victory. Fernando Cabrera earned his third save of the season, allowing one run in the ninth inning.

Anthony Recker reached base all four times for Sacramento, collecting two RBI singles.

RockHounds quiet Hooks

Jordan Mason, Midland Reporter-Telegram

Pitchers may want to choose their next pitch wisely when pitching to Tyler Ladendorf down 2-0 in the count.

The shortstop launched a 2-0 pitch for a home run for the second time in the past four days Friday, this one a solo shot to right that proved to be the game-winner in the Midland RockHounds' 3-2 win against the Corpus Christi Hooks.

"When you're up in the count it's just about being aggressive and kind of making the pitcher pay for working behind," Ladendorf said. "He just kind of left the fastball up, and I got enough of it to get in the bullpen."

Ladendorf had just four home runs on the season entering Wednesday yet has hit half as many in the past three games after belting an Erick Abreu pitch over the short porch in right at Citibank Ballpark during the fourth inning.

"I felt like I got enough of it off the bat," Ladendorf said smiling. "I kept it low to get it through the wind, but here you never know with some of the balls that get held up here."

Midland (16-18) wasted no time getting to Abreu as Matt Sulentic ripped a leadoff double down the right field line on the second Abreu's second pitch of the game.

One batter later, Stephen Parker crushed a 2-0 pitch that careened high off the wall in right center for an RBI triple and an early 1-0 lead.

Michael Spina went down 1-2 next but chopped one up the middle for a RBI single that put his team up 2-0.

But the RockHounds stranded Spina and Wes Timmons in the first then left the bases loaded in the second on a Spina flyout.

The missed opportunities cost the RockHounds in the next inning when the Hooks (16-18) loaded up the bases after a sequence where Jimmy Paredes reached on catcher interference, erasing a play where Wes Timmons gunned T.J. Steele out at the plate.

Instead, Steele crossed the plate on the next at-bat, a fielder's choice by J.D. Martinez that made it 2-1.

The next batter, Kody Hinze, knotted it up at two when he lined an RBI single into left.

Midland, though, responded in the fourth on Ladendorf's solo blast to go up for good in a low-scoring affair.

"It's just nice to know that at this point in the season we don't necessarily have to be perfect," RockHounds manager Steve Scarsone said. "There was a span in the season where if we weren't perfect it seemed like whatever miss, error, a bad pitch or whatever was capitalized on."

The RockHounds' bullpen gave them a larger margin for error by quieting the Hooks bats after the two-run third inning.

Relievers Jonathan Ortiz, Jared Lansford and Andrew Carignan combined to give Midland four innings of one-hit baseball while striking out six Hooks batters.

Scarsone said the solid play from all areas is helping as the team's confidence continues to rise heading into game two of the seven-game homestand today.

"Everyone's kind of picking each other up. It's a good feeling right now," Scarsone said. "We're playing much better baseball."

'HOUND BITES: RockHounds second baseman Wes Timmons had the defensive play of the game in the fourth when he made a diving stop on a sharply hit ball by Emerson Frostad then flipped it out of his glove to Tyler Ladendorf who barehanded the catch and whipped it to first, barely missing the double play. ... Timmons continued a six-game hitting streak with a single in the first as well. ... Michael Spina extended his on-base streak to 19 games with his RBI single in the first.

TODAY'S PROBABLES: Gary Daley (4-4, 4.84) is expected to get the nod today for the RockHounds while lefty Dallas Keuchel (9-6, 3.12) is expected to start for the Hooks.

Texas League: Marti's mysterious exit leaves RockHounds scratching their heads

BY ADAM ZUVANICH, Odessa American

MIDLAND Yadel Marti defected from Cuba nearly three years ago to pursue a Major League Baseball career.

Now he's defected from the Midland RockHounds, and perhaps has given up his professional career altogether.

Marti, a right-handed pitcher who joined the Oakland Athletics' Double-A affiliate about two weeks ago, won both of his starts with ease. He left the team after his last outing July 22, when he pitched seven shutout innings on his 32nd birthday, and hasn't returned.

"No communication with him at all," RockHounds manager Steve Scarsone said Friday before his team opened an eight-game home stand at Citibank Ballpark. "He packed his bag and left."

Bob Rose, a spokesman for the A's, said in an email Friday that Marti "voluntary retired." He also said Marti's future with the organization is uncertain.

Marti was signed by the Athletics as a free agent Aug. 6, 2010, after he pitched for Veracruz of the Mexican League.

Grant Green, a shortstop and outfielder for the RockHounds, said Marti had expressed to some of his Midland teammates that he wasn't happy with the state of his career. He began the 2011 season at Triple-A Sacramento and went 5-1 with a 4.92 ERA in 14 starts, then was demoted to Single-A Stockton for one game before getting sent to Midland.

"They were saying that he talked to a couple people and said that he's 32 years old ... and just felt that he needed to do something else," Green said.

The RockHounds' rotation included six starting pitchers with Marti, so Scarsone said his abrupt departure saved the team from having to make a roster move it was planning to make before Marti's next start. But the Midland manager also said a staff that has struggled this season will miss the savvy right-hander with a sharp breaking ball and deceptive changeup.

Marti pitched 12 2/3 scoreless innings at the inaugural World Baseball Classic in 2006, making the all-tournament team while helping Cuba finish second. He was just as effective during his short stint with the RockHounds.

Marti allowed only one run and seven hits in two starts against the San Antonio Missions, striking out seven and walking two in 12 combined innings. He left Midland with a 2-0 record and 0.75 ERA.

"He's a good pitcher," said RockHounds hurler Gary Daley, who is expected to start today's game against Corpus Christi. "He knows how to pitch. He knows how to work hitters and do different things with them. He wasn't going to overpower guys, but he definitely knew what he was doing on the mound when he was out there."

Efforts to reach Marti through both the RockHounds and Athletics media relations departments were not successful.

Despite his strong performance for Midland, and successful track record, Scarsone said he didn't know where Marti stood within the A's organization or how close he might have been to earning a spot with the parent club.

"He wasn't here long enough for me to even get an idea of what kind of guy he was," Scarsone said, "let alone what kind of prospect he was."

Rawhide Snap Skid; Hand Ports 8-4 Loss

Stockton Ports

VISALIA, Calif. - For the first time in a week, the Visalia Rawhide found their way back into the win column on Friday night. The Rawhide had seven of their 10 hits go for extra bases as they hit their way past the Stockton Ports by a final of 8-4. With the win, the Rawhide snap Stockton's three-game winning streak.

The two teams exchanged blows early on, as the Ports jumped out to a 2-0 lead in the top of the 2nd only to have the Rawhide answer right back with a pair of runs in the bottom half of the inning.

Stockton took the lead back in the top of the 3rd. Myrio Richard started the inning with a double to left-center and scored two batters later on a sac-fly from Petey Paramore to give the Ports a 3-2 advantage.

The 3rd inning run would be the final one allowed by Rawhide starter David Holmberg (2-2), who went on to earn the win after going five innings, allowing three runs on five hits while striking out six.

The Rawhide, after falling behind in the top of the 3rd, took the lead back for good in the bottom half of the frame. Chris Owings started the inning with a double to right. After Ports starter Rob Gilliam (10-5) retired the next two batters, Alfredo Marte tied the game with a triple to right-center field. After Gilliam walked Jon Mark Owings, Rossmel Perez doubled to left-center to score both Marte and Owings and give Visalia a 5-3 advantage.

Visalia added to their lead in the 5th. With one on and two out, Jon Mark Owings hit a double to left to score Bobby Borchering and make it a 6-3 lead.

Gilliam would be lifted in the 5th and suffer the loss on the night. Stockton's starter went 4.2 innings and allowed six runs on eight hits while walking four and striking out three. Seven of the eight hits allowed by Gilliam went for extra bases.

In the 6th, the Rawhide turned it over to their bullpen as Kevin Munson took over. With a runner at second and two out, Munson yielded an RBI double to Conner Crumbliss to cut the Ports deficit to 6-4.

Munson would come out to work the 7th and, after walking back-to-back hitters to open the inning, struck out the next three hitters to escape the frame unscathed. Munson went two innings and allowed just the one run on one hit.

After Munson walked back-to-back hitters to open the 7th, he and Taylor Sinclair (SV, 3) combined to retire the next nine in a row to end the ballgame. Sinclair pitched two perfect innings to notch his third save of the season.

Omar Duran came on in relief of Gilliam and, in just his second Cal-League outing, retired all seven batters he faced for 2.1 perfect innings of relief.

The Rawhide added a pair of insurance runs in the 8th off Connor Hoehn, who came on to start the inning. With two on and nobody out, Brent Greer laced a single to left to extend the Rawhide lead to 8-4.

The Ports will look to take three of four from the Rawhide as the teams will play the series finale on Saturday night at Recreation Park. Left-hander Jake Brown (3-4, 6.06 ERA) will toe the rubber for Stockton, opposed by Visalia right-hander Trevor Bauer (0-0, 0.00 ERA), who will be making his professional debut after being drafted third overall in this season's June draft out of UCLA. First pitch is set for 7 p.m. PDT.

Bees Snap Skid In 2-0 Win

By Jon Versteeg, Burlington Bees

BURLINGTON, IA - The Burlington Bees (10-23) scored two runs in the third inning on a single by DH Josh Whitaker (1-2) and four pitchers combined for a five-hit shutout in a 2-0 win over the Beloit Snappers (16-17) before 1,709 fans at Community Field on Friday night. The victory retires the nine-game losing streak for Burlington.

With the bases loaded and two outs in the third inning, Whitaker hit a two-run single to score C John Nester (0-1) and 3B Wade Kirkland (2-3) for a 2-0 lead. Nester worked a one-out walk and went to second base when Kirkland singled. A groundout by CF Tyreece House (1-4) moved both runners over to scoring position. 2B Ryan Pineda (0-3) walked to load the bases before Whitaker stepped up to the plate.

RHP Josh Bowman (6-4) pitched six innings and allowed just four hits. RHP Sean Murphy (1.2 IP) and RHP Zack Thornton (1/3 IP) combined to work the seventh and eighth innings. RHP Pedro Vidal secured his first save of the season by working a scoreless ninth inning.

The Bees take to the road to face the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers in the first of a three-game series Saturday night at 6:35 p.m. RHP Jose Macias (2-3, 6.23) gets the start for Burlington against RHP Matt Miller (4-4, 4.16) for Wisconsin. Pre-game coverage begins at 6:15 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at www.gobees.com

Vermont Falls 4-1 At Williamsport Friday

By Paul Stanfield / Vermont Lake Monsters

WILLIAMSPORT, PA --- The Williamsport Crosscutters scored single runs in four of the first five innings in a 4-1 New York-Penn League victory over the Vermont Lake Monsters at Bowman Field on Friday night.

Kelly Dugan was 2-for-2 with an RBI single in the first inning and a sacrifice fly in the fourth for the Crosscutters, who also got an RBI groundout from Taylor Black in the second and a Maikel Franco RBI single in the 3rd.

Vermont scored its only run of the game in the third as Sean Jamieson singled with two outs, stole second and scored on a Chih-Fang Pan RBI single to center. Playing in his first game since July 14th, Pan went 3-for-4 to raise his batting average to .321 for the season.

Lake Monster starter J.C. Menna (2-3) allowed four runs (three earned) on four hits over 4 1/3 innings, while also walking five and striking out just one. Pan had three of the six hits for the Lake Monsters, who have now gone 12 straight games without more than nine hits and have scored just one run three times in last five games.

Williamsport starter Adam Morgan (1-2) gave up one run on four hits over six innings for his first win. Reliever Bryan Morgado gave up a leadoff infield single to Jordan Tripp to start the seventh, but then struckout six straight Vermont batters and seven total in three scoreless innings for first save.

Vermont (20-19) returns home to historic Centennial Field for a seven-game homestand beginning with a single-game against the Brooklyn Cyclones on Saturday and a post-game fireworks show sponsored by Subway Restaurants following the 6:05 pm game.