

A's News Clips, Friday, August 5, 2011

Weeks brothers make grandfather proud

By MARK EMMONS / San Jose Mercury News

During baseball season, 83-year-old Victor Weeks usually can be found sitting in front of the television at his Orlando, Fla., home.

He has been blind nearly four decades, but Victor never misses a game involving either the Oakland Athletics or the Milwaukee Brewers. He has grandsons on both teams - Jemile, a rookie with the Athletics, and Rickie with the Brewers.

"Our grandfather," Jemile said, "is definitely a baseball man."

And the grandsons say it was Victor's influence that helped get them to the big leagues.

In fact the Weeks family embodies the arc of baseball's integration. Victor played in the Negro Leagues just as they were fading away in the late 1940s. A knee injury ended his own major league dreams at age 19.

"I grew up reading books about the Negro Leagues and listening to my grandfather's stories," Rickie said before a recent game against the Giants. "When I think about myself and my brother, I realize we're getting the chance he never did."

Rickie, 28, currently on the disabled list, already is an All-Star second baseman. Jemile, 24, has the look of one in the making.

"My grandsons have the greatest opportunity in the world," Victor said recently by phone, "and they've taken full advantage of it."

The country was a much different place when Victor was an outfielder for the Newark Eagles. He joined the team just when players such as Larry Doby, Don Newcombe and Monte Irvin were leaving for major league baseball, following in the path blazed by Jackie Robinson.

"It was a fun time, but you couldn't make a living at it," Victor said. "We were paid something like \$10 or \$15 a game. Everybody had to work outside jobs, so we couldn't put full attention into baseball."

Integration sounded the death knell for the Negro Leagues, and Victor was hoping for his own chance to make the jump to a major league organization. The knee injury cost him tryouts with the Cardinals and Braves, and "that was it for me with baseball."

The family carried on the tradition. Rickie Sr., one of three children, was a New Jersey All-State second baseman who broke many of Irvin's high school records before playing college ball at Seton Hall and Stetson University.

He passed the game on to his two sons, Rickie and Jemile. (Daughter Kaisha took after her mother and was a collegiate sprinter.)

Rickie, the second-overall pick of the 2003 draft, made his major league debut just a month after he signed. Coming off a 29-homer, 83-RBI season, he signed a \$38.5-million contract extension in February. This season, Rickie has 19 home runs and made his first All-Star Game appearance last month.

It's a measure of how seriously Rickie takes the big brother role that he wanted Jemile to share in the moment. So when Rickie competed in the Home Run Derby, he finagled a way to get Jemile on the field.

"My brother wanted me out there and be part of that experience," Jemile said. "With him already up here, he's always been giving me up-close insight, so I could see how he played the game."

The 12th pick of the 2008 draft out of the University of Miami, Jemile made steady progress through the A's system before arriving with a bang in Oakland. Since his June 7 debut, he has entrenched himself as the leadoff hitter, batting .286 with 19 RBIs, 23 runs and 11 stolen bases.

He was so good, so fast, that the A's traded longtime fan-favorite Mark Ellis on June 30 to make room in the everyday lineup for Weeks.

Although Jemile (5-foot-9, 160 pounds) is much more slightly built than Rickie (5-10, 215), the two share a position, a hairstyle (dreadlocks), a demeanor (unfailingly polite) and brotherly love.

Rickie said he always knew Jemile would shine once he got his chance in Oakland. Jemile said he has simply tried to follow Rickie's lead.

"My attitude from Day One has been: 'How do I help this team win?'" Jemile said. "I didn't want to have a passive attitude and just try to fit in. But that's really the way my brother and I have approached baseball as we've grown up."

Through it all, one of their biggest fans has been a man who has never seen them play.

Victor was getting ready for work as a factory electrician one morning in the early 1970s when he bent down and had the sensation of being hit in the back of the head with a baseball bat.

"It was like a tornado," he said. "It came up quick and then was gone, just like that."

It was glaucoma. By age 43, Victor was blind. Yet as he tells his story, there isn't the slightest hint of bitterness. It could have been worse, he said. You learn to make do.

His blindness never stopped him from attending his young grandsons' baseball games. Sitting in the bleachers, Victor developed an uncanny knack for "seeing" the game.

"My dad could just hear everything, and he paid attention," said Rickie Sr., who runs a youth baseball program in Orlando. "I always thought it was funny that people in the stands would ask what was going on, and a blind guy would tell them what the count was."

What Victor tells his grandsons every time they talk is some simple advice: Take care of your bodies.

"Things can happen, and they happened to me," he said. "There was a point in time when maybe I could have made it, but it just wasn't for me. But I thank God that I'm able to see their greatness every day."

A's Kurt Suzuki mired in season-long hitting slump

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Seattle --

Kurt Suzuki got a call of encouragement from former teammate Mark Ellis the other day.

"Everyone else is raking," the Rockies' second baseman told Suzuki. "You need to start raking, too."

As a team, the A's are batting a league-best .304 since the All-Star break, but Suzuki, who was Oakland's best all-around player most of the past three seasons, has yet to get going. Nearly everyone else has picked up the pace, but as soon as Suzuki shows signs of getting out of his season-long funk, he has another poor game or two. He can't quite go on a real tear, and he is batting .227. That's the second lowest among A's regulars, besting only David DeJesus' .225 mark.

Suzuki has tried changing things. Near the middle of the season, he adopted a more open batting stance, but now he's back to his usual more-lined-up stance. He's compared loads of video of this season's at-bats with other seasons' and nothing jumps out.

"I really don't know what I'm doing differently from two years ago," he said. "My mechanics are OK; I take good batting practices."

Suzuki doesn't believe he's being pitched differently than before. Physically, he feels terrific.

"It's definitely frustrating," he said.

Manager Bob Melvin has seen only two months of Suzuki's struggles, but he knows what kind of player his catcher has been over the years, and he knows how upsetting this extended downturn is for a big-leaguer accustomed to better results.

"He takes it pretty hard," Melvin said. "It weighs on him. ... He is a guy who has a history of being an offensive player as well as a defensive player, and he's having a hard time with it."

Melvin likes that fact - he said some players are hard on themselves when they struggle, and some are more accepting that they're having an off year. Melvin wants the guys who aren't satisfied with subpar results.

That, however, might be part of the problem. Suzuki is the first player to the ballpark, as he's always been, and he prepares like a maniac. Maybe he's trying too hard.

"He is trying to go 5-for-4 instead of progressively picking it up," Melvin said.

Of course, one of the players Melvin uses as a model for Suzuki practically is going 5-for-4 recently. Melvin has mentioned Hideki Matsui as a potential inspiration, the designated hitter having lifted his average a sensational 56 points in 18 games after the break.

"It's been so fun to watch what he's doing," Suzuki said of Matsui. "He was obviously struggling the first half, but you'd never know it from his demeanor - no panic. He's been so successful, and it was like, 'OK, don't worry. It will come.' And it did."

Suzuki's first responsibility, of course, is handling the A's pitchers and calling games. Considering how well the Oakland staff has done most of the year - and nearly every season with Suzuki - that makes him valuable every day.

He did struggle much of the way with his throws on stolen-base attempts - opponents have been successful more than 80 percent of the time - but Suzuki works diligently with Melvin and bench coach Joel Skinner. Lately, his release has been quicker, his throws stronger and more accurate.

Another consideration, though Suzuki won't use it for an excuse: Several of the A's pitchers are not as good at holding runners or as quick with their deliveries at times as they might be.

Many scouts believe that Suzuki has been worn down by starting the most games at catcher in the majors since 2008, a total of 476, an issue that began to be raised last August, when Suzuki hit .185.

"He does not appear to be as strong as he was," one scout said this week.

This year, since May 28, Suzuki is batting .198, but he doesn't believe the high number of games behind the plate has taken a toll, because he feels great.

"If you look at the back of most players' baseball cards, everyone has a couple of years where you go, 'What happened there?' " Suzuki said. "I'm not the only one. That doesn't make it any easier, but to me, the main thing is staying on the field and trying to contribute something to help the team every day. If I can do more than that, great."

Leading off

Tough out: Ichiro Suzuki's four singles against the A's this week gave him 274 career hits against Oakland, second most by an opponent since the team moved west for the 1968 season. He trails only Rod Carew (282).

Kurt Suzuki

Not keeping up

Kurt Suzuki's stats since the All-Star break:

At-bats	51
Runs	8
Hits	12
Doubles	7
Home runs	2
RBI's	7
Strikeouts	10
Walks	2
Batting average	.235
On-base percentage	.273

Career stats

Year	BA	HR	RBI
2007	.249	7	39
2008	.279	7	42
2009	.274	15	88
2010	.242	13	71
2011	.227	9	29

[Inbox: Will the A's re-up the Hammer?](#)

[A's beat reporter Jane Lee answers fans' questions](#)

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

Do the A's plan on re-signing Josh Willingham? He's been the best home run hitter for them in a while and a fan favorite.

-- Alex P., Oakland

I wouldn't be surprised if general manager Billy Beane waits until season's end to make a decision on this one, but I'm assuming he'd very seriously consider the option. And Willingham, I know, would definitely be open to staying in Oakland, considering the potential he sees in the team. The A's would be smart to keep a home run hitter around, especially since they're hard-pressed to find one each winter and can't necessarily guarantee quick success with power prospects Chris Carter and Brandon Allen.

Does manager Bob Melvin plan on doing any extra defensive work with his team after that dreadful play in Seattle on Tuesday? What were Eric Sogard and Scott Sizemore thinking? And where was Jemile Weeks? Who's

really to blame? Just awful to watch as an A's fan.

-- Bryan S., San Jose, Calif.

The play to which you're referring, when Brendan Ryan made it to third base on an infield single off Sogard's glove after no one was covering second or third base, was as bad as it gets, no doubt. But, as Melvin explained, blame can't really be placed on one person. Both Sogard and Sizemore broke toward second to attempt to cover the bag -- the result of two players deciding to do the same thing at the same time -- and, as a result, no one was at third when Ryan arrived at second and continued. Weeks, by the way, was doing exactly what his position calls for in that situation -- he was backing up first base.

And while no one was making any excuses after the meltdown, it's worth noting that Sizemore -- a natural second baseman, like Sogard -- is still fairly unfamiliar with the left side of the infield. In a perfect world, Sizemore should be covering second, with Sogard manning third.

What do you think the next step is for Kevin Kouzmanoff? He has now fallen all the way to Triple-A and his future with the A's doesn't look good.

-- Lucas L., Alameda, Calif.

I can't prophesize his next step, but it's safe to say it won't be with the A's, who seem to have taken a liking to Sizemore. Kouzmanoff is actually doing quite well with Triple-A Sacramento, with a .300 average and 13 homers. He could potentially be packaged in a trade with a club looking for infield depth or, in a more probable scenario, his contract will be non-tendered at season's end and he'll enter free agency.

What's going on with Trevor Cahill and Gio Gonzalez? They were lights out at the start of the season, and now you never know what to expect out of them. Are they working on anything mechanically?

-- Ian T., Stockton, Calif.

It's nothing that can be fixed with a mechanical switch. Both have watched video and can't really pinpoint the root of their struggles, but pitching coach Ron Romanick believes it goes back to simplifying things, that Cahill and Gonzalez are trying to overthink, rather than relying on the stuff that's worked for them all year. He thinks they're doing this far too much when they have runners on base, and that's why things seem to be spiraling out of control. It's also that time of year when young pitchers start experiencing the effects of a long season, and Cahill and Gonzalez both entered the day ranked in the top 25 in innings among Major League pitchers. So Romanick says Cahill (147 1/3 innings) and Gonzalez (136 1/3) will be monitored rather closely, as he does with all his pitchers.

When are we going to see Tyson Ross again?

-- Sean W., Tracy, Calif.

Ross is scheduled to pitch for Triple-A Sacramento this week but isn't expected back in Oakland any time soon. That could obviously change, should the A's be in need of another starter. But for the time being, they're happy with Guillermo Moscoso and want to give Ross plenty of time to regain some consistency against hitters after missing time because of an oblique strain, then shoulder soreness. Ross could end up being a September addition when rosters expand, and he is still also considered a bullpen option.

Get free music downloads, win an Android

Loopt 'Music Night' events at 15 ballparks this month and next

By Mark Newman / MLB.com

Celebrating today's technology and the endless romance between baseball and music, Major League Baseball Advanced Media, Loopt and Universal Music Group are teaming up with MLB clubs to deliver a succession of Loopt "Music Night" events at 15 stadiums through the remainder of the season.

Fans attending the **select games** will be eligible to receive prize offerings highlighted by a combined 100,000 Android smartphones and 2.5 million prepaid music downloads.

The first Loopt Music Night was held Wednesday night at Kauffman Stadium in Kansas City, where fans attending the Orioles-Royals game received a prize card containing a unique code redeemable for five free song downloads of their choice from the entire Universal Music Group catalog, including new releases. The codes can be redeemed at www.loopt.com/musicnight.

Other Loopt Music Night events are scheduled to be hosted by the Braves, Red Sox, Cubs, Reds, Tigers, Marlins, Angels, Brewers, A's, Pirates, Cardinals, Padres, Rays and Rangers. In addition to the prize cards for free downloads, select clubs --

the A's, Angels, Pirates, Tigers, Cardinals, Red Sox and Padres -- on Loopt Music Nights will also be giving out the opportunity for fans 18 and older to receive a free Android smartphone. A two-year activation plan plus data feature is required for anyone wanting to redeem the Android prize.

The free Android smartphone codes can be redeemed at www.loopt.com/freeoffers.

"The Loopt mobile app is all about giving you the latest local deals and insider tips," said Sam Altman, CEO and co-founder of Loopt. "We want to make it so even more people can take advantage of what Loopt has to offer -- whether it's meeting up with a nearby friend or getting an alert for a deal around the corner."

Because a mass of new Android customers is about to be delivered via the campaign, now is a good time to make sure you know all about the best-selling **MLB.com At Bat 11** app. If you score one of those Androids, make sure you are signed up for **MLB.TV** so you can use it to watch live Major League games over the device. Also use At Bat with the Android to check in from that same ballpark going forward.

In addition to the prize code cards, another way music and customer value is being delivered the rest of this season is via some great live postgame concerts. Some of those associated with these dates include Ludacris after Mariners at Angels on Aug. 6, R.K.M. + Ken-Y after Giants at Marlins on Aug. 13, and Styx after Mets at Braves on Sept. 17.

With the notable exception of 1979's Disco Demolition Night at Comiskey Park in Chicago, music and MLB always have been a perfect match: two means of entertainment that stimulate the senses.

It's the American and Canadian national anthems; the batters' walk-up music and the closers' entrance music; The Beatles' landmark concert at Shea; a rich history of organ music and ballpark deejays; guest singers at Wrigley Field for the seventh-inning stretch; Sheryl Crow under the Arch for the 2009 All-Star Charity Concert; Jay-Z and Alicia Keys performing their smash hit "Empire State of Mind" during the 2009 World Series; and Tony Bennett and a World Series crowd crooning "I Left My Heart" last fall.

It is an endless and harmonious tune, and now comes an emphatic demonstration of our love for both, with Loopt Music Night through Sept. 28. **Click here** for complete details, scheduling and ticketing information.

The Big Lew Wolff Interview, Part 5

Marine Layer, newballpark.org

LW: How about redevelopment? Don't you want to talk about that?

ML: I'm getting right to that. Actually let's talk about T-rights for one more question. If there was a dollar value attached to the T-rights here, is that something you'd consider? Is there a threshold or limit for that?

What do you mean, pay for this (Santa Clara County)? We should be paid for what we or the Haas family gave up?

ML: Well, I suppose this is an academic thing.

We'll leave that up to the commissioner.

ML: Okay. Fair enough. On to San Jose and redevelopment. There are two properties remaining that have to be acquired. We last heard that they were supposed to be wrapped in June but we haven't heard anything from the City about that. I'm guessing that they haven't done it because of all the shakeup with the budget and the ending of redevelopment. Now that they've filed a lawsuit there's all sorts of stuff up in the air.

San Jose went and acquired half the property or more, which is good for us because they're committed. I spent most of my adult life in redevelopment. We're not looking for redevelopment to hand us a check or a bond issue or anything. That's true in Oakland too. The value of the land that we think it is, if San Jose needed that money to be paid to be the last properties (we'll do it). We thought at first that we'd end up leasing land. Owning the land would be better for us. Whether it's redevelopment, the city, a special district, whatever the hell they come up with, it makes no difference to us because we're not looking for anything different than we would be normally. So in a funny way it's a little better for us.

ML: Really?

Well, look. If we're fortunate enough that they announce that we can go you have to close your eyes and say, "What will that mean?" The whole community is gonna be excited about that. The thing that bothers me is that -- even in this economy -- we need a ballpark whether the economy is good or bad. Right?

ML: Yeah.

So why should we be holding up jobs and construction and so on over an argument that I think is -

ML: Petty?

Petty. As a percentage of what we're doing, the cost of the land, I don't know what it's going to be, if you're going to spend \$400-450 million the land is not going to be a situation where it costs X percent and it's too much so we're not going to build a new ballpark.

I hate to see what's happening to redevelopment, because I think it's one of the few aspects of government that has a cost-benefit to it. I'm still surprised – and I like Governor Brown – I didn't get why he did that. The answer is that I'm sorry about what's happening to all of these cities in California. We have a real shovel-ready project if nobody interferes with it. It's not a concern. Your blog talks about it all the time which I think is good but it really isn't a problem for us. We have one problem, and that's the decision. Is that clear?

ML: Yes, and it's somewhat reassuring in light of what we've learned in the past 6-7 months.

I didn't say it was good for all cities.

ML: I'm not going to lie. There are a lot of people on the blog who read and comment who look at this and say, "That'll be one more thing that eventually eliminates Oakland or some other city because they won't have the resources to make it happen."

By the way, they're right. Not San Jose though – they've spent the resources. Their EIR is done. We may have a lawsuit from some phony – you know all that stuff. Starting now, somewhere else? Forget it, it's not gonna happen. Anywhere.

ML: Did you even conceive that something like this would enter the equation when you started?

No, not at all.

ML: Going back to the first question, so much has changed in six years.

A lot has changed and sometimes things that look negative may be positive for certain people, and vice-versa.

ML: The last questions I have are more fun stuff. I was considering bringing a book that I bought last year when I visited Target Field.

The Target Field book?

ML: The big book, the commemorative book.

I have it.

ML: It's beautiful, covers the entire history of how they got to that point. Other sites that were considered. Politics, and then finally the actual construction. Have you been to Target Field and maybe the Marlins ballpark?

I have been to Target Field but not the Marlins ballpark.

ML: What do you take away from Target Field?

Are you talking about the history of it?

ML: No, just the ballpark.

I think it looks terrific. It's actually built on a smaller site than we have. It's cantilevered out over -

ML: Over streets and railroads.

I don't think we can afford to build that structure in California privately. They've had some help there (in Minnesota). What we're planning to do is this. When you air-condition space like special restaurants and things. Because of San Jose and the

economy and so on. We're gonna have all of the great concessions but we're not gonna have a stadium club because we want the downtown to provide that. The less air-conditioned space you have the more you can put into the field. Target Field is great. Give it to me tomorrow and I'll take it in a second.

But we will be the closest to the field of any ballpark ever built in baseball, at least in my lifetime. And it'll be fun. We just want to have fun. We want the fan to walk in and have fun. We don't need to have a monument or tribute like Yankee Stadium – it's incredible there, the materials and everything. It's a \$1.5-2 billion or whatever it costs. What we want is for somebody to go and say, "Gee, that was really a fun experience. I felt like I was really close to the player." Each of our places in the ballpark – and my son can go over this with you – are neighborhoods. So it might be better to be in LF standing up than it would be to be behind home plate.

The average (attendance related to) capacity last year based on our study: 51%. So everybody's saying we're making this thing too small. Number one – we're in a two-team market even though the other team doesn't agree. [laughs] Number two – we think less is more. We want players to look up and have the stands filled. As much as they shouldn't care whether it's one person or 50,000, they do care.

ML: They absolutely care.

And so does the manager and so does the staff and the ticketing group. We have 130 people we employ and deserve to have a proper operating environment.

ML: Okay. Going to the Cisco Field renderings that were released last year by Baseball San Jose. A bunch of us, because we're stadium geeks, started to dissect the pictures to figure out what's in there, what's going on. We were able to divine a few things and maybe some of my guesses were wrong. The first thing that stuck out from a pure baseball standpoint – because that's what we watch, the action on the field – in RF you have that big wall of something facing Autumn Street. The dimensions of the field -

I'm gonna defer to my son Keith, who lives up here in the Bay Area. I'm gonna have him call you or you can call him, either way. He can sit down and explain this to you. It can be a separate blog time. I like it, but I just don't have the info.

ML: Is Keith dealing with most of this technical stuff now, nose to the grindstone?

He's my son so I don't want to overdo it. He's a little less emotional than I am. Probably smarter, Harvard MBA and all that. He's a real estate developer and a good athlete. Billy wants to see more of Keith but Keith's nose to the grindstone, trying to keep everything going here. On both soccer and baseball plus he has other activities outside of that. You'd get a kick out of talking to him.

ML: I'd love to do that, whether that's soon or after the decision is made.

The other thing is the architect, who used to be with HOK then left – if the two of them were here you'd get a kick out of talking to them. They're great people. I'll work on that.

ML: That's the stuff that we (on the blog) really want to talk about. You mentioned Billy Beane just now. Do Billy and Keith have an ongoing dialogue over how the ballpark should be developed?

What Billy wants is to do is be able to walk into an office where he doesn't trip over boxes and stuff. The answer is that we have Steve Vucinich [*Ed.: VOOSE! A's equipment manager*]. He has a continuing list of all things the things he'd like to see in the ballpark. He's been keeping the list for so long that it's been getting yellow, he teases me. We will use all of our people – we have already but not to the degree when we start actually determining storage space, down to the details. We have great resources for this. Better than just consultants.

ML: That reminds me of when what is now Chase Field was being planned, they left a lot of the conceptual stuff to Buck Showalter, a manager.

A manager would like to have more space between the foul line and the stands. We want to have one inch. So we'll have that kind of battle going.

ML: I like that kind of battle. It's a good thing to sink your teeth into. One more question. During the Fremont unveiling, you referenced ancillary development items such as the baseball village and museum. What happened to the museum concept?

We probably don't have room for it there. My partners, the Fishers, they contributed a wing to an art museum in San Francisco. They talk about a museum all the time. They look at the art of baseball. Or maybe they're talking about pure art.

They've also been down here and have had a conversation with the local museum. *[Ed. - As we are talking I look out the window at the San Jose Museum of Art, a short throw from where I sit.]* They have a great art collection, it's not necessarily sports-related or sports memorabilia. We haven't thought about it, but we're open to those kind of fun things. Right now we don't know if we can incorporate too much of that into the ballpark because of the size. So it isn't perfect. If John Fisher were here he'd be talking about bringing great contemporary art to a baseball park and I'd be talking about bringing somebody's uniform.

ML: You know what? I went to Cowboys Stadium last year and there were several contemporary art installations throughout. And it's really beautiful and striking.

John will be a big influence on this facility.

ML: That's great. One last thing. When you look at the renderings, I've had a few people tell me it looks like a modernized mirror image of Fenway Park.

You know, I don't see it that way but I'm not sure. It is small and compact. Again, I'd like to defer that to the meeting with Keith and so forth. I mean, if we had Fenway Park right now I'd be very happy. [laughs]

ML: [laughs] For years, Fenway had 33,000 seats and no one complained.

You gotta always remember we're in a two-team market. While there's plenty of baseball, there's plenty of other attractions in California, in fact there are more attractions than in Boston for the consumer. We gotta be careful about that.

Is that helpful? I'm pleased you were willing to do this. Believe me.

ML: I'm pleased that you had time to sit down and discuss this.

I guess the point is that I keep getting beaten up, and if people feel that way fine. I feel there are areas where we've really been diligent that people don't want to think about.

ML: This was really great. It'll be really productive when it gets posted.

[Ed. - I had originally meant to follow up the museum question with one about honoring A's history but was thrown off by Lew Wolff's response that I forgot it. We were also heading into a hard stop. I'll be sure to broach that in the discussion with Keith Wolff.]

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Mitchell soaks in fun with game-deciding blast

By Mike Morris / Sacramento River Cats

Midwest rain slowed down the game but not Jermaine Mitchell and the River Cats on Thursday night as Sacramento topped Omaha, 4-3.

The River Cats went into a 33-minute delay down 3-1 in the top of the fifth inning with men on first and third. Two pitches after the delay, Jermaine Mitchell gave Sacramento a one-run lead with a three-run blast.

It was Sacramento's first lead since putting one run on the board in the top of the first. Mitchell led off the game with a triple that was followed by a Josh Donaldson RBI single.

The pitching matchup included two young right-handers who have seen time in the Major Leagues. Tyson Ross started his fourth game this season for the River Cats, but was unable to reach the fifth inning, being taken out after the rain delay. He had his most productive outing of the season despite the break in the action. Ross allowed four hits and three runs (two earned).

Sacramento's relief pitching came up clutch, as they have consistently this season, allowing three hits and no runs in the 5.0 innings that followed the rain delay. Joey Devine, who recently got back from Oakland, allowed just one hit and no runs, keeping his ERA at 0.00. Justin Souza, a Galt native, allowed two hits in 2.0 innings while striking out one. Jerry Blevins allowed no hits striking out two in the eighth and Neil Wagner closed the game for his second save.

At multiple points in the game, cheers were heard from the damp Omaha stands. Those cheers were for River Cats shortstop Dusty Coleman, who played in his fourth game for Sacramento this season. Coleman had family make the trip from Sioux Falls, and their travels were validated by Coleman's performance as he went 2-for-4 with a double and a run.

Outfielders Mitchell and Michael Taylor stood out in the box score as well. Mitchell went 3-for-4 on the night with two runs and three RBI, while Taylor had two of Sacramento's eight hits.

The River Cats look to take the lead in the series Friday night as right-hander Graham Godfrey (10-2, 2.64) faces left-hander Mike Montgomery (4-6, 5.37).

'Hounds score early, hold on to beat Frisco

Oscar LeRoy, Midland Reporter-Telegram

A sign of Gary Daley's growth as a pitcher came in the fourth inning when Frisco's Tommy Mendonca got a leadoff double.

Earlier in the season, that might have meant trouble for the 25-year-old Midland right-hander, but not on this night.

Daley made the right pitches and left Mendonca stranded at third base. As it turned out, that was a recurring theme for the RoughRiders as they left 11 runner stranded and Daley pitched seven solid innings in a 3-1 victory for the Midland RockHounds in front of 4,175 fans at Citibank Ballpark on Thursday night.

"I felt pretty good," said Daley, who improved to 5-4 on the season. "I threw the ball well and tried to do the things I've been working on -- attacking hitters and making them swing the bats. I tried not to do too much, more than I'm capable of doing."

Daley's performance helped the RockHounds take two out of three games from the RoughRiders as Midland improved to 20-20 this season.

The RoughRiders also threatened to score in the second and fifth innings but Daley managed to work out of those jams without allowing a run. In the second, he got a strikeout and a groundout with runners at the corners. Then in the fifth, he got Mendonca -- a dangerous hitter -- to swing at a third strike with runners at first and third.

"My job as a starter is to limit the damage and as a pitcher I like to go deep in the game," Daley said. "I just tried to make the pitches I had to make, I executed. When you do that, sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't, but tonight it did."

Midland manager Steve Scarsone said Daley's start was "outstanding" as the pitcher had both confidence in himself and in the defense behind him.

"Obviously taking us into the seventh inning was big," Scarsone said. "For his confidence and the way he kept a nice pace going, I thought it was a real nice performance for him. He's had a couple of rough outings lately and for him to bounce back like he did tonight, I'm sure was very satisfying for him."

It also helped Daley's confidence that he had an early lead to work with as the RockHounds scored two runs in the first inning when Matt Sulentic (2 for 4) scored on a fielder's choice grounder by Stephen Parker. Parker then scored on a Wes Timmons single against Frisco starter Robbie Ross (0-1), who was making his Double-A debut.

While Daley was on his game, Ross was tough after that first inning and kept his team in the game.

It wasn't until a solo home run by Jeremy Barfield to left field in the fifth inning that the RockHounds and Daley had a little more breathing room at 3-0.

The RoughRiders finally got a run off Daley in the sixth inning when Engel Beltre singled home Jonathan Greene to cut it to 3-1.

But other than that run, Daley did what he had to do and got back on track after some up-and-down outings in his last three starts. He scattered eight hits, walked one and struck out two over seven innings.

"Obviously you gain confidence with good starts," Daley said. "But I just know that I can do it, as long as I stay within myself and do what I normally can do."

Scarsone said Daley has grown as a pitcher this year thanks in large part to the work he's done with pitching coach Don Schulze both mechanically and mentally.

"An example (of that mental work) was that leadoff double. He didn't fall apart," Scarsone said. "He stuck to what he was trying to get done and he still battled his way from keeping those guys from scoring. He showed good character. It's a good thing to build on confidence-wise."

The bullpen of Lenny DiNardo and Jared Lansford did the rest in the final two innings as they combined to scatter four hits with Lansford getting the final two outs for his third save of the season.

'HOUND BITES: The RockHounds are now 8-14 against the RoughRiders this season and now tied for second place in the Texas League Second Half South Division standings with Frisco, four games behind the San Antonio Missions. ...The RockHounds have added LHP Anthony Capra to the roster. Capra comes from Triple-A Sacramento where he pitched one game for the RiverCats. Capra started the year in Midland, then went to Arizona to work on his mechanics. ...RockHounds 2B Wes Timmons extended his hit streak to 12 games with a single in the first inning. ...CF Grant Green made a nice catch on a fly ball hit by Mitch Hilligoss in the ninth inning when he went backwards to the warning track before jumping up to make the play up against the wall.

TODAY'S PROBABLES: The RockHounds head to Corpus Christi to begin a four-game series at 7:05 p.m. today. Midland sends LHP Anthony Capra (1-4, 6.30 ERA) to the mound against a Hooks starter to be announced.

Ports Hand Bauer First Pro Loss With 5-2 Win

Stockton Ports

The Ports strung together their second straight win against the Rawhide, beating Visalia 5-2 on Thursday evening. The Ports faced off against the Diamondbacks highly touted prospect, Trevor Bauer, in the right handed pitcher's second professional start.

Bauer got into a jam early, walking two batters in the first inning, but was able to pitch out of it, getting his first strikeout of the outing to end the inning. Bauer, who had pitched 2.0 scoreless innings in his professional debut was unable to achieve the same feat this evening, as Mitch Levier crushed a two-run homer to right-center field, earning LeVier the title of first run scored off Bauer, as well as first professional home run allowed by the prospect.

The Rawhide got a run back in the third. Raoul Torrez singled to center field to start the inning. Catcher Mark Reed advanced Torrez to second on a sacrifice bunt before a single by Keon Broxton brought Torrez home.

Trevor Bauer pitched a scoreless third inning before being relieved to start the fourth inning. Despite giving up just two runs on two hits, Bauer earned the loss, his first professional decision.

Things remained quiet for both teams until the fifth, when the Ports added an insurance run. Conner Crumbliss began the inning with a single, advanced to second on a Petey Paramore single and then came home on a hard-hit single by Anthony Aliotti.

The Rawhide once again pulled back within a run in the seventh. Connor Hoehn replaced Ports starter Jacob Brown to start the inning. Brown pitched a beautiful six innings, giving up just one run and striking out four and earning the win before being relieved. Hoehn began the inning with a quick out before walking Reed, who advanced to second on a groundout and third on a wild pitch. Reed was driven in on a Broxton single, before Hoehn struck out Chris Owings to end the inning.

The Ports quickly responded with two runs of their own in the seventh. With runners on second and third, Jason Christian stepped up to the plate and laced a single to right-center field, bringing both runners home.

Jose Guzman came on in the ninth to close the game, earning his 18th save of the season. The Ports look to extend their streak to three games tomorrow as the Ports welcome back AJ Griffin to the starting rotation. Griffin will face off against Diogenes Rosario for the Rawhide at 7:05 p.m.

Macias Masterful in 8-2 Win

By Jon Versteeg, Burlington Bees

PEORIA, IL- RHP Jose Macias (4-3) pitched a career high seven innings, DH Tony Thompson (3-5) homered twice and drove in three runs and SS Yordy Cabrera (2-5) added three RBIs to give the Burlington Bees (13-26) an 8-2 win over the Peoria Chiefs (14-25) at O'Brien Field on Thursday. The win snaps a three-game losing streak.

The Bees opened the scoring by putting two runs across home plate in the first inning against Peoria RHP Brett Wallach (0-1). C Beau Taylor (1-3) led off the game with a walk and went to second base on a wild pitch. 2B Nino Leyja (0-4) reached base on an error by Peoria SS Arismendy Alcantara. Cabrera hit a perfectly placed ball that dropped in fair just to the left of the right field foul line for a two-run double and a 2-0 lead.

The Chiefs scored a run in the first inning against Macias. SS Arismendy Alcantara (2-4) singled and went to second base on a throwing error. CF Rubi Silva (2-4) singled Alcantara to third base and he scored on a sacrifice fly by 3B Dustin Geiger (1-3) for a 2-1 lead.

Peoria scored a run in the second inning to tie the game and the Bees scored four runs in the third inning to take a 6-2 lead. Taylor led off the inning with a triple. Leyja earned a walk and 1B A.J. Kirby-Jones (0-5) reached on a fielder's choice. Peoria 3B Dustin Geiger threw wide of second base and Taylor scored for a 3-2 lead.

Thompson added an RBI double to score Leyja, Cabrera hit an RBI single to plate Kirby-Jones and RF Ryan Pineda (0-4) grounded out to score Thompson and make it 6-2.

Thompson hit a solo home run over the left field wall in the seventh inning to advance the score to 7-2. He smacked a solo home run over the left field wall again in the ninth inning to make it 8-2.

BEES BUZZINGS: Macias surpassed his previous career high of six innings set against the Brooklyn Cyclones (NY Mets) as a member of the SS-Vermont Lake Monsters on July 6, 2011.

The Bees and Chiefs finish their series on Friday night at 7:00 p.m. RHP Blake Hasebrock (6-6, 2.38) gets the start for Burlington against LHP Austin Kirk (5-7, 3.36) for Peoria. Pre-game coverage begins at 6:40 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at www.gobees.com.

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

State College Blanks Lake Monsters 1-0

By Paul Stanfield / Vermont Lake Monsters

BURLINGTON, VT --- State College scored the only run of the game in the top of the first inning as the Spikes defeated the Vermont Lake Monsters for the second straight day with a 1-0 New York-Penn League victory Thursday at historic Centennial Field.

Junior Sosa and Alex Dickerson had back-to-back one-out singles in the first to give State College runners on first and third. Chris Lashmet then chopped a grounder to short that and the Lake Monsters were able to get the forceout at second, but were unable to complete a possible inning-ending double play as second baseman Michael Fasbiaschi's throw to first bounced past first baseman Chad Lewis allowing Sosa to score the only of the game.

The Vermont offense got a Bobby Crocker bunt single in the bottom of the first, but that was the only Lake Monsters hit until Fabiaschi led off the sixth with a single. Fabiaschi advanced to second on a wild pitch, but was doubled off second on a line drive to first base. The Lake Monsters loaded the bases in the eighth on a one-out Fabiaschi single followed by a two-out hit batter and walk, but pinch hitter Chad Oberacker flied out to center ending that rally.

State College starter Mike Jefferson allowed one hit with three walks and five strikeouts over the first four innings, while Jordan Cooper (1-3) three hits in four scoreless innings of relief for his first win. Jesus Brito tossed a 1-2-3 ninth for his first save. Vermont starter Tyler Vail (1-3) was charged with one run on five hits over 5 1/3 innings for the loss.

Wes Freeman had two hits for the State College (17-30), which has now won five of its last six games. The Lake Monsters were shutout for the third time this season and for the first time since July 4th at Tri-City. It was the first 1-0 loss since August 12, 2006 at State College for the Vermont (24-22), which lost the final two games of the seven-game homestand after starting out 4-1.

Vermont heads to Tri-City for single games with the ValleyCats on Friday and Saturday before the series switches to Centennial for single games on Sunday at 1:05 pm and Champ's Birthday on Monday at 7:05 pm.

