

Oakland A's steal a win against Tampa Bay Rays

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. -- On a night of big individual performances, the A's pocketed a victory Saturday that was most important for their team psyche.

They put together one of their best all-around efforts of the season in an 8-0 win over the Tampa Bay Rays before 24,939 fans at Tropicana Field.

That snapped a string of four straight losses to begin this nine-game road trip, in which the A's had short-circuited in all facets.

"We came out and played a real complete game," winning pitcher Brandon McCarthy said. "We were solid defensively, we certainly hit well, we pitched well, and that is what we needed. We needed to come out and have the whole team come off and be happy with what we did."

Among the things they could be happy about:

Their seven stolen bases, the most by the A's since they swiped eight against the Seattle Mariners on July 29, 1989. Rickey Henderson had five steals that night.

On Saturday, Coco Crisp led the charge with a career-high four, putting him in position to score twice on sacrifice flies. Crisp leads the American League with 37 steals.

He continued to run wild despite suffering a right calf strain early in the game that manager Bob Melvin said could keep him out of Sunday's series finale.

McCarthy (5-5) scattered five hits over eight innings and won his fourth straight decision, tying his career high. The A's rotation has shown cracks over the past month, but McCarthy is 4-0 with a 2.78 ERA in five starts since the All-Star break.

"This guy is really good," Rays manager Joe Maddon said. "Outstanding cutter, didn't miss his spots all night. We were taking some really bad swings."

Right fielder David DeJesus, hitting just .228, connected for two home runs, giving him three multihomer games in an otherwise disappointing season.

He's played in 96 games -- his seven homers have come in four of them.

DeJesus drilled a change-up from Alex Cobb (3-2) deep into the right-field seats for a solo shot in the second. He added another solo shot in the ninth, barely clearing the right-field wall off Jake McGee.

"I don't understand it, but I'll take every one of them," DeJesus said.

Rookie second baseman Jemile Weeks, hitting .188 over his previous 11 games, went 2 for 5 with two RBIs.

Adam Rosales, playing first base with Conor Jackson out with a back injury, also had two RBIs.

Significantly, the A's didn't let things spin out of control after a glaring first-inning mistake -- which has been a hallmark of this trip.

With two outs in the first, Crisp was at second and came motoring around third on Josh Willingham's single to left. Crisp put on the brakes after passing the bag but couldn't get back, as shortstop Sean Rodriguez sneaked in behind Crisp and took a quick relay from the cutoff man, leaving Crisp out to dry for the final out.

Third-base coach Mike Gallego took the blame, saying he didn't get a read on how fast the ball reached the outfield on the turf and failed to signal Crisp to hold up.

"It froze me," Gallego said.

No matter, as Crisp led the steal parade off Cobb, who lasted just 41/3 innings and had more on his mind than his problems holding runners.

He visited a hospital for tests after the game because of discomfort in his throwing hand.

Oakland A's update: Manager Bob Melvin downplays Guillermo Moscoso's recent struggles

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. -- A's manager Bob Melvin said he isn't concerned about Guillermo Moscoso's recent struggles.

The right-hander is 1-2 with a 7.40 ERA over his past four starts, and he lasted just 42/3 innings in Friday's loss to Tampa Bay.

A pleasant surprise for the A's in the first half, Moscoso (4-6) has pitched as deep as six innings in just one of his past four starts, and his ERA has risen from 2.16 to 3.69.

"He's just hit a bit of a rough patch here like some of our other guys," Melvin said before Saturday night's 8-0 victory over the Rays.

Even after Brandon McCarthy's eight scoreless innings Saturday, Oakland's rotation carries an 8-12 record and 5.53 ERA over the past 25 games.

Gio Gonzalez and Trevor Cahill, the A's top two starters, are underperforming right now, and that would appear to rank as Melvin's biggest pitching concern.

But Moscoso, who had his turn skipped when the A's reshuffled their rotation around the All-Star break, would appear to be on the shortest leash.

His fate is tied to whether any starters in the minor leagues force their way into a promotion.

Left-hander Josh Outman (7-2, 3.84) had been rounding into form for Triple-A Sacramento, but he gave up six runs and threw three wild pitches against Omaha on Saturday.

Tyson Ross hasn't been sharp for the River Cats since coming back from oblique and shoulder problems.

Graham Godfrey, 11-2 with a 2.55 ERA for Sacramento, perhaps is positioning himself for a second call-up at some point.

Conor Jackson didn't play Saturday after tweaking his back while taking a swing in Friday's game, so Adam Rosales started at first base.

Melvin listed Jackson as day-to-day and said there was an "outside chance" he could play in Sunday's series finale. Jackson said his back felt better than on Friday but was unsure of his availability for Sunday.

Cahill, 3-10 with a 5.12 ERA over his past 16 starts, makes his first start at Tropicana Field on Sunday.

Outfielder Michael Taylor connected for his 13th homer of the season Saturday for Sacramento. He's played in 70 games. He hit just six homers in 127 games last year for the River Cats.

Chin Music: Conor Jackson sits with bad back, Adam Rosales starts at first base

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune 8/6/2011 3:36pm

We had a bit of pregame A's news at Tropicana Field. Conor Jackson is out with a "tweak" in the right side of his back, according to manager Bob Melvin. Adam Rosales is playing first base tonight. Jackson hurt his back while taking a swing in his final at-bat Friday, but it doesn't appear serious. He's listed as day-to-day. Initially, Melvin said he assumed Jackson wouldn't be available until the Toronto series, which starts Tuesday. But there's an outside chance Jackson could play Sunday.

The lineups:

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

Rays – Jennings LF, Damon DH, Longoria 3B, Zobrist 2B, Kotchman 1B, Upton CF, Joyce RF, Chirinos C, Rodriguez SS; Cobb RHP.

Oakland A's keep up the pressure, beat Rays 8-0

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

It almost looked like an Oakland home game.

The A's got sustained offensive pressure - including seven stolen bases, a career-high four by Coco Crisp - and a sensational performance by a starting pitcher Saturday, something that has been in somewhat short supply in the second half. Brandon McCarthy coolly and efficiently handled the Rays, setting down 13 in a row at one point in the A's 8-0 victory at Tropicana Field.

McCarthy (5-5) worked eight scoreless innings and allowed five hits and no walks, and outfielder David DeJesus, enduring a dreadful season, hit two solo homers.

"Mac started us off," DeJesus said. "He pitched his butt off; he shut them down. He was breaking bats, and when he does that, his ball is moving.

"We were scoring early and every inning. Four innings in a row, we were able to add on. This is the team we know we have. Hopefully, we can build off this."

Oakland snapped a four-game losing streak, and today the team has a chance to win its first series on the road since May 6-8 at Kansas City. Since then, the A's have gone 12 road series in a row without winning one, matching the third-longest such streak in Oakland history. The A's are 0-9-3 in their past dozen road series.

"With all our struggles on the road, that's a complete game," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said. "We've been struggling to put the facets together, let alone all of them like we did tonight."

"This is what we needed," McCarthy said. "Everyone came in happy and confident with what we did tonight."

McCarthy has been solid since coming off the disabled list July 3, and since the break, he's 4-0 with a 2.78 ERA. On Saturday, he allowed only two men past first base. He struck out five, and were it not for a bit of a lengthy sixth inning, he might have stayed in for the ninth, but because of his injury history, Melvin took him out after 109 pitches - 75 of which were strikes. McCarthy faced 29 hitters and threw 21 first-pitch strikes. For the season, he has 16 walks in 108 2/3 innings, a mere 1.32 walks per nine innings.

"This guy is really good," Rays manager Joe Maddon said.

The A's kept their foot on the pedal: They scored twice in the second, single runs in the third, fourth and fifth, then two more in the eighth and one in the ninth. Rookie Jemile Weeks drove in two runs, as did Adam Rosales.

DeJesus, who'd missed four games last week because of right thumb soreness, began the A's scoring with a homer to right in the second off Alex Cobb. He added a two-out solo shot in the ninth.

DeJesus has seven homers this season - and three two-homer games.

"Really weird," DeJesus said. "I don't understand it, but I'll take every one of them." On the second homer, DeJesus said with a grin, "I was talking to the ball rounding first, like, 'Get over the wall!' "

Coco Crisp steals 4 bags, ends up with sore calf

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Coco Crisp was a busy man Saturday night, but it might have cost him a little bit.

Crisp stole a career-high four bases, then came out in the ninth with right calf soreness and manager **Bob Melvin** is unsure of the center fielder's status for tonight.

According to Melvin, Crisp felt the calf issue while stealing a base and still stole another one or two afterward, but it stiffened up later.

Crisp, who hasn't addressed reporters often this year and doesn't like to talk about injuries, spoke only briefly about his stolen bases, saying, "It just happened. It was a game where there were some opportunities and we got some good jumps."

Crisp was credited with two hits, but the A's are appealing for him to get a third. An error was charged to Rays pitcher **Alex Cobb** on Crisp's grounder in the first, though it would have taken a great play to get him - first baseman **Casey Kotchman** tried to make the flip straight from his glove to Cobb.

In that inning, Crisp was thrown out after going way around third on **Josh Willingham's** single to left; third base coach **Mike Gallego** said it was his fault because he didn't realize how fast the ball would come off the artificial turf and it froze him.

The A's stole seven bases, their highest total since July 29, 1989. It was the most ever by a Tampa Bay opponent. Crisp has a league-high 37 steals, his career high.

Briefly: Rays starter Cobb was taken to St. Anthony's Hospital with discomfort in his right hand. ... **Conor Jackson** was out of the lineup with back soreness, but Melvin said he doesn't believe Jackson will miss more than a day or two.... Were Jackson a candidate for the disabled list, the A's could bring up recently acquired first baseman **Brandon Allen**. Allen, who homered for Triple-A Sacramento on Friday, was optioned out a week ago. Players must remain down for 10 days after being optioned - unless they replace a player placed on the DL.

Leading off

Cahill's woes: Today's starter, Trevor Cahill, is 1-5 with a 6.13 ERA over his past seven starts. Pitching coach Ron Romanick said Cahill is trying to do too much, and he has been up in the zone too much for a sinkerballer. "To me, he should get a groundball every time," Romanick said.

Drumbeat: Conor Jackson out of A's lineup with back discomfort

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Tropicana Field 8/6/2011 3:12pm

Conor Jackson had his back spasm up on him in his last at-bat last night, so he is not in the lineup tonight even though he was feeling significantly better after treatment, according to manager Bob Melvin.

Melvin believes that Jackson might be able to play tomorrow, and at the very least he is considered day-to-day rather than a potential DL candidate. Melvin said that Jackson has not had back problems before. It's not uncommon for players to get little back issues on artificial turf, because there is more pounding no matter how soft and forgiving the turf. It's the best quality turf here, and it's still not going to be as easy on knees and backs as real grass.

Hideki Matsui, who has had surgery on both knees, is in left tonight, but Melvin wants to be careful with him on the turf here and in Toronto. He won't play in the field tomorrow, and if he plays left in Toronto, it's likely to only be once.

With Jackson out, Adam Rosales is at first base. Here's the lineup behind Brandon McCarthy: Weeks 2b, Crisp cf, Matsui lf, Willingham dh, DeJesus rf, Pennington ss, Sizemore 3b, Suzuki c, Rosales 1b.

It's the Goo Goo Dolls tonight (the Go-Go's were fantastic last night, by the way - they played for 75 minutes and sounded great, put on a really fun show) and the Goo Goo Dolls always make me think of Jeremy Giambi. Because they had a hit with a refrain that goes, "Why don't you slide?"

Exactly. Even though the song "Slide" came out a good three years before Jeremy Giambi didn't.

And that gives me another excuse to link to my favorite bit of baseball writing in the past decade - [George Vescey's brilliant "Slide, Jeremy, Slide."](#)

My favorite line:

Slide, Jeremy, slide. The manager should have used a pinch-runner, but this is the lumbering American League, in which such hallowed baseball intricacies are not observed.

A's run wild as McCarthy stifles Rays

By Anthony Chiang / MLB.com | 8/7/2011 12:42 AM ET

ST. PETERSBURG -- It looks like the Athletics heard their manager's comments.

A day after Bob Melvin cited his team's passiveness as the reason for its struggles on the road, Oakland exploded for seven stolen bases in an 8-0 victory over the Rays on Saturday in front of 24,939 at Tropicana Field. The A's are now 1-4 on their nine-game road trip.

"With our struggles on the road, it's nice," Melvin said. "We played a complete game where we pitched, we hit and we ran the bases. For us that's a complete game."

The seven stolen bases were the most ever by a Rays opponent, and it came on rookie catcher Robinson Chirinos' watch. Opposing teams have now successfully stolen 21 of 23 bases against Chirinos this season.

"Our times to the plate were awful," said Rays manager Joe Maddon in regards to the less-than-speedy manner in which his pitchers got the ball home. "[Chirinos] had no chance. He had 1.5 [seconds] to the plate."

Coco Crisp was the catalyst, as he finished with a career-high four stolen bases and scored two runs despite straining his right calf during the game. It also marked the first time that a player has stolen four bases in a game for the A's since Rickey Henderson did it in 1991.

"I just had the opportunities," Crisp said. "I got good jumps and was able to make it in [safely]."

David DeJesus broke the seal by hitting a homer to lead off the second, his first of two in the game. It was the third time this season that DeJesus has collected a pair of dingers in the same game -- the other times coming on May 4 against the Indians and on May 24 against the Angles.

"I don't understand [why I keep doing it]," DeJesus said, "but I'll take every one of them."

After grabbing the one-run lead in the second, Oakland never looked back. The A's added another run in the frame after Adam Rosales, who was filling in for injured first baseman Conor Jackson, hit an RBI groundout with runners on second and third to give Oakland a two-run lead.

Oakland just ran wild on the basepaths from there, scoring in five of the next seven innings. Four of the final six A's runs were scored by a runner who stole at least one base en route to crossing the plate.

All of that was more than enough for starter Brandon McCarthy. He turned in an efficient eight innings of work, allowing no runs on five hits. The 28-year-old McCarthy is now 4-0 with a 2.78 ERA in five starts since the All-Star Break.

"He has been as consistent as any of the guys we have," Melvin said. "He had a chance to go nine. But with his injury history, we didn't want to push it much more than we have."

Saturday's outing didn't turn out much differently than the last time McCarthy faced the Rays, when the right-hander held them to one run in eight innings on July 26. Despite the continued success against Tampa Bay, he can't pinpoint the reason behind it.

"There's nothing that really stands out," McCarthy said. "They're a pretty balanced team and they really don't have any natural tendencies across the board. So you kind of just have to face each hitter independently from the rest."

From there, reliever Fautino De Los Santos was called upon to end it, and he threw a scoreless ninth. But he did struggle with his control, walking two.

It didn't matter, though, because Oakland's offense returned to the success it was having before the road trip. The A's lead the Majors with a .300 batting average since the All-Star Break.

"Hopefully, we can build off this game and come [Sunday] ready to go," DeJesus said.

Crisp strains right calf on career-best night

By Anthony Chiang / MLB.com

ST. PETERSBURG -- Despite stealing a career-high four bases in the A's 8-0 win over the Rays on Saturday night, Oakland center fielder Coco Crisp was playing with a strained right calf.

It is unknown when he suffered the injury, but manager Bob Melvin said that it happened early in the contest on a stolen-base attempt. His status for Sunday's game is unclear.

"He's a guy that can play hurt, I'll give him that," Melvin said. "He has had several injuries over the course of the season. But I'm not sure that he will be able to play around this one."

Price squares off with Cahill in series' rubber match

By Chris Cox / MLB.com | 8/7/2011 12:50 AM ET

Rays lefty David Price is waiting.

Waiting for that elusive game where he absolutely dominates the opposition. The game where the guys at the plate don't really stand much of a chance. The game where you can almost pencil the Rays into the win column.

Maybe Sunday is that day.

"Yeah, I'm waiting for it," Price said. "I've got to keep the ball in the park. I'm looking to go out there tomorrow and set the tone early, give us a good chance to win."

Price has been solid this season for the Rays, going 9-10 with a 3.77 ERA in 23 starts. But it has been a far cry from what he accomplished just one year ago, when he was the runner-up for the American League Cy Young Award after going 19-6 with a 2.72 ERA.

Will he reclaim that dominance beginning on Sunday against the Athletics at the Trop?

"I'm tired of trying to force it, man," Price said. "If I try and force it it's not going to happen and I'm going to be so mad because it's not happening. So it's going to drive me into the ground. I've just got to relax and let it happen. And when it does, I will just grab hold of the reins and take it from there."

Price is back on regular rest unlike the rest of the rotation, as the Rays have a six-man staff. While that is still in place, Price is on regular rest so he can pitch in the upcoming series against the Yankees and Red Sox.

Whether that proves beneficial to Price remains to be seen.

"I hope it makes a difference," he said. "I hope I go out there and go nine and give up none. I don't know if it's going to make any difference."

The A's, meanwhile, are trying to correct some of their own pitching struggles. Before Saturday's shutout performance, the A's had compiled a 6.18 ERA (94 earned runs in 137 innings) and opponents were hitting .309 (175-for-567) over Oakland's last 16 games.

Sunday's starter Trevor Cahill will try to get Oakland back to where it was in the 22 games prior to this recent stretch, when the club posted a 2.55 ERA and held opponents to a .210 batting average.

"We just hit a little bit of a slump overall, pitching-wise," manager Bob Melvin said. "Typically in our ballpark the numbers will be a little bit more skewed to the pitching, because it's a big ballpark and the ball doesn't carry as well."

A's: Balfour returns to Tampa

A's pitcher Grant Balfour returned to the mound at Tropicana Field on Friday for the first time since signing with Oakland as a free agent last offseason.

Balfour, who pitched the final two innings in Oakland's 8-4 loss, helped the Rays reach the World Series in 2008 after he posted a 1.54 ERA and 0.89 WHIP in 51 appearances.

"I had some good times," Balfour said. "I think this team is a good team, with a lot of comeback wins and things like that. They never die, and they always play hard. I had some really good teams. It started with a team that didn't have much success, and turned into a team that had a lot of success."

Rays: Upton falls short of club record

B.J. Upton's second-inning groundout on Saturday night left the Rays outfielder just short of some history.

Had he reached safely, he would have owned a club record by reaching base safely in eight consecutive plate appearances. Despite that, he's still 5-for-13 in Tampa's last three games after going 7-for-59 in the 15 games prior.

Upton has been playing relaxed ever since he found out that he wouldn't be shipped off on last Sunday's Trade Deadline. Rumors had swirled in the final days leading up to the deadline that he may be moved.

"It's the first time I've ever dealt with that, and it's over with," he said. "It was definitely rough. So I can relax now and just know that I'm here with these guys, and can just go out and have fun and play baseball."

Worth noting

- With the Athletics beginning a stretch of six consecutive games on artificial turf, Melvin said Hideki Matsui "might" play in the outfield once in that time, in order to protect his knees. Matsui was in left field Saturday night. After leaving St. Petersburg, Oakland travels to Toronto for three games to play the Blue Jays.
- B.J. Upton, Ben Zobrist and Matt Joyce all have at least 10 homers and 10 stolen bases. The Diamondbacks are the only other team to do that this year, as they have four players who have accomplished the feat.

Jackson sits after tweaking right side of back

By Anthony Chiang / MLB.com

ST. PETERSBURG -- Oakland's lineup was missing a familiar face on Saturday.

Conor Jackson sat out Saturday's game after tweaking the right side of his back during his at-bat in the ninth inning on Friday. Manager Bob Melvin ruled Jackson's injury as day to day.

"[Athletic trainer Nick Paparesta] said last night that there was a pretty good knot in there," Melvin said.

But after receiving treatment following Friday's game, Jackson's back has responded well.

"There's an outside chance that he can play [Sunday]," Melvin said. "I'm not 100 percent sure. Last night it looked like there would be no way he would be able to play until Toronto. So, we'll see."

Utility player Adam Rosales played first base on Saturday in place of Jackson. Entering the game, Rosales was hitting .108 this season, to go along with two homers and five RBIs in 37 at-bats. But his versatility is what allows Melvin to plug Rosales into the lineup.

"That's what [Rosales] does," Melvin said. "He's a guy that plays everywhere, and he keeps himself ready. His work ethic before games is terrific. He's a hard worker. Whether he's playing once or twice a week, he's always prepared for it."

Matsui starts in left field on turf

ST. PETERSBURG -- Hideki Matsui started in the outfield for the 15th time this season on Saturday.

The 37-year-old has been slotted as Oakland's designated hitter for most of the season to ease the stress on his knees, which made Saturday's start in left field so surprising.

With the A's in their second game of a six-game stretch on artificial turf, Melvin said that Matsui wouldn't play in the field too much in that time because of the effect that the surface has on players' knees.

However, Matsui has been solid with his glove this season. Entering Saturday's game, he had gone 120 1/3 innings in the field without committing an error.

"Even when he wasn't playing any outfield, he was always preparing to play the outfield," Melvin said. "He knows the hitters, he's in good alignment out there and he can read swings. His experience is in the outfield for the most part, and he understands what it takes to play the defensive end."

Melvin made it clear that Matsui would not play back-to-back games in the outfield on artificial turf. However, Oakland's manager praised Matsui for the work that he has put in to make himself an option in the outfield this season.

"For some of his limitations, like his knees -- which I haven't really seen this year -- he has prepared in the offseason to be able to play defense this year," Melvin said. "He's just a smart player."

Extra bases

- Entering Saturday's game, Cliff Pennington is batting .393 since the All-Star break, which ranks sixth in the Majors.
- The A's have hit two home runs or fewer in each of their past 83 games, which is the third longest streak in franchise history.
- Oakland will travel a total of 6,544 miles during its current nine-game road trip.

A's road win is a runaway

Team steals seven bases, including four by Crisp, as McCarthy sparkles on mound

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — After stealing seven bases, the Oakland Athletics finally got another chance to celebrate in a visiting clubhouse.

Brandon McCarthy pitched five-hit ball for eight innings, David DeJesus homered twice and the Athletics earned a rare road victory by beating the Tampa Bay Rays 8-0 on Saturday night.

Oakland had dropped the first four games of a nine-game trip.

"It's good for all of us," McCarthy said. "We came out and played a very complete game. We needed to come out and have something where the whole team can come in and be happy with what we did tonight."

McCarthy (5-5) helped Oakland win for just the eighth time in its past 38 games away from home. He struck out five before Fautino De Los Santos finished up with a hitless ninth.

McCarthy improved to 4-0 in five starts since the All-Star break.

"He was terrific," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "He's been as consistent a guy as we've had."

Oakland had its most stolen bases since swiping eight on July 29, 1989, against Seattle. Coco Crisp stole a career-best four bags, giving the speedster 37 this season.

"He gets an opportunity and takes advantage of it," Melvin said.

Crisp did hurt his right calf on one of the early stolen bases, but stayed in the game through eight innings. Melvin said the outfielder might miss Sunday's game.

DeJesus hit a pair of solo homers, while Jemile Weeks and Adam Rosales each had two RBIs.

Tampa Bay's B.J. Upton grounded out in the second inning, ending a stretch of reaching base in seven consecutive plate appearances. Upton is one of seven players who share the team record of eight.

McCarthy retired 13 straight after Evan Longoria's first-inning single before allowing consecutive singles to Robinson Chirinos and Sean Rodriguez to start the sixth. The right-hander was able to work out of the jam.

DeJesus homered and Rosales had an RBI grounder off Alex Cobb (3-2) as Oakland went up 2-0 in the second. DeJesus, who hadn't hit a home run in his previous 42 games, also went deep in the ninth.

Cobb gave up five runs and seven hits in 4½ innings. The rookie right-hander, who has lost two starts in a row, experienced discomfort in his throwing hand and was taken to a hospital for precautionary tests.

"He did not complain about anything throughout the course of the game," Tampa Bay manager Joe Maddon said. "I was advised about the problem during the game. He's being seen (by the team doctor). I really have no idea where this is going to go."

Crisp had a bunt single in the third, stole second and scored to make it 3-0 on Josh Willingham's sacrifice fly.

Weeks extended the advantage to 4-0 on an RBI single during the fourth. Weeks drove in a run with a double and Rosales had a sacrifice fly in the eighth. Oakland took a 5-0 lead in the fifth when Crisp singled, stole both second and third and scored on Cliff Pennington's sacrifice fly. Oakland threatened in the first, but a baserunning mistake by Crisp ended the inning. After reaching on an error and stealing second, Crisp was tagged out in a rundown near third base on Willingham's two-out single.

Weeks was also thrown out to end the fourth after going too far away from first base on his hit.

NOTES

* Oakland 1B Conor Jackson didn't play due to spasms on the right side of his back. There is an outside chance he could play Sunday.

* Tampa Bay All-Star LHP David Price (9-10), Sunday's scheduled starter, has allowed eight homers in his last six outings after giving up nine over his first 17 appearances. "I'm looking to go out there and set the tone early and give us a chance to win," Price said.

* Athletics RHP Trevor Cahill (9-10) enters his start Sunday 1-5 with a 6.13 ERA in his previous seven games.

* Hideki Matsui made his 15th start this season in left field for Oakland. He has been the DH 76 times. Matsui singled in the seventh to extend his hitting streak to 14 games.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Storm Chasers brave ... well ... the storm

By Alex Sadorf / Sacramento River Cats

The Storm Chasers fittingly thrived through two rain delays Saturday night to topple the visiting Sacramento River Cats, 7-5, at Werner Park.

The River Cats took an early lead, propelled by a Michael Taylor home run that sparked a four-run second inning.

Taylor's 13th home run of the season came on a 1-1 pitch. Anthony Recker then doubled off a sharp ground ball down the left-field line, putting him in scoring position for Andy LaRoche. After Omaha pitcher Jeff Suppan walked LaRoche, Dusty Coleman singled on a soft line drive to left field bringing in Recker and putting LaRoche on third. Jermaine Mitchell finished the rally with a two-run single to center field bringing home LaRoche and Coleman.

The Storm Chasers played off some of the River Cats' momentum during their turn in the second. Shortstop Yamaico Navarro singled with a ground ball to left field and scored on a Salvador Perez double to left field. It was the first earned run River Cats pitcher Josh Outman has given up since July 9. Irving Falu then came to the plate and grounded the ball to the infield, taking his out at first and allowing Perez to score. The River Cats maintained their lead at 4-2.

Omaha wasn't content with their deficit and made a strong showing in the third, putting four more runs on the board and taking the lead. Lorenzo Cain hit a two-run homer over the center field wall with David Lough on base, tying the game at 4-4.

A quick downpour gave Cats pitcher Josh Outman some trouble with the next few batters. After a wild pitch that allowed Clint Robinson to take second and a walk for Navarro, Perez again doubled to left field and brought both runners home. The Storm Chasers' lead stood at 6-4 as the first bout of rain cleared.

After briefly clearing, the rain came back in full force in the middle of the fifth. It looked bleak for the River Cats as the umpires considered calling the game and giving the Cats the loss, but the teams were able to come back after a delay of just over an hour.

The River Cats staged a comeback in the seventh as rain started to sprinkle again. Recker singled off a ground ball to the shortstop. LaRoche followed with a double off the right field wall that advanced Recker to third. Coleman then popped the ball to left fielder Lough, who wasn't able to make the catch. Recker hurried home while Lough recovered to take out LaRoche at third. That was the end of the momentum however and Sacramento was left trailing 6-5.

Omaha came right back as Jarrod Dyson, who doubled to left field, showed off his speed by running home on a single from Lough, bringing the score to 7-5.

The suspense was intensified at Werner Park in the eighth when, with the bases loaded and two outs, the game was again delayed for rain. Cardenas settled on third, after a line drive single, Carter on second, from a soft fly ball, and Taylor on first after being walked.

After the 44-minute delay, Recker came out ready to swing. Storm Chasers' pitcher Brandon Sisk took advantage of that and struck out Recker.

The game took only 20 minutes to come to a close after the second rain delay, with neither team putting any more runs on the board. The final score of 7-5 in favor of the Storm Chasers split the four-game series with two wins each. Tune into Talk 650 KSTE Sunday at 1:05 p.m. to find out how the River Cats fare against the Iowa Cubs at Principal Park.

RockHounds slip into second place with win

From staff reports, Midland Reporter Telegram

CORPUS CHRISTI-- The Midland RockHounds battled for five scoreless innings only to see the Corpus Christi Hooks grab control of the game Saturday in a two-run sixth inning.

The RockHounds, though, came alive on offense to go ahead for the first time in the eighth, and then, after the Hooks tied it in the bottom of the inning, took advantage of a Brandon Wikoff fielding error that allowed Wes Timmons to score the decisive run in a 4-3 victory.

Midland (22-20) now sits a game ahead of the Frisco RoughRiders for second place in the Texas League South second-half standings after its second straight win against the Hooks.

Lenny DiNardo turned in a short but masterful performance early, pacing Midland in a pitcher's duel by allowing just one hit while fanning seven in four innings to start the game.

Jonathan Ortiz replaced DiNardo in the fifth and picked up right where he left off by retiring the side in order

But Corpus Christi (17-25) finally got to Ortiz rudely in the sixth when Brandon Barnes smacked a two-run shot to left to bust open the scoreless game.

Midland, though, responded starting with Timmons' leadoff homer in the seventh, which cut the deficit to 2-1.

Matt Sulentic launched a leadoff homer of his own in the eighth to tie it, and the RockHounds took the lead later in the inning when Grant Green scored on a wild pitch by Daniel Meszaros, who was facing his first batter of the night.

The Hooks tied it in the bottom of the eighth on an RBI single by Jon Gaston but gave it back in the ninth when Ryan Ortiz reached and Timmons scored on Wikoff's error.

Trey Barham, who got the win on the night, sealed the deal for Midland by getting Brian Esposito to ground into a double play to end the game.

Questionable Calls Cost Ports Sweep

Stockton Ports

In a game that went 12 innings and four hours, 16 minutes long, the Visalia Rawhide managed to avoid the sweep thanks to a combination of timely hitting, impressive defense, and a very questionable call in the 12th. The Rawhide ultimately captured a 7-4 win after they put up three runs in the 12th.

The evening began like any other night. The anthem was sung and the Ports took the field. Things were rocky for the Ports from the get-go, as Ports starter Dan Straily gave up a single and a double in the first before pitching out of the jam in the first to keep the Rawhide scoreless. Straily gave up six doubles on the night, and matched a season-high ten hits on the evening before being relieved in the sixth with two on and none out. Despite the high hit count, Straily gave up just three earned runs and struck out seven.

The Ports got on the board early, putting up a run in both the first and the third. Conner Crumbliss started the first by being hit by a pitch from Rawhide starter Eric Smith, and then advanced to third on a balk and a groundout. Anthony Aliotti, who

made several key plays, drove in Crumbliss with a single to left field. In the third, Ryan Lipkin started the inning with a double, advanced to third on a groundout and then scored on a wild pitch.

The Rawhide responded with three straight innings where they posted a run a piece. They got their first run quickly in the fourth, with back-to-back doubles by Matt Davidson and Bobby Borchering. In the fifth, a Chris Owings double and a David Nick single resulted in the tying run.

In the sixth, the Rawhide took their first lead of the game. Straily gave up a single to Borchering, and then a double to Alfredo Marte before loading the bases by hitting Raoul Torrez in the shoulder before being pulled. Mike Hart replaced Straily, and got Rossmel Perez to ground into a double play that resulted in a run. Hart got the Ports out of the inning without giving up any more runs.

The Ports responded with the tying run in the sixth, courtesy of a Petey Paramore home run to left field. Hart pitched a scoreless seventh, before being relieved by Josh Lansford to start the eighth. Lansford looked to have hurt himself with two outs in the inning, but was able to finish the inning and kept the game tied heading into the ninth.

In the ninth, Ports fans were treated to perhaps one of the most spectacular defensive plays of the season, courtesy of Aliotti. Mike Benacka had come on to relieve Lansford, and had promptly walked the bases loaded to bring up Owings. Owings popped up into foul territory, and Aliotti pulled the ball out of the stands with a spectacular over-the-shoulder catch before firing home to throw out the go-ahead run to keep the game tied at three.

The teams headed to extra innings after that, where both teams remained quiet until the 11th, with Connor Hoehn pitching his second inning of relief. With a runner on third and two outs already in the inning, the base umpire called a questionable balk on Hoehn to score the go-ahead run. Hoehn got Keon Broxton, who went 0-for-6 with six strikeouts, to strikeout to end the inning.

The Ports responded to send the game to the 12th. With two outs recorded in the 11th, three straight singles by Crumbliss, Myrio Richard and Michael Gilmartin tied the game. While Broxton struggled at the plate, he played a key role in the victory, absolutely robbing Mitch LeVier of the walk off win, snaring a possible home run as he ran into the wall near the Jackson Rancheria Back Porch to send the game to the 12th.

Scott Deal came in for the Ports in the 12th, where he fell victim to perhaps one of the most questionable calls of the season at Banner Island Ballpark. Owings began the inning with a single to left field. Then Nick stepped up to the plate and attempted to put down a sacrifice bunt to advance Owings into scoring position. However, Nick's bunt came right back to Deal, who turned around and threw a perfect throw to Gilmartin, who was standing on second base. Gilmartin threw to first, where Nick just barely beat out the throw. However, the base umpire declared that Deal's throw had pulled Gilmartin off second and both men were ruled safe. Davidson then hit a ground rule double to score the first run of the inning, before Torrez laced a single through the hole at second base, bringing in the final two runs of the inning.

The Ports were unable to overcome the three run deficit in the bottom of the 12th, despite their best efforts, the game ending with Keon Broxton once again robbing the Ports of a home run, this time with him crashing into the wall as he snared a possible Leonardo Gil two-run bomb. Scott Deal, who fell victim to poor officiating, took the loss, while Adam Worthington picked up the win for the Rawhide.

Rancho Cucamonga come to Banner Island tomorrow, as RHP Murphy Smith faces off against RHP Matt Magill for the Quakes at 6:05 p.m.

Bees "Bash" Their Way to 8-4 Win

By Jon Versteeg, Burlington Bees

BURLINGTON, IA -The Burlington Bees (14-27) scored six runs over the first three innings to secure an 8-4 win over the Clinton LumberKings (21-20) before 1,192 fans at Community Field on Saturday night in the opening game of a four-game series.

Clinton scored a single run in the first inning against Burlington RHP Jonathan Joseph (3-4). CF Mike McGee (1-4) doubled and scored on a triple by 2B Stafen Romero (1-4) for a 1-0 lead.

Burlington scored four runs in the first inning against Clinton LHP Tony Butler (1-2). DH Ryan Pineda (1-4) doubled and LF Royce Consigli (0-3) walked. 1B Josh Whitaker (1-3) singled to load the bases. 3B Tony Thompson (1-3) doubled both Pineda and Consigli across home plate and pushed Whitaker to third base. RF Douglas Landaeta (1-3) lifted a sacrifice fly to left field to score Whitaker. Thompson scored on a throwing error by Butler in an errant pick-off attempt to make it 4-0.

2B Nino Leyja (2-4) hit a solo home run over the left field wall in the second inning to make it 5-0.

Clinton scored a run in the third inning on a solo home run by LF Julio Morban (3-4) to shave the lead to 5-1.

In the third inning Thompson lifted a sacrifice fly to center field to score Whitaker and make it 6-2.

The LumberKings scored single runs in the fifth and eighth innings to get the score to 6-4.

CF Tyreace House (2-4) added a two-run single in the eighth inning to increase the Burlington lead to 8-4.

RHP Jonathan Joseph pitched five innings for the win. RHP Blake Treinen tossed two scoreless innings and RHP Pedro Vidal pitched two scoreless innings for his second save of 2011.

The Bees and Clinton LumberKings continue their series on Sunday afternoon at 2:00 p.m. It's "Louisa Communications Kids Day." All kids 12 and under get in free and get to run the bases after the game. It's also "Faith Day" at the Community Field. Fans that bring their church bulletin to the box office will receive one dollar off up to four general admission tickets to the game. RHP Stephen Kohlscheen (1-3, 6.59) takes the mound for Clinton against RHP Nate Long (6-5, 3.27) for Burlington. Pre-game coverage begins at 1:40 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at www.gobees.com.

Vermont Rained Out At Tri-City Saturday

By Paul Stanfield / Vermont Lake Monsters

TROY, NY --- Saturday night's New York-Penn League game between the Vermont Lake Monsters and Tri-City ValleyCats at Bruno Stadium was postponed due to rain. Since it was the last meeting between the two teams in Tri-City this season, the game will be made up as part of a doubleheader at historic Centennial Field on Sunday, August 7th beginning at 1:05 pm.

This is the second time that a Lake Monsters road game will be made up at Centennial. Vermont was rained out at Brooklyn in the final game of that series on July 8th and made the game up in Burlington as part of a doubleheader on July 31st. Lake Monsters are now scheduled to play 40 of their 76 games at home barring any more rainouts this season.

Sunday's doubleheader will be two seven-inning games beginning at 1:05 pm. Mini Kiss, a KISS tribute band, will be at Centennial to sign autographs and sing the national anthem. The Lake Monsters and FEMA will also host Flood Victim Awareness during the twinbill as FEMA - Federal Emergency Management Agency - will be at Centennial reaching out to families and individuals who were affected by the devastating floods during the spring.