

Josh Willingham's 10th-inning homer lifts Oakland A's

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. -- The A's had not won a road series in three months, so it was natural that a victory Sunday required some struggle.

After Grant Balfour surrendered a tying home run to Evan Longoria in the seventh inning, Josh Willingham delivered the go-ahead homer in the top of the 10th that lifted the A's to a 5-4 victory over the Tampa Bay Rays at Tropicana Field.

The A's took the final two of the three-game set, capturing their first road series since they won two of three at Kansas City on May 6-8.

They hadn't even won consecutive road games since May 8-9, when they beat the Royals and then won a series opener against the Texas Rangers.

"We haven't done that in a while," closer Andrew Bailey said of winning a road series. "Looking back at this year, it's kind of been the story -- close games where we've fallen short."

Indeed, the A's have lost more games like Sunday's contest than they have won. They began the day an American League-worst 14-20 in one-run games, and they were 6-10 in extra-inning affairs, second worst in the league.

"We needed, for many reasons, an outcome like this today," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "A win against a good team, one-run (margin), extra innings ... all of those things."

Bailey, who had gone 11 games without pitching in a save situation, provided tension in the bottom of the 10th when he put two runners aboard with one out.

B.J. Upton popped up for the second out, and Matt Joyce lined an 0-2 fastball up the middle. But shortstop Eric Sogard was positioned perfectly, moving just a couple of steps to his left to snare it for the final out.

The A's are 20-39 on the road compared with 31-24 at home. After getting swept in Seattle and losing Friday to Tampa Bay to begin their nine-game trip, they feel better heading into a three-game set against Toronto that starts Tuesday.

"A turnaround like that is definitely good for the team," said starting pitcher Trevor Cahill, who allowed three runs over six innings.

The Rays took a 3-1 lead into the fifth, but the A's answered with three runs that inning to chase Tampa Bay left-hander David Price.

The rally included Hideki Matsui's two-run homer to right to tie the score.

David DeJesus scored later in the inning on a wild pitch by J.P. Howell to put the A's ahead 4-3.

Matsui's homer extended his hitting streak to 15 games. Since the All-Star break, Matsui is hitting .451 to go with five homers and 22 RBIs in 21 games.

He has lifted his overall average from .209 to .267 since July 10.

Considering his first-half struggles, Matsui was asked if his hot streak is making his first year with the A's more enjoyable.

"I think the feeling coming to the ballpark is the same," Matsui said through a translator. "But now that I've been hitting and the results are there, it's more the feelings after the game that is different."

Balfour, who spent 2007-10 relieving for the Rays, allowed Longoria's homer in the seventh to tie it 4-4.

A's rookie Fautino De Los Santos (1-0) threw a scoreless ninth, which set him up for his first major league victory when Willingham homered in the 10th on a 3-2 fastball from Jake McGee (0-1).

Willingham's 17 homers eclipse last season's team-leading total of 16 by Kevin Kouzmanoff.

Oakland A's update: Trevor Cahill bruised, but still has a better outing vs. Tampa Bay Rays

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. -- Trevor Cahill did not pocket a victory Sunday, but the right-hander earned praise from A's manager Bob Melvin.

Cahill allowed three runs over six innings in a 5-4 win over the Tampa Bay Rays. Considering he came in 3-10 with a 5.12 ERA over his previous 16 starts, that qualified as a good afternoon.

But Cahill also was pitching with a bruise that formed on his right index finger that limited his ability to throw his curve.

"He threw some sliders, but he didn't throw many curveballs," Melvin said. "He really battled for us in a game that we needed to get those kinds of innings out of him."

Cahill was in line for the victory until reliever Grant Balfour allowed a game-tying homer to Evan Longoria in the seventh.

Cahill said the bruise -- "not a blister" -- on his finger sometimes forms late in a game and hurts when he throws his curve. For the first time Sunday, he said it also affected how he threw his fastball, though he said the bruise usually goes away between starts.

Rays left-hander • David Price entered the game with a 9-10 record, but he was holding lefties to a .154 batting average, the lowest mark among major league starters.

He lasted just 42/3 innings, and the five hits he allowed to Oakland's left-handed hitters were a career high. That included Hideki Matsui's two-run homer, which was just the fifth homer by a lefty that Price has allowed in his three-plus major league seasons.

Reliever Craig • Breslow was unavailable because of soreness in his upper back. That left Melvin short on bullpen options when the ninth inning arrived and the score was tied. Rookie Fautino De Los Santos pitched a scoreless ninth and was credited with his first major league victory.

It didn't come easy, as Johnny Damon flied out to the base of the right-field wall with two out.

Center fielder • Coco Crisp (strained right calf) and first baseman Conor Jackson (back spasm) both sat, but Melvin said he expected both to return for Tuesday's series opener at Toronto.

Shortstop Cliff Pennington, still recovering from Bell's palsy, also took the day off. Melvin said he also would probably rest Pennington once during the Toronto series.

Chin Music: Crisp, Jackson, Pennington all sit for series finale vs. Rays

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 8/7/2011 10:39am

Here's the lowdown from the A's pregame scene ...

—Center fielder Coco Crisp (right calf strain) and first baseman Conor Jackson (sore back) are both sitting, though manager Bob Melvin thinks both should be ready for Tuesday's series opener with Toronto. Jackson is confident he'll play by then, saying he and the team are "erring on the side of caution." Crisp, when asked about his calf, simply said "Perfect. Everything's always perfect." That's Coco Talk for "I don't want to discuss it."

Shortstop Cliff Pennington is getting a day off too, and Melvin said he will probably give Pennington another day to rest in Toronto. It makes sense that the A's are being cautious with him. Melvin cited the medication that Pennington is on for Bell's palsy, and wanting him to get a chance to adjust to it.

That leaves the A's with one fully healthy bench player — catcher Kurt Suzuki, who is being spelled by Landon Powell. The A's have operated with a similarly thin corps on more than one occasion recently.

Ah yes, one more injury update: Reliever Craig Breslow has soreness just below his left shoulder, stemming from a recent weight lifting session. He was unavailable last night and likely today as well.

—As bad as this road trip began for the A's, things would suddenly seem sunnier with a win today. Taking two out of three from Tampa would be a good way to go into Toronto for the final leg of this three-city trek.

The lineups:

A's — Weeks 2B, Sogard SS, Matsui DH, Willingham LF, DeJesus RF, Sizemore 3B, Sweeney CF, Powell C, Rosales 1B; Cahill RHP.

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

A's beat Rays for rare road-series win

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Tampa Bay didn't make it easy for the A's to get their first road-series win in three months.

But every time the Rays took a lead Sunday, Oakland responded, and in the 10th inning, Josh Willingham decided things, clobbering a 3-2 fastball from Jake McGee into the seats in left. That gave Oakland a 5-4 victory at Tropicana Field, and for the first time since May 8-9, the A's recorded consecutive wins on the road.

"I never would have known that," outfielder David DeJesus said with genuine astonishment. "Three months? That's a long time."

Oakland's 14-20 record in one-run games entering Sunday was the league's worst, and the team was 6-10 in extra innings, second worst in the league.

"One-run game, extra innings, road - all the things we've been struggling with," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "That was good."

Willingham said he was looking fastball with the full count, and what do you know? "He was coming after me with a fastball," he said.

Willingham's homer was his 17th, with seven weeks to go already topping last year's Oakland team high of 16 by Kevin Kouzmanoff.

Melvin said that it has been Willingham and Hideki Matsui providing the big at-bats for Oakland for quite a while, and in the fifth inning, Matsui tied the game by hitting a two-run homer off David Price.

That extended Matsui's hitting streak to 15 games, tied for the A's season high. Matsui is 29-for-60 (.483) during his hitting streak, and his homer was his 11th, eight of them off left-handers.

Another slow-starting A's player, DeJesus, also is showing signs of getting it together. DeJesus, who missed four games last week because of right thumb soreness, had three hits, including a double, and scored two runs. In the series, he went 6-for-14. He's wearing a pad to protect the thumb.

"It's just one of those things," he said. "I'm more relaxed. Maybe I'm not holding the bat too tight. Some balls that were getting called strikes on me are balls now."

Ryan Sweeney recorded his first hit off a left-hander this season, when with the A's down 1-0 in the fourth, he went the other way against Price to send in DeJesus from second base. Sweeney was 0-for-19 against lefties entering the game.

Oakland was up 4-3 in the seventh when Longoria, 0-for-3 at that point, crunched a two-out solo homer to left off former Rays teammate Grant Balfour.

A's starter Trevor Cahill, pitching with a bruised right index finger, did a nice job despite being unable to use his spike curveball after the first few innings. He prevented any big innings: Even though the Rays sent eight men to the plate in the fourth, Cahill kept them to two runs in the inning, leaving the bases loaded when he got Longoria to fly to center. Melvin called it "a gutty effort."

Cahill allowed six hits and three runs in six innings. He walked two and struck out five. In his previous seven starts, Cahill was 1-5 with a 6.13 ERA and a .310 opponents' batting average.

A's rookie Fautino De Los Santos gets 1st win

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Rookie **Fautino De Los Santos** earned his first big-league victory Sunday, and it came with one nervous moment.

With the game tied 4-4, a man at first and two outs in the ninth, **Johnny Damon** hit a blast to right that **David DeJesus** grabbed in front of the wall.

"For a second, I thought it would be a home run," De Los Santos said as fellow reliever **Jordan Norberto** translated.

As for that first win, De Los Santos said, "I'm very excited, very happy." Manager **Bob Melvin** planned to give De Los Santos the lineup card.

De Los Santos, 25, has a 1.76 ERA in 13 appearances since being recalled July 1.

"He's done really, really well," closer **Andrew Bailey** said. "He's proved he can pitch at this level. He's got a great arm."

Bailey earned the save, but he, too, had a moment of uncertainty. With two men on and two outs, **Matt Joyce** hit a soft liner that looked as if it might go up the middle, but shortstop **Eric Sogard** caught it with a slight lunge.

Catcher **Landon Powell** had wanted Bailey to throw a cutter, but Bailey went with a fastball away, instead.

"I never shake off the catcher, but I shook off Landon - and he squared it up," Bailey said of Joyce. "Sogard was right there, I was like, 'Good! Good positioning!' "

Briefly: Coco Crisp was out of the lineup with right calf soreness, but Melvin expects him to be ready to go Tuesday at Toronto; same with **Conor Jackson** (back). ... **Cliff Pennington** got the day off. Melvin said that because Pennington is on medication for Bell's palsy, the team wanted to give him time to adjust. Melvin said Pennington also is likely to get a day off in Toronto. ... Reliever **Craig Breslow** tweaked a muscle under his left shoulder in the weight room Saturday and was unavailable, but he's expected to be OK on Tuesday.

A'S LEADING OFF

Getting it right: After Evan Longoria's homer in the seventh, Ben Zobrist sent a rocket down the first-base line that was signaled fair. A's manager Bob Melvin argued the call with first-base umpire Tim Welke. The umpires discussed it and ruled it was foul, which replays confirmed.

Drumbeat: A's thin today; Conor Jackson, Coco Crisp out, Pennington off

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Tropicana Field, 8/7/2011, 9:30am

Coco Crisp is being held out today with a right calf strain, but it's more of a precaution than anything else, especially with a day off tomorrow. He and Conor Jackson are both expected to be back on Tuesday at Toronto.

Jackson said his sore back feels much better and he's just getting an extra day to make sure the problem is resolved.

Cliff Pennington is getting a day off; he said that he is not experiencing more trouble with the bout of Bell's Palsy he's getting treated for, but manager Bob Melvin said that because Pennington is under medication for the problem, the team wanted to get him a day off. He'll also get a day off in Toronto for the season reason.

Craig Breslow tweaked his left shoulder lifting weights yesterday and he still has a small knot, according to Melvin, so he's probably unavailable today. Same thing: day off tomorrow, that gives all of these guys two full days of extra rest and treatment.

The A's are prudent in the way they deal with injuries and maladies this season, and that seems to have helped their overall DL use - they have used the DL 12 times this year, and September and roster expansion is getting close. They haven't used the DL fewer than 15 times since 2005, and the low 20s has been the norm the past three years.

Here's the lineup behind Trevor Cahill: Weeks 2b, Sogard ss, Matsui dh, Willingham lf, DeJesus rf, Sizemore 3b, Sweeney cf, Powell c, Rosales 1b

So the bench is basically Kurt Suzuki, although Pennington is probably available if needed. Melvin is likely to try to stay away from Crisp and Jackson if at all possible.

Alex Cobb, the Rays starter who went to the hospital last night to get his right hand checked out, told reporters that no blood clots or anything serious had been found, and the Rays expect him to pitch again this season. No long-term issues, according to the Rays.

Willingham powers A's with 10th-inning blast

By Anthony Chiang / MLB.com

ST. PETERSBURG -- The Athletics have become accustomed to playing close games on the road, but they aren't necessarily used to winning them.

That wasn't the case on Sunday, when Oakland used a 10th inning go-ahead homer from Josh Willingham to earn a 5-4 victory over the Rays at Tropicana Field. The victory gave the A's their first road series win since May 6-8.

"One-run game, extra innings on the road -- all the stuff we had been struggling with," manager Bob Melvin said. "It's well documented, our struggles on the road. So we needed, for many reasons, an outcome like this today."

Willingham's team-leading 17th homer of the season came on a 3-2 pitch from Rays reliever Jake McGee.

"He was coming after me with a fastball," Willingham said.

Reliever Fautino De Los Santos set Willingham's heroics up by throwing a scoreless ninth to send the contest into extra innings. The effort marked De Los Santos' first career Major League victory.

What made his performance even more impressive was the fact that he had already been called upon to face Tampa Bay in the first two games of the series.

"A lot of times that factors in when you bring a guy into a game," Melvin said. "That was his inning, regardless. Nobody was up in the bullpen, so he had to get through it."

After Tampa Bay took a 1-0 lead in the third, the A's came right back in the fourth. Center fielder Ryan Sweeney slapped an RBI single to left field off southpaw Rays starter David Price to knot the game at 1. It was Sweeney's first hit against a lefty in 20 at-bats this season.

Price allowed a career-high five hits to left-handed batters in his 4 2/3 innings. David DeJesus collected three of them as he continues to swing a hot bat. In the past two games, DeJesus has racked up five hits in 10 at-bats -- including two homers.

The Rays grabbed another lead in the bottom half of the fourth. Casey Kotchman led off the frame with a solo homer off the right-field foul pole, and Desmond Jennings brought in the second run with an RBI single to left field to give the Rays a 3-1 advantage.

But starter Trevor Cahill settled down to give the A's six solid innings -- allowing three runs on six hits -- despite a lingering bruise on his right index finger that prevented him from throwing his curveball.

"It's not a blister," Cahill said. "It usually just hurts on my curveball later in the game because I spike it. Today was the first time it started hurting on my fastball. But I just worked through it."

It was an important outing for Cahill, who has only won three of his past 17 starts.

"After a little bit of a rough start for him, to be able to get us through to where he got us was key," Melvin said. "And he did it with really one less pitch than he normally has. It was a gutsy effort from him."

After Hideki Matsui homered in the fifth inning, the back-and-forth trend continued in the seventh as Evan Longoria went yard to tie the game at 4. Matsui's shot enabled him to extend his hitting streak to 15 games.

Once the lead was in tow in the 10th inning, Andrew Bailey entered the game and recorded his 13th save of the season. But it didn't come easy, as the game ended on a line out to shortstop Eric Sogard with runners on first and second.

The A's have now won nine of its past 39 road games and are 2-4 on their current nine-game road trip.

"Definitely after losing the first four on the road, to turn it around like that is good for the team," Bailey said. "Hopefully it can continue in Toronto."

A's, Blue Jays aiming to get on a roll

By Spencer Fordin / MLB.com

The A's will come to Toronto on Tuesday, seeking to stabilize their season and make a run toward a .500 record, while the Blue Jays are trying to stay afloat in the league's most competitive division. Both teams will have their work cut out for them, with A's veteran Rich Harden matched up against Brett Cecil.

Harden, 2-2 with a 4.63 ERA this season, will try to contain one of the league's most imposing lineups. The right-hander has pitched well, but has allowed seven home runs in his 35 innings, an ominous statistic with Jose Bautista, the man with the most homers in the Major Leagues, lying in wait.

Bautista has homered in two of his past five games after a 14-game drought, and Harden has allowed at least one home run in each of his starts this season. The A's hope to get a boost to their own lineup, with Conor Jackson and Coco Crisp returning to health, but there may be a counter-balance.

Hideki Matsui, who has played just 15 games in the outfield this season, will be limited to designated-hitter duty on Toronto's artificial surface. The A's are concerned that playing in Toronto could damage the veteran's weathered knees, but manager Bob Melvin has seen enough to rate Matsui as an outfielder.

"I'm more than satisfied," said Melvin of Matsui's outfield play. "He has done a terrific job for us in the outfield. He is well prepared, he knows the opponent, he knows himself and he gets good reads. ... [It] has actually been a nice surprise for us to be able to put him out there to play some left field."

Cecil, who pitched through a demotion to Triple-A Las Vegas earlier in the season, has managed to turn his year around in recent weeks. The left-hander has trimmed nearly three runs off his ERA -- from 7.24 to 4.35 -- in his last six starts, and he's managed to complete at least six innings in nine of his 11 outings.

A's: Matsui showing signs of resurgence

Matsui delivered his 11th homer, and his second in three games, on Sunday, providing some hope that he can make a charge in the last two months. Matsui, a .298 second-half hitter for his career, went into Sunday on pace for his worst season in average (.268), on-base (.340) and slugging percentage (.415).

Blue Jays: Lawrie to make Rogers Centre debut

The Blue Jays will treat the local populace to some Canadian contributions when they return on Tuesday, as they have two native-born players on the roster for the first time since 2000. Toronto currently has Mark Teahen and Brett Lawrie on the roster, the first pair of Canadians on the team since Rob Ducey and Paul Quantrill.

Lawrie, acquired from Milwaukee in the offseason in exchange for Shaun Marcum, hit his first career home run in Sunday's win. The former first-round draftee hit .353 with 18 homers and 61 RBIs for Triple-A Las Vegas before his recent promotion, and the Blue Jays hope to have found a long-term fixture at third base.

Worth noting

- Toronto closer Jon Rauch, suffering from a sore knee, was unavailable on Sunday.
- Toronto catcher J.P. Arencibia, who leads all big-league backstops with 18 home runs, has nine extra-base hits in his past 13 games.
- Shortstop Cliff Pennington was out of the lineup for Oakland on Sunday, but could return on Tuesday.

Crisp, Jackson, Pennington miss series finale

By Anthony Chiang / MLB.com

ST. PETERSBURG -- Oakland headed into Sunday's contest with a short bench.

After stealing a career-high four stolen bases on Saturday, center fielder Coco Crisp was not in the lineup on Sunday because of a strained right calf. Manager Bob Melvin hopes to have Crisp back in the lineup in Toronto, as the Rays have an off day on Monday.

The news regarding Conor Jackson was similar. Jackson, who already missed Saturday's game because of a knot in the right side of his back, was out of the starting lineup for Sunday's series finale. But Jackson was optimistic that the injury wouldn't be an issue going forward.

"It's definitely not something that I think is going to be lingering into Toronto," Jackson said. "I think for sure that I'll be ready to go [in Toronto]."

As if that wasn't already enough, Cliff Pennington is also absent from Sunday's lineup, but for precautionary reasons related to Bell's palsy.

"We're going to give him a day," Melvin said. "He's got the whole medication thing going on and we want him to get used to that. We'll probably end up giving him a day off somewhere in Toronto, too."

The Athletics' bullpen will also be limited. Melvin added that left-handed reliever Craig Breslow is probably not available for Sunday's game after suffering "a pretty good knot" under his left shoulder during a lifting session on Saturday.

Despite all of that, Oakland took the field in search for a series win on the road on Sunday.

"We are a little bit limited today," Melvin said. "But it's all right because nine is all you need."

Gonzalez, Weeks enjoy Florida homecoming

ST. PETERSBURG -- Gio Gonzalez and Jemile Weeks were all smiles in the clubhouse this weekend.

With both players hailing from the state of Florida, they were excited for the chance to see family and friends while playing the Rays.

Gonzalez, who is from Hialeah, Fla., took advantage of an off day in his home state and took a trip to Busch Gardens with his family and friends. He said that the best part about it was being able to experience the typical erratic Florida weather.

"It was rainy, sunny, rainy, sunny -- I was like, 'This is definitely the Florida weather you always miss when you go back home,'" Gonzalez said.

Weeks, on the other hand, requested about 30 tickers for some of his closest family members and friends from back home in Orlando, Fla.

"I felt good just knowing I was back in the state of Florida," Weeks said. "It's always good to be back here."

Extra bases

- Manager Bob Melvin said that he will probably not play Hideki Matsui in the outfield during Oakland's upcoming three-game series against Toronto because of the artificial turf.
- The A's have committed 18 errors in 21 games since the All-Star break.

A's reverse negative trends

Willingham's 10th-inning blast provides one-run, extra-inning road victory

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — The Athletics have struggled on the road, in one-run games and in extra innings. All three came together in a positive way for one day.

Josh Willingham led off the 10th inning with a home run, helping the A's beat the Tampa Bay Rays 5-4 on Sunday.

Willingham lined a pitch from Jake McGee (0-1) into the left-field stands for his 17th homer this season. Fautino De Los Santos (1-0) threw a scoreless ninth to pick up his first major league win and Andrew Bailey allowed two singles in the 10th before getting his 13th save.

"It feels great," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said after the game. "Everybody contributed."

Hideki Matsui also homered for Oakland, which stopped a stretch of 12 consecutive non-winning road series by taking two of three from the Rays. The Athletics improved to 7-10 in extra-inning games and 15-20 in one-run contests.

"All the stuff that we've been struggling with, a good win for us," Melvin said. "It's well documented, our struggles on the road. We needed, for many reasons, an outcome like this. Guys are feeling a lot better about it."

Tampa Bay got homers from Casey Kotchman and Evan Longoria.

"It was a tough one," McGee said.

Matsui extended his hitting streak to 15 games with a two-run homer off AL All-Star David Price during a three-run fifth that gave Oakland a 4-3 advantage. The designated hitter has 23 homers and 99 RBIs in 129 games against the Rays, his most against any team.

David DeJesus scored the go-ahead run in the fifth on J.P. Howell's wild pitch.

Tampa Bay pulled even at 4-4 on Longoria's solo shot off Grant Balfour during the seventh.

Price, coming off three straight losses, allowed four runs and seven hits over 4½ innings.

"It's been frustrating the last month and a half," Price said. "It's going to change. It stinks."

Oakland's Trevor Cahill, who is pitching with a bruise on his right index finger, gave up three runs and six hits over six innings.

"Usually it just hurts on my curveball later in the game, but this is the first time it started hurting on a fastball," Cahill said. "I just kind of worked through it."

Johnny Damon put the Rays ahead 1-0 on a third-inning RBI grounder, and Kotchman had a solo homer and Desmond Jennings hit an RBI single as Tampa Bay went up 3-1 in the fourth.

Ryan Sweeney was hitless in 19 at-bats against left-handers this season before getting Oakland even at 1-1 on a run-scoring single off Price in the fourth. The Rays lefty entered holding left-handed batters to a .154 average this year, lowest among major league starters.

Tampa Bay's Ben Zobrist lost a double with two outs in the seventh after a reversal call.

First base umpire Tim Welke, while attempting to get out of the way of a liner down the line, called the ball fair. Welke, after talking with Melvin, checked with plate umpire Mike DiMuro and the call was changed to foul.

Zobrist then popped out to end the inning.

Oakland center fielder Coco Crisp (strained right calf) and first baseman Conor Jackson (back spasms) were both out of the starting lineup, but will likely return for the start of a three-game series at Toronto on Tuesday night.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Sacramento falls in series-opener at Iowa

By Veronika Tafoya / Sacramento River Cats

Despite striking first with a solo home run by Andy LaRoche in the first inning, the River Cats were unable to keep the hits coming as they fell 6-1 to the Iowa Cubs on Sunday afternoon at Principal Park.

The home run was LaRoche's fourth of the year, and his only hit of the game. The loss was the second in a row, and the first time Sacramento has lost two consecutive games since July 19 and 20 against the Salt Lake Bees.

Entering Sunday's game, the River Cats were 44-17 overall when scoring first, but their 1-0 lead wouldn't last long.

The Cubs picked up a solo home run for themselves in the first inning, hit by Brett Jackson, and Brad Snyder added another run after tripling and then scoring on a sacrifice fly.

The River Cats attempted to change the score in the fourth inning, but struggled to find the right hits. Three force outs ended the fourth inning, and by the fifth River Cats tallied 11 groundball outs thrown by Iowa's winning pitcher, Dave Bush.

Banwart allowed another home run in the fourth inning, a solo shot by Scott Moore that took their lead to 3-1. Banwart ended up throwing 7.0 innings, giving up six hits and three runs and striking out two.

Iowa reliever Carlton Smith gave up a base hit to Brandon Allen, making him responsible for half of the Cats four hits allowed by the sixth inning.

The River Cats would pick up two more hits by the end of the game, but they didn't have much of an effect after the Cubs cemented their victory with three more runs in the eighth.

The inning started with Brett Jackson knocking out his second home run of the day, and a triple from Montanez scored Scott Moore. Steve Clevenger kept the runs flowing by batting in another run, and Matthew Spencer picked up another RBI, giving the Cubs a 6-1 lead.

The five hits in that inning were given up by Sacramento reliever Andrew Carignan, who struggled in his 0.2 innings pitched.

Sunday's game put Sacramento at 4-3 so far in August, and even with the loss they still remain in first place of the Pacific South Division with a record of 70-46.

The River Cats will play the Cubs again Monday at 5:05 p.m., with lefties Carlos Hernandez (6-6, 4.46) and Chris Rusin (1-1, 3.47) facing off at Principal Park.

'Hounds use 7-run inning to win fourth straight

Staff reports, Midland Reporter Telegram

CORPUS CHRISTI — Stephen Parker drove in four runs and the Midland RockHounds had a seven-run fourth inning to beat the Corpus Christi Hooks, 11-8, at Whataburger Field on Sunday.

The big inning for RockHounds came right after the Hooks had a four-run third inning against Midland starter Shawn Haviland (6-9) to take a 4-1 lead.

But then the RockHounds sent 12 batters to the plate in the big fourth. Wes Timmons (2 for 4) started things off with a single and then later scored on a Ryan Ortiz single. After Grant Green (3 for 5) added an RBI single, Parker gave Midland the lead for good, 5-4, with a two-run double against Hooks starter Jarred Cosart (0-1). Shane Peterson added a two-run single and Timmons also came around to stroke an RBI single for an 8-4 advantage.

The RockHounds added a run in the fifth and on a Parker RBI single and then added two more insurance runs in the seventh with another RBI single by Parker (3 for 4) and a fielder's choice groundout by Adam Heether.

Every RockHound in the lineup except for Jeremy Barfield had a hit.

Midland has now won four consecutive games and three out of four out of the series with the Hooks.

The RockHounds and Hooks close out the series at 7:05 p.m. today at Whataburger Field.

Ports Shutout Quakes

Stockton Ports

The Stockton Ports shut out the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes 5-0 on Sunday night to start off a three game series. The win extends the Ports win streak against southern division rivals to 11 in a row dating back to June 13 against the High Desert Mavericks.

The Ports got on the board in the first with a run. Conner Crumbliss walked with one out in the inning to bring Michael Choice to the plate. Choice, who had missed two weeks with a quad strain, made his return to the lineup as the DH, and went 0-for3 on the night, including striking out in the first. This brought up Anthony Aliotti, who hit a single to advance Crumbliss to third. Michael Gilmartin came up next and hit a single of his own to drive in Crumbliss.

The Ports scored two more runs in the third. Mitch LeVier led off the inning with a walk, and advanced to second on a single by Leonardo Gil. Then Ryan Lipkin stepped up and smacked a double to center field to score both LeVier and Gil. The Ports attempted to extend the lead as Crumbliss laced a single to keep the inning going. Choice walked to load the bases and extend his on-base streak to 45 games. Unfortunately Aliotti struck out and Gilmartin grounded out to end the inning.

The Ports tacked on another run in the third. Rashun Dixon led off the inning with a bit of good luck. Dixon hit a big fly ball to center field, where Nick Buss lost it in the sun and it dropped near him. Preston Mattingly overran the ball and Dixon extended the hit into a triple. Gil then laced a single to right-center field to score Dixon for the only run of the third.

The Ports were quiet offensively for the next three innings. Meanwhile Ports pitching continued to keep the Quakes off the scoreboard. Ports starter Murphy Smith pitched 6.0 scoreless innings, giving up just three hits while striking out six before being relieved by AJ Huttenlocker. Huttenlocker pitched 2.0 scoreless innings of his own, giving up just one hit and striking out two.

The Ports tacked on a final run in the seventh inning, with Crumbliss and Aliotti once again combining for a run. Crumbliss led things off with a walk, his third of the game. Aliotti drove in Crumbliss, who had stolen second, with a double for the final run of the game.

Jose Guzman came in to finish the game for the Ports. Guzman got off to a rough start, walking his first two batters faced. After a visit from pitching coach Craig Lefferts, Guzman settled down and struck out Jake Lemmerman. Things got interesting when Algelo Songco singled to load the bases, but Guzman got out of the jam by getting a strikeout and a pop out to end the threat and the game.

The Ports look to extend their win streak against south division rivals to 12 tomorrow as James Simmons faces off against Red Patterson at 7:05 p.m. tomorrow.

Bats Quiet In 4-1 Loss

By Matthew Wheaton, Burlington Bees

BURLINGTON, IA- Burlington RHP Nate Long (6-6) allowed two runs on four hits in six innings but the Burlington Bees (14-28) scored only one run and lost to the Clinton LumberKings (22-20) by a score of 4-1 at Community Field Sunday afternoon.

Clinton started the scoring in the top of the third inning after CF Mike McGee (1-4) drew a two-out walk. A single to center field from LF Julio Morban (2-3) moved McGee to second base. DH Kevin Rivers (0-2) walked, advancing McGee to third base and Morban to second base. A two-RBI single from 2B Stefen Romero (2-4) gave the LumberKings a 2-0 lead.

In the top of the seventh inning, McGee hit a solo home run to right field to make the score 3-0.

Morban hit a one-out double to left field and scored on a RBI single from Romero in the top of the ninth inning to put Clinton up 4-0.

Burlington 1B Josh Whitaker (0-2) drew a lead-off walk in the bottom of the ninth inning and scored on a single to left field from RF Douglas Landaeta (1-4) to get Burlington within three runs at 4-1.

The Bees and LumberKings play game three of their four game series on Monday at 6:30 p.m. Its "Dollar Monday," presented by Miller Lite, at Community Field. Adult general admission tickets are just \$2 and senior/student general admission tickets, hot dogs, pizza, popcorn, and cans of Pepsi products are just a dollar. Fans can enjoy 16 oz. cans of Miller Lite and Coors Light for just \$3.25 sponsored by Miller Lite and Everything That Rocks KQ92. LHP Anthony Fernandez (4-3, 3.11) gets the start for the LumberKings against RHP Josh Bowman (7-4, 3.64) for the Bees. Pre-game coverage begins at 6:10 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at www.gobees.com.

Lake Monsters-Tri City Spilt Twinbill

By Paul Stanfield / Vermont Lake Monsters

BURLINGTON, VT --- The Vermont Lake Monsters scored six runs in the bottom of the second inning in an 8-3 victory in game one, while three straight hits with two outs in the top of the seventh in game two gave the Tri-City ValleyCats a 3-2 victory and a split of the New York-Penn League doubleheader on Sunday afternoon at historic Centennial Field.

The Lake Monsters fell behind 2-0 in the opener as Tri-City scored twice in the top of the first, but Vermont got a two-out RBI double from Bobby Crocker in the bottom of the inning and then sent 11 batters to the plate to score six runs in the second for a 7-2 lead.

Dusty Robinson tied the game 2-2 with an RBI single scoring Chad Lewis, who had led off the second with an infield single. Three of the next four Lake Monsters walked forcing home two runs and knocking ValleyCat starter Jonas Dufek (3-4) from the game. Lewis capped off the six-run outburst with his second hit of the inning, a two-run single to leftcenter for a five-run Vermont lead.

Crocker had a two-run single in the first inning of the nightcap for a 2-0 Lake Monster lead, but the ValleyCats tied the game with single runs in the fourth and fifth innings on RBI doubles from Rafael Valenzuela and Matt Duffy. Then in the seventh with two outs and no one on, Tri-City got three straight singles off Nathan Kilcrease (2-2) from Justin Gominsky, Duffy and Zach Johnson for the eventual game-winning run.

Travis Smink (2-2) allowed one hit over three scoreless innings for the win in game two, while Vermont Kurt Wunderlich (1-4) picked up his first win of the season allowing three runs on eight hits over five innings in the opener. Crocker was 4-for-6 with three RBI in the doubleheader, including 3-for-3 with a pair of RBI in game two. Miles Hamblin was 4-for-7 with two runs in the twinbill for Tri-City (20-29).

Vermont (25-24) wraps up the quick two-day homestand on Monday night against Tri-City starting at 7:05 pm. Come out to Centennial to help celebrate Champ's birthday as the Lake Monsters play their final home game before heading out on a six-game roadtrip.