

**Oakland A's reliever Craig Breslow allows grand slam in loss to Toronto Blue Jays**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

TORONTO -- A's reliever Craig Breslow did not enter an easy situation Wednesday, and his task was tougher given his recent struggles.

Inheriting a bases-loaded jam in the sixth inning, the lefty allowed a run-scoring single and then served up a grand slam to Toronto Blue Jays rookie Brett Lawrie, sealing the A's fate in an 8-4 loss at the Rogers Centre.

As Breslow kicked himself for missing his location on a 2-0 fastball, Lawrie -- a highly touted rookie playing in his fifth major league game -- cranked his celebration into high gear.

He pumped his arm going around first base. Then he slammed his helmet down and yelled wildly when he got back to his dugout, obliging the home crowd with a curtain call.

The celebration went a bit far in Breslow's mind.

"It was a big hit," he said. "I wouldn't have chosen to celebrate that way, but he got the best of me there."

Tensions escalated in the eighth with the Blue Jays up 8-3.

With a runner on first and one out, A's reliever Jordan Norberto hit Yunel Escobar with a 92 mph fastball on the first pitch of his at-bat.

Escobar began walking toward the mound, and both benches cleared, though no punches were thrown and no warnings issued by home plate umpire Dana DeMuth.

Norberto, who walked Jose Bautista on four pitches after hitting Escobar, said the pitch wasn't intentional.

"I was surprised (Escobar) approached me because I didn't try to hit him on purpose," Norberto said. "I don't want to get my teammates in a fight."

The loss snapped the A's three-game winning streak, but a concern moving forward for manager Bob Melvin is solving Breslow's woes.

A solid middle reliever for Oakland over the past two seasons, Breslow carries a 9.00 ERA over his past nine appearances, surrendering seven earned runs over seven innings.

"A lack of execution is something that's been hurting me for some time, and I've got to make an adjustment," Breslow said.

On Lawrie's grand slam, the lefty was trying to spot a fastball down and away, but it cut back over the plate.

"We have to get him right," Melvin said. "He's struggling with his command in the strike zone."

The sixth-inning mess wasn't just his doing.

A's starter Gio Gonzalez (9-10), who steadied himself after a 36-pitch first inning, gave up Adam Lind's double to start the inning, then walked Edwin Encarnacion.

Catcher Kurt Suzuki then threw to second trying to pick off Lind. His throw skipped under the glove of shortstop Cliff Pennington to advance both runners, and Gonzalez walked Colby Rasmus to load the bases for Breslow.

"I really can't explain any of it," Gonzalez said. "I feel like I'm pitching better than my performance. The results just suck."

The A's took a 3-1 lead with three runs in the fourth off right-hander Henderson Alvarez, making his major league debut.

David DeJesus homered to dead center with one out in the fourth, and Josh Willingham added another long ball in the ninth. He has homered in three consecutive games and has six in his past 11.

### **A's update: Players unconcerned about allegations that Jays stole signals**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

TORONTO -- A's players were tuned in to clubhouse televisions Wednesday following a story about the Toronto Blue Jays allegedly stealing opponents' signs.

ESPN The Magazine reported that four unnamed players from an American League team witnessed someone sitting in the center field seats at Rogers Centre last season and signaling Blue Jays hitters on what pitches were coming.

Toronto general manager Alex Anthopoulos vehemently denied the allegations Wednesday.

A's reliever Craig Breslow said the responsibility is on teams to change their signs often enough that they can't be deciphered.

But he added that when former A's pitcher Ben Sheets got rocked for nine runs last season in Toronto, some players had suspicions.

"It just seemed unusual that a guy with that good of stuff could get hit around (like that)," Breslow said.

However, Sheets had a 4.53 ERA last season, and he pitched much of the season with an injured elbow that required reconstructive surgery.

A's reliever Grant Balfour said he wasn't buying the ESPN story.

"(The Blue Jays) are 30 games back," Balfour said. "If they knew what was coming, don't you think they'd be in first place?"

Toronto actually is 13 games back in the A.L. East.

Texas Rangers lefty C.J. Wilson, who starts Friday at Oakland, ripped into A's fans and the O.co Coliseum in a session with Rangers reporters Wednesday.

"I hate pitching there," Wilson said, according to ESPN.com. "The mound sucks, the fans suck. There's no fans there. It's too bad because the fans that are there are really adamant, and they're really stoked on the team ... But, you know, some games you go there, and there's like 6,000 people there."

Eligible for free agency after the season, Wilson added that "you don't have to worry about me signing there after the season. The players on their team hate me."

In May, Wilson accused the A's of playing "lawyer ball" -- not swinging and letting the umpires decide the game -- after he walked four in a loss to Oakland.

A's players responded by sending Wilson a baseball that read "From the law office of ..." accompanied by several signatures.

### **Chin Music: Coco Crisp sits again, status unknown for Thursday**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 8/10/2011 4:04pm

Checking in from Toronto, where the hot topic of the day is whether the Blue Jays are stealing signs from the center field seats during home games. Toronto GM Alex Anthopoulos spoke at a news conference vehemently denying any of the allegations that came out of an ESPN The Magazine story on the subject. His opening statement: "This whole thing is stupid. It's unbelievably that we're sitting here to even talk about this. ... All I'll say is there's zero truth to this."

It was pretty entertaining to listen to him go on ...

—As for A's news, Coco Crisp (strained right calf) is out of the lineup again, with Ryan Sweeney playing center field and Cliff Pennington hitting second in the order. Manager Bob Melvin said Crisp was scheduled for baseball activity before the game

to test his calf. He's not sure about whether Crisp will be ready to play in Thursday's road trip finale. "I'm always hopeful, but I'm not even gonna handicap it," Melvin said. "If he does feel it some, I would be reluctant to play him."

The lineups:

A's — Weeks 2B, Pennington SS, Matsui DH, Willingham LF, DeJesus RF, Jackson 1B, Sweeney CF, Suzuki C, Sizemore 3B; Gonzalez LHP.

Jays — Davis LF, Escobar SS, Bautista RF, Lind 1B, Encarnacion DH, Rasmus CF, Hill 2B, Arencibia C, Lawrie 3B; Alvarez RHP.

### **Rookie Brett Lawrie's slam powers Jays over A's**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Brett Lawrie, less than one week into his big-league career and already the pride of his native Canada, crushed his first career grand slam Wednesday to propel Toronto to an 8-4 victory over Oakland that turned testy in the late stages.

The A's are seldom involved in any bench-clearing incidents, but after surrendering an RBI single to Rajai Davis in the eighth, recently acquired A's reliever Jordan Norberto hit Yunel Escobar with the next pitch, which was up and in. Escobar started toward the mound, but catcher Kurt Suzuki quickly stepped in front of him, and although both dugouts and bullpens emptied, all that resulted was a lot of milling around. No one was ejected, no warnings issued.

Norberto said there was no intention to hit Escobar; he'd tried to go inside and simply missed. Plus, he's known for his occasional control problems. But Toronto manager John Farrell told reporters that, given the situation, "It makes you wonder."

The A's have had three batters of their own hit in the series, including Hideki Matsui in the fifth inning. And there wasn't a great deal of enthusiasm for the way Lawrie celebrated his grand slam - with an abundance of fist-pumping, hollering and even a helmet slam in the dugout. "He hasn't been in the big leagues a week," one Oakland player noted with disapproval.

"I probably wouldn't have chosen to celebrate it that way," said reliever Craig Breslow, who served it up. "But he got the best of me."

A's starter Gio Gonzalez loaded the bases to start the sixth before giving way to his fellow left-hander. Breslow gave up an RBI single and then, with one out, Lawrie's slam, which sailed over the wall in left and earned the 21-year-old a curtain call. He was called up Friday.

Over his past nine appearances, Breslow has given up 14 hits and 10 runs, seven earned. However, entering Wednesday, Breslow had allowed only three of 22 inherited runners to score, the fourth lowest percentage in the league.

"Lack of execution is hurting me," said Breslow, who was trying to throw outside with a 2-0 pitch and left it over the plate. Breslow said he believes it's a matter of adjusting his tempo; he doesn't believe it's a mechanical problem.

Gonzalez didn't have an easy first inning, allowing two walks, two hits and one run, but he did stop things there, preventing a big inning. He gave up only one walk and a single over the next four innings.

"I feel like I'm pitching a lot better than the results are," said Gonzalez, who has allowed 20 earned runs over his past four starts.

Relievers Trystan Magnuson (also a native of Canada) and Norberto allowed single runs.

In the fourth, David DeJesus hit a one-out homer off Henderson Alvarez, 21, who allowed three runs in 5 2/3 innings in his big-league debut. The only video the A's had available on him was his one inning at the Futures Game last month.

Josh Willingham hit his sixth homer in 11 games, a solo shot in the ninth. Coco Crisp missed his third game with a right calf strain and he does not appear likely to play in today's finale.

### **Blue Jays accused of stealing signs**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

The pre-game talk at Rogers Centre on Wednesday was all about ESPN the Magazine's report alleging that the Blue Jays stole signs last season, via a "man in a white shirt" who supposedly raised his arm if Toronto players were about to get an offspeed pitch.

The magazine cited four anonymous opposing relievers, along with statistical analysis of the Blue Jays' home-run prowess at home compared to visitors (the Blue Jays had a lopsided 150-83 edge).

Blue Jays general manager **Alex Anthopoulos** called the report "stupid" during a pre-game news conference and pointed to the fact that no ex-Blue Jays were quoted - surely the team couldn't keep such activities quiet, especially in this age of ever-present video.

Toronto's **Jose Bautista** said the reported altercation he had over the allegations came against the White Sox.

A's reliever **Grant Balfour** said he'd heard rumors before about "the man in the outfield putting his arm up or down," but, he said, "I've never witnessed it."

"People are going to speculate," Balfour said, "but **Justin Verlander** threw a no-hitter here. That's pretty good if they knew what was coming. ... And if they knew what was coming, you'd think they'd be in first place."

A's starter **Rich Harden** said, "I've always had a hard time pitching against them here, but I don't think sign-stealing is the reason; it's that I throw the ball all over the place and they've got some good hitters in a park where the ball can carry."

Manager **Bob Melvin** said such allegations pop up in baseball, and if teams feel they need to change their signs, they should.

He said stealing Oakland's elaborate signs wouldn't be easy.

Signs in the outfield Wednesday included "Fastball" and "I stole this sign."

Toronto reliever **Casey Janssen** fashioned fake binoculars out of two coffee cups and tape, and peered toward the plate.

### **Leading off**

**Not an Oakland fan:** Texas pitcher C.J. Wilson, starting Friday at the Coliseum, told ESPN Dallas, "I hate pitching there. The mound sucks, the fans suck. There's no fans there." He said he won't consider signing with the A's as a free agent.

## **Drumbeat: A's play at Toronto on day the Jays are accused of sign stealing (again)**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Rogers Centre, 8/10/2011, 2:56pm

The A's news of the day is minimal; as expected, Coco Crisp is out of the lineup again with that right calf strain. Manager Bob Melvin said he doesn't want to put odds on tomorrow, and he mentioned how important running is to Crisp's overall game - so I kind of doubt he'll be in there tomorrow.

The story here today is courtesy of ESPN the Magazine, which released a story today about allegations that the Blue Jays steal signs. Earlier this season, the Yankees had hinted the same thing, and it sounds based on things Jose Bautista told Toronto writers today as if the White Sox might be the source for this round of accusations, accusations that the Blue Jays strongly deny. The allegations center around a man wearing a white shirt purportedly seen by four opposing players waving his arms to indicate when pitches other than fastballs were coming last season.

I went to Toronto GM Alex Anthopoulos' press conference this afternoon, an unusual affair in which he expressed clear bafflement and disdain for ESPN's story - and he noted that he never has heard from any opposing team on the subject. None of his fellow GMs, no managers, nothing. None of the accusations in ESPN's story came from named sources, other than Yankee manager Joe Girardi's widely reported remarks of last month. Yankee center fielder Curtis Granderson confirmed in the story that he'd received a text from one of the players making allegations - and when he'd looked for someone relaying signs from center field, he saw nothing.

"Don't let the facts get in the way of a good story," Anthopoulos said. "I have a lot of respect for ESPN, but in this instance, they're wrong. They didn't do the homework they needed to do."

Anthopoulos described himself as "blown away" that a press conference over such allegations was even necessary.

"To have to talk about this, it's nuts," he said.

As many people around here said today, no former Blue Jays were quoted in the story, though an ex-Toronto player presumably would be in the know about any such activities. The story uses some statistics to point out the difference between the Jays' home and road offensive splits, but it's debatable whether that is actual evidence of wrongdoing. The most interesting statistical claims center around the home-run boost the Blue Jays allegedly received at home, compared to their opponents at Rogers Centre. There are some elaborate numbers cited, but what it boils down to is that Toronto hit 150 homers at Rogers Centre, opponents 83. (I just ran the numbers for this year, and the Blue Jays are on track to hit 104 homers at home and allow 88. Of course, they lost more than 50 home runs combined with the departures of John Buck and Vernon Wells.)

Bautista told Toronto reporters today that last year his homer totals drew allegations of steroids, this year it's sign stealing - he's wondering what it will be next year.

I asked some of the A's pitchers about the sign-stealing flap, and Grant Balfour said he's heard the rumors about the man in the white shirt relaying signs - but he's never seen any evidence here of sign stealing.

"Justin Verlander threw a no-hitter here," Balfour said. "That's pretty good, if they know what's coming and you still throw a no-hitter."

Balfour also said, "If they know what's coming, you'd think they'd be in first place."

Rich Harden had a career 13.50 ERA here until last night's gem, and he said, "I've always had a hard time pitching against them here - but I don't think sign stealing was the reason. It's because I was throwing the ball all over the place, and they also have some good hitters in a park where the ball can carry."

If Balfour thought a team was stealing signs?

"If you're doing that, you're going to wear it," he said. "That's the way it goes. Be prepared to get worn out. Go ahead, but know that that's the unwritten rule."

UPDATE: Signs in the outfield tonight: "Fastball" and, my favorite, "I stole this sign."

The A's lineup tonight behind Gio Gonzalez: Weeks 2b, Pennington ss, Matsui DH, Willingham lf, DeJesus rf, Jackson 1b, Sweeney cf, Suzuki c, Sizemore 3b

## **A's bullpen lets late lead slip**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

TORONTO -- On Tuesday, the A's spoiled the home debut of Blue Jays rookie and British Columbia native Brett Lawrie.

On Wednesday, Lawrie stole the show right back via a decisive sixth-inning grand slam off lefty Craig Breslow that left the A's on the losing end of an 8-4 contest and denied them a shot at their first winning road trip since the beginning of May.

And Lawrie, clearly not shy of his rookie status, celebrated in quite the fashion.

The Blue Jays third baseman fist-pumped his way around the bases before gracing the home dugout with an array of forceful claps with his teammates, throwing down his batting helmet and ultimately responding to a curtain call.

"While it was going on, I didn't see it," Breslow said of the antics. "I was trying to get the next guy out. I could tell it was a little bit louder when I came in and saw the celebration. It was a big hit. I probably wouldn't have chosen to celebrate it that way ... but he got the best of me there."

"I think it's just the heat of the moment," Lawrie said. "I've always been a guy that's fired up."

Two innings later, A's reliever Jordan Norberto plunked Yunel Escobar with a first-pitch fastball near his back, forcing the benches to clear as Escobar made his way toward the mound while catcher Kurt Suzuki jumped in front of him. The fracas dissolved quickly without a single punch being thrown, and Norberto -- making just his third Major League appearance of the year -- maintained the pitch was unintentional.

"I was kinda surprised because I didn't hit him on purpose," he said. "I tried to go in and missed."

But Toronto manager John Farrell had a different take on the matter.

"When it's a first pitch and you hit somebody in the back," he said, "you know what, I know tonight was probably, what, his third appearance? But it certainly wasn't his third appearance in pro baseball.

"I can't sit here today or at this moment and say it was intentional, but when you miss that wide, particularly to your glove side, it makes one wonder."

Dramatics aside, the A's will now enter Thursday's series finale carrying around a 3-5 mark on their nine-game road swing. And when the team departs for the Bay Area, lefty Gio Gonzalez will bring with him 10 earned runs in his two starts over that span, four of which came out of Wednesday's loss, marking his fifth in his last six tries.

Following a shaky first inning that included two walks and 36 pitches, it appeared Gonzalez was back to his old ways, as he fired four clean frames while allowing just two baserunners along the way and gaining a 3-1 lead. But the southpaw quickly loaded the bases in the sixth with no outs, at which point Breslow was brought in to face Aaron Hill.

Hill managed an RBI single off Breslow, who proceeded to strike out J.P. Arencibia for out No. 1 before offering up Lawrie's first career grand slam -- a shot to left field -- to put the Blue Jays on top, 6-3.

"I was trying to go away," Breslow said. "We came in the first two pitches and I missed. Obviously, 2-0 there with the bases loaded, I gotta throw a strike. I tried to go down and away and ended up missing and overthrew it, which in that situation is not what I'm looking to do."

Like Gonzalez and several other notable A's hurlers, Breslow has struggled recently, surrendering seven earned runs over his past nine games after not allowing a run in his previous 11 appearances. The woes are nothing of the mechanical sort, he says.

"I think lack of execution is something that's been hurting me for a little bit of time, and I have to make an adjustment," he explained. "I don't think it's mechanical. If anything, it's maybe a little bit lack of rhythm or tempo. I have to concentrate on making my pitches."

Gonzalez, meanwhile, has fewer answers for his struggles. He's given up 20 earned runs, 32 hits and 15 walks over his last 21 1/3 innings spanning four starts, raising his ERA from 2.33 to 3.25.

"I feel like I'm pitching a lot better than my performance is coming out," he said. "I feel like everything is looking alive. It's just that the end results aren't there. I can't explain it, just gotta continue to battle through it."

Said Melvin: "If he gets through that [sixth] inning, that's going to be a real positive outing for him, based on the way it started. Good pitchers go through difficult times. This isn't the best time of the season for him. He's going to have to work his way through it, and he will."

The skipper's offense showed sporadic signs of life against Blue Jays righty Henderson Alvarez, who went 5 2/3 innings in his Major League debut. The best of those efforts came in a three-run fourth, when David DeJesus tallied his eighth homer of the season and Ryan Sweeney and Scott Sizemore added on with RBI hits of their own.

Josh Willingham's 19th homer of the season and his sixth in his last 11 games, a solo shot off Jesse Litsch in the ninth, proved to be the final run. But the finishing touches seemingly came long before that in the sixth with Breslow on the mound.

"We gotta find a way to get some outs there," Melvin said. "He's a key guy for us in the middle innings, and we have to get him right. The pitches that he's missing with, they're hitting. He's struggling with his command in the strike zone."

### **A's, Blue Jays' benches clear after HBP**

By Gregor Chisholm / MLB.com

TORONTO -- The Blue Jays and Athletics emptied their benches during a brief altercation in the bottom of the eighth inning on Wednesday night.

Toronto shortstop Yunel Escobar was hit in the middle of his back by a 92-mph fastball from left-hander Jordan Norberto.

Escobar took exception to the pitch and took several steps towards Norberto, who raised both of his hands into the air.

The benches for both teams emptied and their relievers came running in from the bullpens. Cooler heads quickly prevailed, and order was restored without any physical altercations. Escobar took his spot at first base and the inning resumed with Norberto on the mound and no players ejected.

Blue Jays manager John Farrell appeared to indicate after his club's 8-4 victory that the timing of the poorly located pitch was suspicious. Norberto had just surrendered an RBI single to Rajai Davis the previous at-bat.

"When it's a first pitch and you hit somebody in the back," Farrell said. "I know tonight was probably, what, his third appearance [this year]? But it certainly wasn't his third appearance in pro baseball.

"I can't sit here today, or at this moment, and say it was intentional. But when you miss that wide, particularly to your glove side, it makes one wonder."

Noberto was surprised by Escobar's reaction because he said the pitch wasn't intentional.

"I just tried to go in and missed," Norberto said.

### **Crisp doubtful to play against Blue Jays**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

TORONTO -- As expected, Coco Crisp remained out of the A's lineup for Wednesday's game in Toronto and is doubtful for Thursday's series finale because of lingering soreness in his right calf.

"He's going to do some baseball activity out here today, so that's encouraging," manager Bob Melvin said. "But we want to make sure that when we do bring him back he's ready to go. I don't want to chance that, because any time there's a pull, especially in the legs, that's a big part of his game, and we want to be careful with that."

Crisp stole a career-high four bases on Saturday at Tampa Bay before the injury forced his departure in the ninth. He's tallied 10 stolen bases in his last seven games and has an American League-leading 37 on the season. Anything that could hamper those abilities, Melvin noted, will keep him sidelined.

"If he does feel it some," the A's skipper said, "I'm going to be reluctant to play him."

### **Magnuson relishing time in home country**

TORONTO -- Big league rookies experience several firsts, but it's likely that one will easily rank higher than the rest by season's end for A's reliever Trystan Magnuson.

The 26-year-old righty, raised nearly 950 miles from Toronto in Winnipeg, Manitoba, is in the midst of his first visit to Rogers Centre, home to his childhood Blue Jays team and the same one that drafted him in 2007.

"It's been so awesome," Magnuson said. "I grew up watching the Blue Jays all the time. It's a team for the whole country, and it's a blast getting to come back here, and it being my first time to sit in the bullpen at the Rogers Centre. Getting the chance to compete against the team you grew up idolizing is fantastic."

Magnuson, part of a winter trade that sent Rajai Davis to the Blue Jays, remained a resident of Winnipeg until he was 11, at which point his family moved to Louisville, Ky. for his father's job. His baseball loyalties have since remained the same, though.

"Without a doubt, aside from the A's," he said, smiling. "And it was a thrill, obviously, being drafted by a Canadian team, but at the end of the day it's still just a thrill to be here. I still have a huge respect for the organization and everything, and I know so many of the guys, which makes it fun. That adds another element of excitement to it."

Magnuson made his first mound appearance on his home soil in the seventh inning Wednesday, giving up a run on two hits with one strikeout.

"I couldn't help but smile when the national anthem played," he said before the game. "I tried hard not to, but I just couldn't help it. I can't imagine what it would be like to be out on that mound."

### **Worth noting**

- Toshiaki Nagahara, the A's Minor League trainer for the club's Arizona Rookie League team, has been named Athletic Trainer of the Year for the Arizona Summer League, as voted on by his peers.

### **Moscoso, Mills face off in Toronto**

By Jon Star / MLB.com

It is the time of the season when teams no longer in contention can begin to see what they have got in terms of young players. On Thursday, both the A's and Blue Jays will get a glimpse of their own and each other's young pieces.

For the A's, Guillermo Moscoso will be tasked with capturing the series. Perhaps more importantly, Moscoso will have an opportunity to reverse his fortune since being recalled from the Minors. The right-hander is just 1-2 with a 7.40 ERA since returning from the farm on July 19. Moscoso had posted a 1.75 ERA in his previous six starts before being sent down.



A's manager Bob Melvin is looking for Moscoso to help reverse a recent trend that has seen Oakland starters get knocked around to a 5.36 ERA over their last 28 games entering Wednesday.

"He's just hit a bit of a rough patch here like some of our other guys," Melvin said.

Countering Moscoso will be Brad Mills, who will make just his third start of 2011 and the eighth start of his career dating back to '09. Mills returned to the Blue Jays' rotation on July 30, when he took a tough-luck loss after giving up two earned runs on six hits over seven innings against the Rangers. He picked up his second career victory his last time out by holding the Orioles to three earned runs on four hits over 5 1/3 innings.

### **Athletics: Pennington pouring it on**

Cliff Pennington is not expected produce much in the way of power, but his bat has helped an improved A's offense in the second half. Despite taking an 0-for-5 night on Wednesday, Pennington is hitting .342 (25-for-73) over 21 games since the All-Star break. The surge is a drastic turnaround after he hit just .235 in the first half, including a .202 mark in June.

Coco Crisp (strained right calf) is not expected to play again Thursday

Andrew Bailey has delivered in the second half throughout his young career, going 29-for-29 in save opportunities after the All-Star break. Bailey has allowed just one earned run in 10 appearances (9 1/3 innings) in the second half of 2011.

### **Blue Jays: Escobar an on-base machine**

Yunel Escobar has reached base safely in 38 of his last 41 games since June 18. During that stretch, the shortstop is hitting .335 (54-for-161) with 19 walks and a .416 on-base percentage entering Wednesday's game against the A's. Escobar leads all Major League shortstops with 50 walks. He has also reached base 176 times this season, which ranks first among all AL shortstops.

### **Worth noting:**

With a win on Wednesday, the Blue Jays are now in position to win the season series against Oakland for the fourth consecutive season.

### **A's lose to Blue Jays, 8-4**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TORONTO — Gio Gonzalez cruised into the sixth inning. The left-hander looked ready to put his rough stretch behind him. Then it all fell apart — in a hurry.

Gonzalez allowed three consecutive batters to reach, and Brett Lawrie hit a grand slam off Craig Breslow, sending the Oakland Athletics to an 8-4 loss to the Toronto Blue on Wednesday night.

Gonzalez (9-10) was charged with four runs and four hits in five-plus innings and is 0-4 with an 8.43 ERA in his past four starts. He walked five, one shy of his season high, and struck out four.

"I feel like I'm pitching a lot better than my performance is coming out" a frustrated Gonzalez said. "I feel good with my fastball. Everything is looking live, the curveball, the change-up. It's just the end results (stink). I can't explain it. I've just got to continue to battle through it."

Oakland manager Bob Melvin chose to focus on Gonzalez's performance between the second and fifth innings, when he retired 12 of 14.

"He was on the verge," Melvin said. "If he goes out there and has a clean (sixth) inning, that's going to be a real positive outing for him. Good pitchers go through difficult times, this isn't the best time of the season for him. He's going to have to work his way through it and he will."

Lawrie's drive to left on a 2-0 pitch from Breslow was his first career grand slam and gave the Blue Jays a 6-3 lead.

"It was everything I had imagined and more," said Lawrie, who was promoted from Triple-A on Friday. "It was a moment I'll never forget."

The 17th Canadian-born player in Blue Jays history, Lawrie pumped his fist repeatedly as he circled the bases, then traded enthusiastic high-fives with his amused teammates, firing his helmet to the ground as he reached the end of the dugout.

With the crowd of 19,541 standing, he came out of the dugout for a brief curtain call, waving from the top step.

"It's just the heat of the moment," Lawrie said of his exuberant celebration. "I've always been a guy who's been fired up. I like to get fired up and I like to get everyone else going. I like to be that spark and try and make everyone better and get everyone going."

"I was so caught up in the moment and I was so fired up," he added. "I don't think I hurt anybody but I don't think a lot of people are going to shake my hand from now on."

Breslow said he wasn't paying attention to Lawrie as giving up the blast, but watched the replay when he returned to the clubhouse.

"I could tell it was a little bit louder when I came in and saw the celebration," Breslow said. "It was a big hit. I probably wouldn't have chosen to celebrate it that way but he got the best of me."

Lawrie also doubled off the wall in left in the eighth and went 2 for 4. He's hitting .389 in five games since his promotion.

Before the game, Blue Jays general manager Alex Anthopoulos, manager John Farrell and several players angrily denied an ESPN story that Toronto has been stealing signs with the help of someone stationed in the outfield.

Then both benches and bullpens emptied in the eighth when Oakland's Jordan Norberto hit Yunel Escobar on the left arm with a pitch. Escobar yelled and took several steps toward the mound but was restrained by catcher Kurt Suzuki, while Norberto walked toward the plate, responding to Escobar with his arms spread wide. No punches were thrown and the field was soon cleared.

Farrell, however, was just as upset as his shortstop.

"I can't sit here at this moment and say it was intentional but when you miss that wide, particularly to your glove side, it makes one wonder," he said.

Norberto and Melvin denied any intent.

The Athletics were seeking their fourth consecutive win, all coming on the road. Instead, they dropped to 6-11 in their last 17 games in Toronto, dating to 2009.

Casey Janssen (4-0) got one out for the victory and Jesse Litsch gave up a ninth-inning homer to Josh Willingham but worked the final 2 2-3 innings for his first career save.

Adam Lind gave the Blue Jays the lead with an RBI single in the first, but the Athletics answered with a three-run fourth against rookie right-hander Henderson Alvarez, who was making his major league debut.

David DeJesus hit a one-out solo drive to center, his eighth, giving Oakland at least one home run in each of the past eight games.

Conor Jackson followed with a single and scored on Ryan Sweeney's double to left-center. Suzuki struck out before Scott Sizemore singled home Sweeney. Jemile Weeks followed with a drive to deep center, but Colby Rasmus made a running catch on the warning track.

Alvarez allowed three runs and eight hits in 5 2-3 innings.

Toronto got the rookie off the hook with a five-run sixth. Lind led off with a double and Edwin Encarnacion walked before both runners advanced on Suzuki's throwing error. Rasmus walked to load the bases and Gonzalez was replaced by Breslow, who surrendered an RBI single to Aaron Hill. After J.P. Arencibia struck out, Lawrie launched his second homer.

Encarnacion hit an RBI double off Trystan Magnuson in the seventh and Rajai Davis singled in Lawrie in the eighth.

Willingham hit a two-out drive to left in the ninth. It was his sixth homer in 11 games and No. 19 overall.

NOTES: The A's have gone deep 13 times in the past eight games. ... Blue Jays RHP Dustin McGowan (shoulder) pitched four innings at Double-A New Hampshire, allowing no runs and one hit. McGowan last pitched in the majors in 2008. ... Oakland manager Bob Melvin said OF Coco Crisp, who has missed three games with sore right calf, is not likely to play this series.

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **Sacramento losing streak at 5 entering homestand**

Sacramento River Cats

The Sacramento River Cats hope to regain their winning ways at Raley Field after concluding an eight-game road trip with a 7-6 loss at Iowa on Wednesday afternoon.

Sacramento starter Graham Godfrey had his shortest outing in over a month, allowing six runs (three earned) over 4.2 innings. Godfrey was unable to snap Sacramento's losing streak, which is now five.

Iowa is just the second home team to win a series against Sacramento this season, joining the Fresno Grizzlies, who swept visiting Sacramento from July 4-6.

Iowa slugger Bryan LaHair, who leads the Pacific Coast League with 30 home runs, led the Cubs' offense with a double and two RBIs. He had six RBIs in the three games he played during the series, with three doubles and a home run.

Trailing 7-3 entering the eighth inning, Brandon Allen brought Sacramento within a run with a three-run home run. It was his 20th homer of the season, and second since being acquired by the Oakland organization in a trade with the Arizona Diamondbacks.

Sacramento, which opens an eight-game homestand Friday against the Round Rock Express, has won seven consecutive home games and has a 33-27 home record.

On Friday night, Sacramento left-hander Josh Outman (7-2, 3.84) faces Round Rock left-hander Zach Jackson (10-4, 5.65) at 7:05 p.m. at Raley Field.

### **Sulentic's clutch hit rallies 'Hounds to win**

By Oscar LeRoy, Midland Reporter-Telegram

Midland RockHounds manager Steve Scarsone said Matt Sulentic has been one of the best clutch hitters on the team during the second half of the Texas League season.

On Wednesday, after a one-out, bases-loaded walk by Tyler Ladendorf to pull the 'Hounds to within 9-8, Sulentic delivered again in the clutch with a two-run single to give Midland a thrilling 10-9 victory over the Tulsa Drillers at Citibank Ballpark.

"That's a situation that I always want to be in -- a chance to win the game," Sulentic said. "I love it.

"I was thinking I don't want to get too big. The adrenaline was pumping right there and you have a tendency to want to try to hit the ball out of the yard, at least that's what I do. My biggest thing was to not try to swing as hard as I can and stay within myself."

This was a game that saw the RockHounds jump out to an early lead, then give it up in the later innings, before mounting some heroics in the ninth against a solid closer in Daniel Turpen (2-4).

Turpen got into trouble from the beginning as Shane Peterson and Wes Timmons reached on singles to center field. Then with one out, Ryan Ortiz connects on a bloop single to shallow right field that dropped in the middle of Tulsa's first baseman, second baseman and right fielder to load the bases.

Ladendorf then drew a four-pitch walk to score Peterson before Sulentic came through with the single to score Timmons and Ortiz.

With the victory, the RockHounds have now won six consecutive games and stayed four games back of first place San Antonio, an 11-4 winner over Springfield, in the South Division.

Scarsone said the comeback in the ninth inning is an example of how confident his team is right now.

"We were patient at the plate and we weren't trying to do too much," Scarsone said. "We had some key hits and the ball that Ortiz hit could have gone either way but we were lucky it falls in. I think the guys are believing in themselves and it's showing with their approach at the plate."

The RockHounds got off to a very good start as Grant Green hit a two-run home run over the left field wall in the first inning.

After Tulsa scored three runs in the top of the third to take the lead, the RockHounds responded by sending 11 batters to the plate and scored five runs in the bottom of the third against Tulsa starter Dan Houston to retake the lead, 7-3.

The RockHounds had seven hits in the inning and the first six batters reached, including Adam Heether, who got the big hit in the frame with a two-run single.

It got so shaky for Houston that at one point in the inning he got checked out by Tulsa trainer Austin O'Shea at one point to make sure he was all right. After Houston reassured O'Shea and Tulsa manager Duane Espy he was OK to continue, he actually settled down and got out of the inning without further damage.

Midland starter Gary Daley was solid in his 5 1/3 innings as the only other run he gave up was an unearned run in the sixth as the Drillers pulled to within 7-4.

"Tulsa has a lot of capable hitters in the lineup and Daley went (into the sixth inning), so I thought he did a good job for us," Scarsone said. "He should be encouraged by his performance tonight."

With the RockHounds' bullpen taking over, the Drillers offense went to work in the seventh inning. Mike Mitchell had an RBI double to knock out Trey Barham, and then Eric Wetzel tied the game at 7 with a two-run single to right field against Jonathan Ortiz.

The Drillers then took the 9-7 lead when Tommy Field blasted a two-run home run to left against Polin Trinidad.

"It is disappointing any time you give up a lead, but hopefully the way we came back will erase some of that disappointment," Scarsone said. "That's baseball. Sometimes the hits fall your way and sometimes they don't and Tulsa was able to get the hits to fall in certain situations. Luckily, we were able to overcome that tonight by the way we came back there in the ninth inning."

'HOUND BITES: RockHounds 2B Wes Timmons was recently named the Texas League Player of the Week for the week ending Aug. 7. Timmons hit .556 and helped the RockHounds to a 6-1 record during the week. ...RHP Sonny Gray, the Oakland A's first round draft pick in June's draft, is expected to start Friday for the RockHounds against Tulsa. Gray was the 18th overall pick out of Vanderbilt University. ...The Drillers had five stolen bases on the night.

TODAY'S PROBABLES: The RockHounds host the Tulsa Drillers in the second game of a three-game series at 7 p.m. today as Midland sends LHP Anthony Capra (1-4, 6.07 ERA) to the mound against Tulsa RHP Cory Riordan (1-11, 5.54).

### **Ports Take Rubber Match 5-1**

Stockton Ports

The Stockton Ports rebounded nicely from their loss on Monday with a 5-1 victory on Tuesday to take the rubber match and the series from the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes. The Ports now increase their record against southern division foes to 22-5.

Ports starter Rob Gilliam had another quality start, pitching 6.2 innings giving up just one earned run, a solo home run to Angelo Songco in the fourth inning. Gilliam earned the win, moving him into a tie with San Jose's Craig Westcott for the league lead with 12 wins.

The Ports got on the board in the third inning, knocking in three runs. Conner Crumbliss, who has been swinging a hot bat of late (.389 over the last five games, .300 over the last 10), led off the third with a ground rule double. Unfortunately, Crumbliss was too aggressive on a grounder by Myrio Richard and was tagged out for the first out of the inning. Richard, who reached due to the tag on Crumbliss, promptly stole second.

Michael Gilmartin and Anthony Aliotti both walked to load the bases for Petey Paramore. Paramore grounded to the third baseman, who threw to second instead of attempting to get the runner out at home, allowing Richard to score. Then Ryan Lipkin and Rashun Dixon hit back-to-back doubles to score two more runs for the Ports before the final out of the inning was recorded.

In the fifth inning, it was once again Lipkin and Dixon with back-to-back doubles to score two more runs for the Ports, bringing their final run total to five.

With two outs recorded in the seven, Jacob Brown, a former starting pitcher for the Ports, came in to reliever Gilliam in his first appearance from the bullpen. Brown pitched 2.1 scoreless innings, giving up just one hit and striking out three to end the game.

The Ports get a much needed day off before heading down to the southern division for a four-game series against the High Desert Mavericks.

### **River Bandits Ride Third Inning to Victory**

By Jon Versteeg, Burlington Bees

DAVENPORT, IA--The Quad Cities River Bandits (28-17) sent 13 batters to the plate in the third inning and scored seven runs on five hits to earn a 12-7 win over the Burlington Bees (15-30) before 3,334 fans at Modern Woodman Park in the opening game of a three-game series on Wednesday.

The Bees scored four runs on three hits in the second inning. 3B Tony Thompson (1-5) singled and went to second base when SS Yordy Cabrera (2-4) was hit by a pitch. 2B Ryan Pineda (1-2) hit a double to right field to score Thompson. C John Nester (1-3) walked to load the bases.

CF Tyreece House (1-3) singled to score Cabrera and make it 2-0. RF Jose Crisotomo (3-4) followed with a two-run single to plate Pineda and Nester and move the score to 4-0.

The River Bandits scored two runs in the second inning against Burlington RHP Blake Hasebrock (6-7). 1B Geoff Klein (2-5) hit a two-run home run over the right field wall to cut the lead down to 4-2.

Quad Cities scored a run in the fifth inning against LHP Max Peterson and Burlington got back on the scoreboard in the seventh inning. Crisotomo pulled a fastball over the right field wall for his second home run of the season and a 10-5 score.

Burlington got within three runs at 10-7 with two runs scoring in the eighth inning. Cabrera and Pineda doubled to produce one run. Crisotomo later added an RBI single to make it 10-7. He finished with four RBIs on Wednesday.

Quad Cities scored two runs in the eighth inning to make it 12-7.

The Bees and River Bandits continue their series on Thursday at 7:00 p.m. RHP Jonathan Joseph (3-4, 6.42) gets the start for the Bees against RHP Zach Russell (6-8, 3.34) for the River Bandits. Pre-game coverage begins at 6:40 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at [gobees.com](http://gobees.com).

### **Auburn Sweeps Vermont 9-5 and 7-1**

By Paul Stanfield / Vermont Lake Monsters

AUBURN, NY --- The Auburn Doubledays scored 16 runs on 28 hits in a doubleheader sweep of the Vermont Lake Monsters with 9-5 and 7-1 New York-Penn League victories on Wednesday night at Falcon Park in a matchup of current and former Washington Nationals affiliates.

The Auburn Doubledays scored six runs on seven hits off Lake Monsters starter J.C. Menna in the bottom of the first inning of the opener for a 6-1 lead. The Lake Monsters got a two-run single from Michael Fabiaschi in the fourth, then a Nick Rickles solo homer and Fabiaschi RBI double in the sixth to cut the deficit to 9-5.

The Lake Monsters were able to get the tying run to the plate in the seventh on a single, hit batter and walk, but former Vermont Lake Monster pitcher Aaron Barrett struckout Jordan Tripp with the bases loaded to end the game and earn his fifth save for the Doubledays. Fabiaschi had two of the Lake Monsters five hits as Vermont fell below the .500 mark for the first time this season.

In the nightcap, former Lake Monster Justin Miller went 3-for-4 with one run, one double, one homer and two RBI as Auburn scored two runs in the second and third innings for a 4-1 lead before scoring three more runs in the fourth. Former Lake Monster Russell Moldenhauer went 2-for-2 with two walks and a double in game two after going 1-for-2 with a double in the opener.

Tyler Vail (1-4) allowed five runs on five hits over three innings for the loss in the nightcap, while Wirkin Estevez (4-2) one run on three hits with six strikeouts over six innings to pick up the win for Auburn (32-21). 12 of the Doubledays 28 hits in the doubleheader sweep went for extra-bases, while Vermont was swept in a doubleheader for the first time since August 16, 2008 at Staten Island.

Vermont (25-27) will look to salvage a win in the three-game series at Auburn on Thursday night before heading to Batavia for a three-game series against the Muckdogs. The Lake Monsters return to Centennial Field next Wednesday to open a six-game homestand.