

Oakland A's update: Brandon Allen, Bruce Billings are latest roster additions

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

The A's constantly revolving personnel door delivered first baseman/outfielder Brandon Allen and right-handed relief pitcher Bruce Billings on Saturday. They are the 42nd and 43rd players to make the 25-man roster this season.

The A's optioned utility infielder Adam Rosales and left-handed reliever Jordan Norberto to Triple-A Sacramento to make room for the two players, both of whom were acquired in recent trades.

Allen was acquired in the trade that sent reliever Brad Ziegler to the Arizona Diamondbacks, and Allen started at first base in place of Conor Jackson. Allen struck out in his two at-bats.

Allen, 25, who was hitting .299 with 21 homers in combined Triple-A stops at Reno and Sacramento, might play some outfield as well as provide a left-handed pinch-hitting option off the bench. He played briefly with the Diamondbacks in July and was there long enough to hit one of the longest home runs in the history of Chase Field.

"They're not all paint-scrappers from him," said A's manager Bob Melvin. "I know a little bit of his history with Arizona. He's a talented guy who's got some power."

Allen was surprised he was traded but sees an opportunity with Oakland.

"Everything happens for a reason, but the important thing is someone wanted me," Allen said. "It was a little discouraging at first, but I'm happy to be here."

Billings, meanwhile, was acquired in the Mark Ellis trade with Colorado and had a 5.14 ERA in 12 appearances at Sacramento. The A's expect to use him in long relief.

"At this point, he gives us some length and versatility," Melvin said.

Billings, 25, also got a brief taste of the majors with his former team earlier this year. He pitched in just one game and allowed five hits and a run in two innings but nevertheless came out of it with a highlight.

"I got (Albert) Pujols to ground into a double play, so I was pretty excited about that," he said.

Rosales hit just .083 (4 for 48) after coming back from a foot fracture. Two of his four hits were home runs, but Melvin said Rosales never got untracked.

"He probably fell behind early on when he didn't have a spring training," the manager said. "There's no doubt in my mind that he's back Sept. 1 (unless) something happens before that. But I think the extra at-bats will certainly help him."

Outfielder Coco Crisp, who missed a sixth straight game with a calf strain, ran the bases before the game with Melvin and the training staff observing him. It's possible Crisp will return Sunday.

Chin Music: Two new faces from recent trades on the A's roster: slugger Allen, pitcher Billings

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune, 8/13/2011 12:42pm

In for Joe Stiglich today ...

The A's have called up first baseman/outfielder Brandon Allen and right-handed pitcher Bruce Billings from Triple-A Sacramento and optioned infielder Adam Rosales and left-handed pitcher Jordan Norberto, and Allen gets the start today at first for Conor Jackson.

Allen, acquired in the Brad Ziegler trade with Arizona, might be best described as a left-handed version of Chris Carter, and in more ways than one. Like Carter, he's very soft-spoken and carries a very prodigious stick ... when he makes contact.

They're still buzzing about the 455-foot homer he hit for the Diamondbacks against Milwaukee in July during a brief call-up, which was one of the longest homers ever hit in the history of Chase Field. Take a look: <http://tinyurl.com/3gnk5zo>

In his combined Triple-A stops in the rarified air of Reno as well as Sacto, Allen hit 21 homers with 73 RBIs. A big contrast with Carter, even though he has 101 strikeouts in 344 at-bats, is that he also walks a bit. He has 66 walks this year and an on-base percentage of .413. He was effectively displaced in the Diamondbacks organization when power prospect Paul Goldschmidt made the jump from Double-A and became the regular Arizona first baseman earlier this month.

Hard to say how the A's view Allen for the future — he could also play some left field while he's here — but if nothing else, he provides a little depth at the first base position as Carter tries to sort out his issues at Triple-A.

Billings, acquired in the Mark Ellis deal with Colorado, also had his first taste of major-league experience earlier this year when he recorded a two-inning save against St. Louis earlier this year. In his MLB debut, he got Albert Pujols to hit into an inning-ending double play. For the year with Colorado Springs and Sacramento, he is 6-2 with a 4.67 ERA and has 34 walks and 66 K in 71 1/3 innings. He's primarily a fastball pitcher with a circle change. He said the A's have him slotted as a long man.

Both Allen and Billings are 25 years old.

Coco Crisp was out of the lineup for the sixth straight day with a calf strain. He did some pre-game baserunning with manager Bob Melvin and the training staff looking on, so he should be close. Jackson, shortstop Cliff Pennington and catcher Kurt Suzuki are all getting the day off.

Here are today's lineups:

OAK: 2B Weeks, 3B Sizemore, DH Matsui, LF Willingham, RF DeJesus, 1B Allen, CF Sweeney, C Powell, SS Sogard. P Cahill.

TEX: 2B Kinsler, SS Andrus, LF Hamilton, 3B Young, RF Cruz, DH Napoli, 1B Moreland, C Torrealba, CF Chavez. P Lewis

Melvin lights into A's after sloppy loss

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Oakland -- Not long ago, the A's were a proud defensive team, and now their manager is calling the latest defensive mishaps "demoralizing and embarrassing," not to mention "inexcusable."

In the harshest critique of his team since becoming manager June 9, Bob Melvin offered nothing but the truth after the A's fell 7-1 to the Rangers, ruining pitcher Trevor Cahill's gem-in-the-works.

"He pitched very well," Melvin said. "We gave him no help as a team. It's demoralizing and embarrassing. No excuses. As a player, you better be embarrassed. As a coach, as a staff, everybody, there's nothing more embarrassing than playing bad defense. You can not pitch on days. You don't hit on days. But you should bring your glove every day. It's inexcusable."

After taking infield practice before the game, a rare routine in this era, Oakland's infield committed four errors, and as Melvin pointed out, "Really, we played worse than that."

Cahill tossed 5 1/3 hitless innings before Yorvit Torrealba singled in the sixth (he was caught stealing) and would have escaped the inning if second baseman Jemile Weeks hadn't committed a double error with two outs, enabling Endy Chavez to reach second. Ian Kinsler followed with an RBI double.

The Rangers' only baserunner in the first five innings was Elvis Andrus, who reached when shortstop Eric Sogard erred by hurrying a throw to first base. The fourth error was third baseman Scott Sizemore's, accounting for an unearned run in a three-run eighth.

Sizemore also made a funky play in the seventh, recovering a ball on the outfield grass and throwing errantly toward third in a failed effort to catch Josh Hamilton - Mike Napoli followed with an RBI double. With two outs in the ninth, Sizemore missed a not-so-routine backhand attempt of Ian Kinsler's two-run double.

"Trevor pitched his butt off out there, and we didn't help him out," Sizemore said. "You feel you could've done more to help his cause."

Weeks has 11 errors in 56 games, the most by an A's second baseman since Mark Ellis' 14 in 154 games in 2003. Weeks, who bobbled Chavez's grounder and made a wild throw, admitted he needs to make "smarter decisions, but I'll definitely not let up in my aggressiveness."

Perhaps Phil Garner will provide input. The former second baseman witnessed every blown play in his second day on the job as special adviser. As is, "We work on it ad nauseam," Melvin said, "and we'll continue to work on it, and at some point in time, we've got to get it right."

In defense of the defense, Weeks is relatively new to the majors, Sizemore is learning a new position, and Sogard is a backup. Still, the A's lead the major leagues with 98 errors, and this is a team that reached 100 errors only once in seven years.

The Rangers, now runners-up with 96 E's, played spotless. In fact, Hamilton robbed Ryan Sweeney of an extra-base hit and RBI that would have tied the score 2-2 in the seventh.

"That's a big play in the game," Melvin said. "Typically in close games, it's good defensive plays versus bad defensives plays. Unbelievably, that was a close game for a while. Then we just played our way right out of it."

Not magnificent 7

The A's 7-1 loss Saturday extended their skid against Texas to seven games. Oakland has been outscored 46-15 in that stretch, which constitutes the A's longest losing streak against the Rangers since a nine-gamer in 1986. A look at this year's skid:

Date	Site	Score	LP
5/10	Tex	7-2	Anderson
7/7	Tex	6-0	Harden
7/8	Tex	8-5	Gonzalez
7/9	Tex	7-6	Bailey
7/10	Tex	2-0	Cahill
8/12	Oak	9-1	McCarthy
8/13	Oak	7-1	Cahill

A's call up trade acquisitions

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

The A's welcomed former members of the Diamondbacks and Rockies into their clubhouse, neither of whom spent enough time in Phoenix or Denver to speculate on how the National League West will be won.

Both 25, they're hoping to broaden their horizons in green and gold.

First baseman-left fielder **Brandon Allen** (acquired in the **Brad Ziegler**-to-Arizona trade) and pitcher **Bruce Billings** (**Mark Ellis**-to-Colorado deal) were added to the roster, replacing **Jordan Norberto** (obtained in the Ziegler package) and **Adam Rosales**, who were optioned to Sacramento.

Allen, who swings left-handed, hit 21 Triple-A homers in 93 games for Reno and Sacramento and three in 11 games with the Diamondbacks. The most memorable was his July 19 clout that traveled an estimated 455 feet, one of the majors' longest of the year.

On being a power hitter, Allen said, "I can't claim it now, but I just want to have good at-bats and hit the ball hard so line drives turn into doubles and doubles into home runs. That's my philosophy."

Manager **Bob Melvin** said **Conor Jackson** remains the No. 1 first baseman and Allen will come off the bench. Billings, who had a 4.67 ERA in 41 Triple-A appearances, can be used as a long reliever. In his only big-league game, May 27 against St. Louis, he gave up one run in two innings and retired **Albert Pujols** on a double-play grounder.

Rosales will play three infield positions at Sacramento.

Briefly: Jemile Weeks singled, doubled and tripled. He has not hit for a cycle in pro ball. ... Pitcher **Brandon McCarthy** said he felt better one day after getting pelted on the right knee by a line drive. He fell to the ground and said he felt a back spasm, and only later realized he had been hit on the knee.

Leading off

Available? ESPN's Buster Olney reported Hideki Matsui cleared waivers, meaning he could be traded, and a Japanese newspaper speculated the Giants could be a fit (we're hearing no). Bob Melvin said if he manages in 2012, he'd like Matsui back.

Drumbeat: A's call up Brandon Allen to add some pop, among other moves

John Shea from the Coliseum . . . 8/13/2011 1:03pm

Brandon Allen, just up from Triple-A Sacramento, is at first base today, but manager Bob Melvin emphasized Conor Jackson is the everyday guy. Melvin said Allen could see time in the outfield.

"He's a talented guy who has power," Melvin said of Allen. "He's a good athlete who can play first base and left field. He can also be used as a left-hander off the bench in a pinch-hitting role. He's definitely a guy who can be productive. He's a work-in-progress, and we'll have to see how things shake out."

The A's recalled Allen and pitcher Bruce Billings and optioned infielder Adam Rosales and reliever Jordan Norberto. Allen arrived with Norberto from the Diamondbacks in the Brad Ziegler trade, and Billings came from the Rockies in the Mark Ellis deal.

In Oakland, Billings will be a long reliever. In Sacramento, Rosales will play three infield spots.

Allen definitely has power, collecting 21 Triple-A homers in 93 games for Reno and Sacramento and three in 11 games with the Diamondbacks. The most memorable was his July 19 clout that traveled an estimated 455 feet, one of the longest homers of the year. Teammate Justin Upton called it the longest homer by a lefty swinger he had ever seen.

Asked if he considers himself a power hitter, the seemingly humble Allen said, "Yeah, I guess so. I can't claim it now, but I just want to have good at-bats and hit the ball hard so line drives turn into doubles and doubles into home. That's my philosophy."

Asked to describe himself as a player so fans have a better idea, he said, "Hopefully I can show 'em, and they can figure out for themselves."

Deep thoughts, cheap shots & bon mots ...

Scott Ostler, San Francisco Chronicle

Gotta hurry through this so I can get back to ESPN and the T-ball World Series. Do they have a seventh-inning nap?

The Giants have the rings, but they still have some work to do in winning hearts. The Phillies are America's Team. In a recent survey, four of America's 10 favorite major-league players were Phillies: **Roy Halladay** (1),

Cliff Lee/Chase Utley (T4) and **Ryan Howard** (10). **Brian Wilson** was the highest-polling Giant, just out of the top 10.

Without the beard, he'd be No.

762. There's your challenge, Lads.

What if a batter gets plunked, one team's dugout empties onto the field, and the other team simply sits in its dugout looking bored?

Kudos, props, or whatever, to all the Giants' pitchers. No support, game after game, yet nary a whimper or whine. Smells like team spirit.

Two cities in Colombia have banned the vuvuzela. Fun fact: The vuvuzela is the only musical instrument that when played on Earth can be heard from the moon.

Billy Beane acknowledged that the worse the A's finish, the better their draft position, and vice versa. "That's the Gordian knot," Beane said. Gordian knot: An exceedingly complicated problem or deadlock that can be cut only with a bold stroke of the sword. Your swing, Billy.

Alexander the Great cut the original Gordian knot, after an oracle said that whoever untied the knot would rule Asia. By chopping, instead of untying, Alexander kind of cheated. At least he didn't steal signs.

How about this for the Giants: Let **Barry Zito** pitch the games in which the Giants aren't going to score.

Taking their talents to Istanbul: The Besiktas team in Turkey has signed **Deron Williams** and is courting **Kobe Bryant**. If they can't get Bryant, they want **Kevin Durant**. With Williams and either Bryant or Durant, Besiktas will have an excellent shot at winning the title in Turkey.

Twin brothers, separated at birth: **C.J. Wilson** and **Mat Latos**.

My problem with **Dennis Rodman**, and it's not his hats or tats: About halfway through his NBA career, he began taking pride in his absolute refusal to shoot anything but a putback. He even stayed in the locker room before games, purposely blowing off shooting warm-ups. He forced his team to play a man short on offense, because he had his WWE, meme- me, wacko-guy persona going.

The Priggish Linguist strikes again. Yo, several local radio guys: The word is "integral" (IN-tuh-grull). NOT "intrical" (IN-truh-kull).

Twenty-one straight Giants home runs with the bases empty. Here's an idea for a Giants promotion: "Solo Night." Free admission to everyone dressed as **Charles Lindbergh**.

SHEA HEY

Judge fans by who's there, not who isn't

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

C.J. Wilson wants to badmouth the Coliseum? Pick a number.

But the Texas pitcher also badmouthed A's fans for their poor attendance, as if the Rangers have better fans because more show up. Of course they do. It's a superior ballpark and houses a superior team.

Though Wilson praised the Oakland crowds for their passion, there's no doubt he knows little about A's history and how they

outdrew the Giants 17 times in their first 25 years in Oakland.

Fast-forward to 2011, and it's not the fans' fault the A's are heading for a fifth straight nonwinning season, or that Mount Davis sucked all the quaint out of the Coliseum, or that the upper deck is tarped, or that FanFest was canceled, etc.

Once upon a time, the A's were close to drawing 3 million, and now they're struggling to get half of that. It's reminiscent of the old Candlestick days, when the Giants struggled at the gate but had a legendary core of fans that kept the team breathing.

Phillies shortstop **Jimmy Rollins**, during his visit to San Francisco last weekend, said Giants fans were no different when he was growing up in the East Bay than they are now.

Except for the volume.

"They're a loud, loud crowd, and they love their team," he said. "That hasn't changed.

When I was growing up, they weren't always packing the house, but the people who showed up at Candlestick were loud and crazy. All that's changed is the number of people showing up to the games."

And the venue. But the venue doesn't make the fans. The venue simply helps bring 'em out.

Defensive miscues loom large for A's

Oakland extends struggles against Texas with four errors

By Rick Eymer / Special to MLB.com | 8/13/2011 8:27 PM ET

OAKLAND -- The Oakland Athletics have committed more errors than any other team in the Major Leagues, and A's manager Bob Melvin is downright chagrined.

"There's nothing more embarrassing than playing bad defense," Melvin said after watching his team throw away a chance at keeping things close in a 7-1 loss to the Texas Rangers on Saturday.

"At some point, we just have to get it right," Melvin said. "We work on it ad nauseam."

All four errors, which give the A's 98 on the year, came from three infielders who were not with the team at the beginning of the season. Jemile Weeks, who tripled, doubled and singled, made two errors on the same play. Eric Sogard and Scott Sizemore also made miscues.

"I do more than probably needs to happen," said Weeks, who was charged with a fielding error and a throwing error. "But I feel like even if I make a mistake, I can recover. Maybe it means making a smarter decision. You better believe the rest of the game I was focused on making every play."

What exacerbated the problem was how well Trevor Cahill was pitching at the time. He carried a no-hitter into the sixth inning before the game unraveled.

"Trevor pitched his butt off," Sizemore said. "He pitched well enough to win. We didn't help him very much."

Cahill finished with a seven-hitter over 7 1/3 innings. He allowed four runs (three earned) while striking out four. He did not walk a batter.

Cahill breezed through the first five innings and then ran into trouble in the sixth. Yorvit Torrealba singled with one out, but he was caught stealing. Weeks then committed the double error to set up Ian Kinsler's run-scoring double.

"I went for it," Weeks said. "My defense could be better. There are a lot of things I can do better. I just don't want to back away from my aggressiveness."

Melvin called it "demoralizing" and insisted the A's do everything they can to reverse the trend.

"We made four errors, but really, we played worse than that," Melvin said. "All you can do is keep working at it."

Cahill, who has struggled since the All-Star break and is 3-11 since May 15 after starting the season 6-0 with a 1.79 ERA, tried to deflect the sloppy defense played behind him.

"They've made good plays, too," he said. "It wasn't a good overall game. It was frustrating, because I started out so well and I wasn't able to finish it. When an error happens, all you can do is try to pitch out of it. I look at it like it's just another baserunner."

The A's lost their seventh straight to the Rangers, the longest such streak in 25 years. Texas took nine in a row against the A's during the 1986 season.

Consecutive one-out doubles by Josh Willingham and David DeJesus produced the A's only run of the contest against Colby Lewis and four relievers. Weeks had the other three hits.

Lewis left the game after giving up the one run on three hits. He did not walk a batter and struck out eight.

"Colby always throws well against me," Cahill said. "I knew it would be tough. I just couldn't finish it out."

Kinsler drove in three runs for the Rangers, including breaking the ice against Cahill with an RBI double in the sixth.

"Cahill had good stuff and was changing speeds on all his pitches," Kinsler said. "We just tried to have good quality at-bats. He was tough, but we were able to grind it out. The key was Colby throwing the ball the way he did and matching Cahill pitch for pitch."

Harrison can pitch Rangers to sweep of A's

By Anthony Fenech / MLB.com | 8/13/2011 7:22 PM ET

All signs point to Rangers left-hander Matt Harrison turning in another solid start on Sunday.

Fresh off a 9-2 victory over the Mariners in his last outing, Harrison has had good success the past two months and great success in his career against the A's.

And on Sunday, he'll try to pitch the Rangers to a series sweep over the A's at the Oakland Coliseum.

"I'm going to treat it like any other start," Harrison said. "They're a good ballclub, so the main thing is to be aggressive and keep the ball in play, not give them any free passes.

"I want to carry some momentum over from my last start."

In that outing, the 25-year-old Harrison threw seven innings, allowed two runs on five hits, struck out six and walked none in beating the Mariners for the second time in less than a month.

He looks to carry that momentum against former Rangers right-hander Rich Harden, who is coming off his best effort of the season on Tuesday, when he beat the Blue Jays by allowing one run on five hits in seven innings.

Harden struck out eight, walked two and through seven starts, he is averaging 9.6 strikeouts per nine innings.

The 29-year-old right-hander spent last season with the Rangers and put up a 5-5 record with a 5.58 ERA in 18 starts while battling injuries.

He is 5-3 against the Rangers in his career, and his two career complete games were both against the Rangers, both in Oakland and both in 2005.

Meanwhile, Harrison has excelled in his five career starts against the A's, compiling a 4-1 record with a 2.15 ERA.

He bounced back from the shortest outing of his season on May 1 against Oakland -- when he allowed four runs on six hits in 1 2/3 innings -- to blank them over 7 2/3 innings on July 10 while striking out seven and allowing six hits.

Rangers: Torrealba, Young increase streaks

- With a sixth-inning single to break up Trevor Cahill's no-hit bid on Saturday, Rangers catcher Yorvit Torrealba increased his hit streak to 11 games.
- Michael Young also singled, giving him a 12-game hitting streak, good for longest in the American League, along with equal streaks by the Mariners' Mike Carp and Blue Jays' Edwin Encarnacion.
- Colby Lewis continued a year-long theme for Rangers pitching with 6 1/3 innings of one-run baseball against the A's on Saturday. He allowed only three hits. Heading into Saturday's game, the Rangers had the lowest road ERA in the majors at 3.11 and the current mark would be the lowest in the majors since the Expos' 2.69 mark in 1992.

Athletics: Regulars get rest

- Shortstop Cliff Pennington, first baseman/outfielder Conor Jackson and catcher Kurt Suzuki were all given scheduled days off in Saturday's loss. "Pennington still has that Bell's Palsy thing that hasn't gone completely away yet. We don't want to run him out there too much," A's manager Bob Melvin said.
- Suzuki's 36 RBIs, 16 doubles and 30 strikeouts against the Rangers are his most against any team.
- The A's have failed to hit more than two home runs in a game for the past 90 games. The team record is 91 games, which the A's could match Sunday. The last time it occurred was from July 31, 1974, to May 16, 1975.
- After homering in a season-high eight straight games, the A's have been held homerless in three consecutive contests.

McCarthy sore, but completes pregame routine

By Rick Eymer / Special to MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The way Brandon McCarthy fell to the ground after getting hit on the right knee by Endy Chavez's line drive in the fourth inning of Friday night's game made it appear as though he was seriously injured.

That the ball caromed down the right-field line into the Rangers' bullpen seemed to emphasize that.

"Actually, I didn't know I had been hit by the ball until later," McCarthy said. "My back locked up and I was fighting a spasm at the time. That's why I went down. It was only when I tried to sit up that I realized I had been creamed."

McCarthy left the game at that point and walked off, with a slight limp, under his own power.

"It's a little sore," said McCarthy, who went through his regular pregame routine to test the right knee.

Allen can provide pop, flexibility for A's

OAKLAND -- Brandon Allen may be just the power hitter the Oakland Athletics have been searching for since the beginning of the season.

At least, that's how A's manager Bob Melvin would like to see it played out.

Allen, whom the A's acquired in a trade that sent right-handed reliever Brad Ziegler to the Arizona Diamondbacks, was recalled to the Majors before Saturday's game against the Texas Rangers and inserted into the starting lineup at first base.

"He's a talented guy who has power," Melvin said. "He's a good athlete who can play first base and left field. He can also be used as a left-hander off the bench in a pinch-hitting role."

Allen was hitting .306 with 18 home runs and 66 RBIs with Triple-A Reno when he was called up by the D-backs less than two weeks before the trade.

"He walks and he gets on base," Melvin said. "He's definitely a guy who can be productive. He's a work-in-progress, and we'll have to see how things shake out."

Melvin assured Conor Jackson that the first-base job is still his to lose. The manager said he was being given a scheduled day off after hitting a pair of doubles and driving in the A's lone run Friday night.

"What Conor has done warrants him to be the everyday first baseman," said Melvin. "We can use Brandon in the outfield mix."

The A's also brought up right-hander Bruce Billings to give Melvin flexibility with the long role out of the bullpen.

Billings came to the A's as part of the trade that sent infielder Mark Ellis to the Colorado Rockies.

A's make room on roster for Allen, Billings

OAKLAND -- To make room for Brandon Allen and Bruce Billings on the roster, the A's sent infielder Adam Rosales and left-hander Jordan Norberto to Triple-A Sacramento.

Norberto pitched two innings in relief on Friday night, and Brandon McCarthy's early departure necessitated a move to bolster the bullpen.

"I can see him back in the big leagues," manager Bob Melvin said of Norberto. "We were a little concerned about his ability to go more than an inning but he handled it just fine."

Rosales has not been able to get on track this season after spending most of the first half on the 60-day disabled list. He was hitless in his last 25 at-bats, with an overall average of .083.

"He didn't have a Spring Training, and he fell behind," Melvin said. "He's going down to play all over -- third base, shortstop and second base. There's no doubt in my mind he'll be back Sept. 1, if not before."

Ratto: Errors driving A's coach Melvin wild

[Ray Ratto, CSNBayArea.com](http://CSNBayArea.com)

Bob Melvin needed to vent. He had just watched the [Oakland Athletics](#) play a particularly poor game of jai alai against the [Texas Rangers](#) and get the proper reward for it -- a 7-1 loss -- and he unloaded as much as he ever will.

"[Trevor Cahill](#) pitched very well," he said of his losing pitcher, "and we gave him NO help. "As players, coaches, everyone, there was no excuse for that."

"That" was, of course, the four errors that moved the A's into a solid two-boot lead in the coveted Most Bungled Plays competition. Two by second baseman [Jemile Weeks](#) on the same play, a bad-hands play by shortstop [Eric Sogard](#), and a throwing error of consequence by third baseman [Scott Sizemore](#) were the recordable failures, but there were makeable plays that went unmade as well that caused Melvin's first true annoyed outburst in the job.

"You make the error, and then you have head down thinking about it and they take an extra base," he grouched as he tried to figure out what liquid would best un-knot his brow before Sunday's 1 p.m. start. "It's just not excusable."

But it's also not easily fixable. The A's skipped outdoor batting practice Saturday morning to work on defense, and committed more errors than they have in any game since Opening Day. They will work again Sunday morning, and there will be meetings and reminders and, for all we know, Post-it notes on locker frames.

Melvin, though, knows that the only way to break the cycle of a team that is in a hideous catching-and-throwing slump is time.

"That's really the only thing that gets you out of this," he said. "Three or four or five games where you just do everything right and get back to playing instinctively. Where you're not thinking about every single thing you do. That's part of the problem we have now. Nothing is natural."

Now it may also be that the A's just have bad fielders. They started the year with better gloves at first (Daric Barton), third (Kevin Kouzmanoff) and second (Mark Ellis), but they needed runs that none of the above were providing. Now they get more runs, and return them at a faster rate.

Weeks has committed 11 errors in 56 games, the most by an Oakland second baseman since Ellis in 2003 – in 147 starts. Sizemore is simply out of his element at third, and as such is being given some air by Melvin. Cliff Pennington, the usual shortstop, had two botched double plays Friday night and has 17 for the year, behind only Chicago's Starlin Castro (19) and Texas' Elvis Andrus (22).

And, truth be told, the A's don't have a lot of solutions they can implement in the short term. They can continue to work ("And we're going to," Melvin said), but this is a mindset that is created in spring and driven home time and again. Defense is prone to slumps, true, but defensive slumps are more infuriating by their very nature.

"I think it's probably because we look at defense and say it's easier to catch a ball than pitch one, and definitely easier to catch one than hit one," Phil Garner, Melvin's designated good angel, said from atop Melvin's left shoulder. "That's probably why Bo is more frustrated. I know that's how I was."

It's how the fan base is. As much as it wanted to hate Texas pitcher C.J. Wilson Friday night, it booed Pennington more for the double plays he couldn't convert. In addition, bad defense creates a more immediate reaction, whereas bad hitting is a just a slower-acting corrosive. You can always hope for a big hit or converted opportunity later in the game, whereas a kicked ball is an immediate buzzkill.

Hence, a perfectly delightful Saturday afternoon was ruined. Bobbleheads had been given out, always a big treat. A couple had exchanged wedding vows in front of the Barbecue Terrace, which is Oakland's version of St. Peter's Basilica. The field, which had been rushed into service after Thursday's Raider game, had another day to better resemble an actual ballpark. The day was in the '70s, and moods were buoyant.

And then . . . it was kick-save-and-a-beauty baseball again. The A's, who have pitched but not hit, and hit but not pitched, are now pitching and hitting (sort of) but not fielding. They are 53-66, 14 ½ games behind the Rangers and (just for laughs) 19 ½ behind the Yankees for the wild card, and every hit ball is an adventure with horror-movie undercurrents.

And that, let us tell you, is no way to start a marriage.

Sharp comments from manager Bob Melvin after Oakland A's make four more errors in 7-1 loss to Texas Rangers

Associated Press

The A's taking over the major league lead in errors Saturday served to ignite Bob Melvin's first full-fledged eruption as the team's manager.

Oakland committed four errors, including two on one play by rookie second baseman Jemile Weeks that helped break a scoreless tie in the sixth inning. The Texas Rangers used the miscues as a springboard to a second straight lopsided win, 7-1 at O.co Coliseum.

Friday night, an error on what should have been a routine double-play grounder opened the floodgates for a six-run second inning and a 9-1 Rangers win, so Melvin is starting to get short-tempered about the A's defense.

He was particularly peeved that starting pitcher Trevor Cahill was crafting a gem Saturday and that the defense played a major hand in unraveling it.

"He pitched very well, but we gave him no help as a team," Melvin said. "It's demoralizing and embarrassing. I don't know what else to say, because there are no excuses. As a player, you'd better be embarrassed. As a coach, as a staff, everybody -- there's nothing more embarrassing than playing bad defense."

Melvin didn't need a whole lot of prompting to continue his tirade.

"You cannot pitch on days, you cannot hit on days, but you should always bring your glove every day," he said. "Typically, in close games, it's good defensive plays versus bad defensive plays. It was an unbelievably close game for a while, and then we played our way right out of it.

"What'd we have, four errors? Really, we played worse than that."

The four errors gave the A's 98 for the season, one shy of their total last season. Oakland has been under 100 errors six of the past seven seasons with a high of 105 in 2009, but this year the A's are on pace for 133 miscues..

Cahill survived the first boot, a careless throwing error by backup shortstop Eric Sogard, with two outs in the fourth. Cahill had a no-hitter until Yorvit Torrealba singled with one out in the sixth, and Torrealba subsequently was cut down trying to steal second. Then things began to unravel.

Rangers No. 9 hitter Endy Chavez hit a grounder to Weeks, who bobbled the ball and then threw wildly to first after recovering it. Chavez wound up at second, and Ian Kinsler's double brought the first run home. The Rangers never looked back.

"I should have held it," said Weeks, who despite not being called up until June nonetheless leads the American League in errors at second base with 11. "But at the same time, I went for it, and there's nothing you can do once it's done. So the rest of the game, you can believe I was focused in on making sure I made every play."

A's make four errors in yet another embarrassing loss to Rangers

By Sam McPherson, Oakland A's Examiner

(OAKLAND) -- Oakland Athletics starting pitcher Trevor Cahill went the first five and one-third innings without allowing a hit today against the Texas Rangers.

For most teams, this might signify the A's would win the game.

Emphasis on *most teams*.

Four errors and 11 hits for the Rangers later, Oakland lost its seventh straight contest to Texas, 7-1, on another long afternoon at the Overstock.com Coliseum.

Cahill was betrayed by his defense -- specifically second baseman Jemile Weeks, who made two errors on one play in the sixth inning that allowed the Rangers to score their first run -- on his way to his 11th loss of the year.

He was also betrayed by the A's offense, which failed to score Weeks after a leadoff triple in the first inning, as Texas starter Colby Lewis retired 17 straight batters at one point.

Oakland just couldn't get the big hit when they needed it later, either. Trailing by one run in the bottom of the seventh, the A's hitters couldn't even the score with the tying run on second base with one out, and when the Rangers scored three runs in the top of the eighth inning, that pretty much ended the home team's shot at winning.

So did the 1-for-11 effort with runners in scoring position.

Another wasted opportunity, another day in Oakland. That's what happens when you have only one more hit than you do errors in the game.

Weeks had an odd day, for sure -- he had the A's first two hits (triple in the first, double in the sixth) to go along with his two errors. While he's hitting .292 on the year after getting three hits today, he also leads the American League in errors by a second baseman (11) -- which is bad, since he's only been in the majors for about half the season (56 games).

Another youngster who took his lumps today was first baseman Brandon Allen, who struck out in his first two at-bats and then was lifted for a pinch hitter in the seventh inning -- Conor Jackson struck out in his place with one out and the tying run on second base.

So in the end, it was business as usual for the A's: a lot of missed opportunities early enough in the game that could have changed everything that followed.

And at 13 games under .500 now, the dog days of summer have definitely taken hold in Oakland.

When does football season start?

Former Astros skipper Phil Garner accepts special advisor position with Oakland

Stephen Goff, examiner.com

Former Astros manager Phil Garner has officially returned to Major League Baseball for the first time in nearly four years after accepting a position with the Oakland A's on Friday as a special advisor to current skipper Bob Melvin and the entire organization.

According to MLB.com, A's general manager Billy Beane and Melvin had discussed the possibility of hiring Garner for three to four weeks.

Melvin, who previously served as Garner's bench coach with the Milwaukee Brewers (1999) and Detroit Tigers (2000), has remained close friends over the years with the man he credits for helping to pave his career path to becoming a big league manager.

Garner told Examiner.com that he'll attend home games for the A's while participating in pregame activities on the field in uniform.

The job position runs through the rest of the season.

He looks forward to reuniting with Melvin and hopes to have a similar effect on him as former MLB manager Chuck Tanner had on his career.

"Bob and I have been close friends for a long time," Garner said. "He was my right-hand man for a little while when I was managing in Milwaukee and Detroit. He's got a high baseball IQ. I have always respected him for his abilities on and off the field.

"During some of my managing career, Chuck Tanner had a similar type of role as I will have in Oakland. He was one of a kind with the players and the staff. He was the most optimistic guy I've ever come across. I hope I can have a similar type of effect."

The 62-year-old Garner was selected by Oakland as a first-round pick out of the University of Tennessee in 1971 and ultimately made his major league debut with the A's on Sept. 10, 1973.

Garner played 16 seasons in the major leagues with the A's (1973-76), Pittsburgh Pirates (1977-1981), Houston Astros (1981-87), Los Angeles Dodgers (1987) and San Francisco Giants (1988).

Known as "Scrap Iron," Garner spent 15 seasons as a big league manager for the Brewers (1992-99, Tigers (2000-02) and Astros (2004-07).

He led the Astros to the World Series for the first time in franchise history in 2005 with a squad featuring Craig Biggio, Jeff Bagwell, Lance Berkman, Roger Clemens, Andy Pettitte and Roy Oswalt.

Astros owner Drayton McLane Jr. elected to relieve Garner and general manager Tim Purpura of their duties on Aug. 27, 2007.

Garner, who resides in The Woodlands, Texas, with his wife, Carol, transitioned into retirement by allocating a substantial amount of his time toward participating in charities throughout the Houston area.

The Astros interviewed him for their open managerial position in October 2009, but Boston Red Sox bench coach Brad Mills got the job.

Melvin also interviewed for the position, as Garner endorsed him as a candidate to president of baseball operations Tal Smith.

Furthermore, rumors circulated in the midst of last season that the Baltimore Orioles were interested in possibly hiring him as manager -- a rumor Garner denied and a position that eventually went to two-time AL Manager of the Year Buck Showalter.

Garner hasn't officially closed the door on the possibility of managing once again in the big leagues, but he would prefer to lead an established, veteran team capable of making the playoffs, rather than go through a rebuilding process at his age.

"I haven't ruled out managing again," Garner said. "Still, the further removed you are as a former manager, the harder it is to get back into it. You never want to call an organization with an open position to ask if you could get put on their interview list. You want them to call you. The longer you are out, front offices will change and you might not know as many people as you once did.

"You never know what will happen. I'm excited to be back in the game with the new job in Oakland. It's something I look forward to."

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

First-place River Cats drop seventh in a row

By Alex Sadorf / Sacramento River Cats

The setting was perfect for a nail-biter Saturday evening as the two best records in the Pacific Coast League faced off before a sold out crowd of 14,014 at Raley Field.

Sacramento slugger Chris Carter, representing the winning run, struck out with the bases loaded in the bottom of the ninth inning as the River Cats fell 6-3 to Round Rock.

Adrian Cardenas made the first hit of the game, a single to shortstop Guilder Rodriguez in the second inning. Anthony Recker followed with a single of his own, a soft line drive to right field that gave Cardenas time to make it to third. With runners on the corners, Andy LaRoche doubled off a ground ball to left field and scored Cardenas. The River Cats left the inning with their first lead over the Express in this four-game series.

Round Rock came out strong in the fourth to take the lead. With the bases loaded, designated hitter Chad Tracy hit a sacrifice fly to center field, scoring Leonys Martin. The River Cats seemed to regain control when they were able to throw out Esteban German at home, but the Express held strong. Brad Nelson then doubled to bring in Tracy and Joey Butler. Matt Kata played off the momentum and singled to center field, bringing Nelson home. The Express led 4-1.

Round Rock increased its lead to 5-1 in the sixth off a solo home run from Brad Nelson, his 21st of the season.

The Cats defense had a shining defensive moment in the sixth when, with the bases loaded and no outs, Martin came to the plate and popped the ball to right fielder Michael Taylor. Taylor made the catch and followed with a strong throw to home. Catcher Josh Donaldson was able to tag out Kata for the double play, keeping the score at 5-1.

Sacramento's offense also made an impact in the seventh. Jai Miller's solo home run, his 28th of the year, brought the score to 5-2.

Miller tied the record for most River Cat homers in one month during July. With 12 home runs, Miller became part of a three-way tie with Graham Koonce (August, 2003) and Dallas McPherson (August, 2010).

"If home runs come, they come, but I'm just trying to get hits," said Miller, who went 2-for-5 Saturday with his home run and a single.

Round Rock further solidified their lead in the ninth after a failed pickoff attempt at third. Donaldson's hard throw to third baseman Kouzmanoff went down the line and gave German his opportunity to run home.

Sacramento looked ready to make their comeback in the ninth with the score at 6-2. It began with Miller reaching first on a throwing error by Kata. Donaldson followed with a line drive single to left field. With two on, Kouzmanoff singled to the shortstop to load the bases with one out. Taylor then popped out to right field. The suspense was tangible as Adrian Cardenas came to the plate. Right-handed relief pitcher Darren O'Day walked Cardenas, scoring Miller and bringing the score to 6-3.

"It was tough," Miller said. "We got this (seven-game) losing streak going on. You come out, play hard, it wasn't meant (to be) tonight. We'll turn it around tomorrow."

The River Cats take on the Express for a third time Sunday at 1:05 p.m. at Raley Field. Raley Field Fiesta presented by Miller Lite will take place, where Latino heritage will be celebrated with a live mariachi band, Latin dancers, pregame tequila tasting, and a doubleheader featuring the Liga Latina de Beisbol All-Star Game.

Naturals snap RockHounds' winning streak

By Oscar LeRoy, Midland Reporter-Telegram | Posted: Sunday, August 14, 2011 12:42 am

If the Midland RockHounds want to make the Texas League playoffs this season, they're going to have to beat quality opponents like the Northwest Arkansas Naturals down the stretch.

The Naturals, having already punched their tickets to the postseason by winning the first half North Division title, jumped on Midland pitcher Shawn Haviland early, then starter Mario Santiago slowed down the RockHounds' offense in an 8-3 victory in front of 5,491 fans at Citibank Ballpark.

"They're a pretty good ballclub," said Midland manager Steve Scarsone about the Naturals. "They have a lot of guys who can run and put pressure on us defensively. We've got two more with them, and I would like to see how these next two games come out. That's part of the fun of (playing baseball). We'll be ready tomorrow."

With the loss the RockHounds saw their eight-game winning streak come to end and luckily didn't lose any ground to South Division leader San Antonio, which lost 5-1 to Arkansas and remained three games ahead of Midland with 22 games remaining in the regular season.

Despite already clinching a playoff spot and leading Arkansas by a game in the second half North Division race, Naturals first baseman Anthony Seratelli said his team remains focused down the stretch.

"It's a tight race so every win at this point matters with (22 games) left. There's no more messing around, Seratelli said. "Every loss is big and we want to get as many wins as possible."

It was a tough start for Midland starter Haviland (6-10) when Christian Colon hit a one-out flare single to right, and then Paulo Orlando connected for a towering home run to the top of the berm in left field for a 2-0 lead in the top of the first inning.

The RockHounds answered with a run in the bottom of the inning. Grant Green doubled and then moved to third on a single by Stephen Parker. But both runners were awarded an extra base when home plate umpire Gabriel Morales called a balk on Santiago when he was handed the ball from third baseman Rey Navarro while he was on the pitching rubber, which can be interpreted as deceiving the runner.

Haviland seemed to settle down after a perfect second inning, but then got into some trouble in the third inning, in part because of two walks and a single by Orlando, which loaded the bases with one out. An infield groundout by Jamie Romak scored one run, and then Seratelli connected with the big hit with a two-run double to left inning to give the Naturals a 5-1 lead.

"After getting in late last night, to come out and we don't drag is a great way to start a series," said Seratelli, who went 3-for-5 with two doubles and three RBI. "That just motivates a team. You don't want to come here and look sluggish after the road trip overnight. It was nice to get on the board early."

The Naturals added a run in the fourth to chase Haviland after 3 2/3 innings. That run came after an odd sequence when Mario Lisson scored on what would have been an inning-ending double play. Instead, the inning continued as the ball thrown by shortstop Tyler Ladendorf broke through first baseman Michael Spina's glove.

Even with that bad break, Haviland struggled as he gave up six runs (five earned) on seven hits, walked two and struck out two as his personal three-game winning streak came to an end.

"He wasn't as sharp as he had been the last couple of times," said Scarsone about his starter.

Meanwhile, Santiago (3-1) was sharp as he went six solid innings and gave up three runs (two earned) on eight hits. He also struck out two and didn't walk a batter.

The RockHounds had their opportunities against Santiago but couldn't come up with the big hit. Midland scored two runs in the fourth thanks in part to two singles and a Naturals error.

"I thought we were on the verge of breaking out with some big innings, but we couldn't get that key hit," Scarsone said. "That's what we've been doing the last couple of weeks, capitalizing on stuff like that. In the grand scheme of things, it's nothing to get down about. It's just the law of averages."

'HOUND BITES: With the recent sweep of Tulsa, the RockHounds have won five consecutive series. ...Grant Green extended his hitting streak to 12 games with a double in the first inning. ...C Ryan Ortiz made a nice play to get the first out of the seventh inning. Paulo Orlando attempted a bunt but the ball sailed backward into foul territory. Ortiz got out of his crouch in a hurry and then slid to make the over the shoulder catch for the out. ...SS Tyler Ladendorf followed Ortiz's great play by making a leaping grab on a liner hit by Jamie Romak. ...With two stolen bases on Saturday, Naturals CF Derrick Robinson now has 45 stolen bases on the season on 56 attempts. As a team, the Naturals stole four bases and have now stolen 174 on the season.

TODAY'S PROBABLES: The RockHounds host Northwest Arkansas in the second game of a three-game series at 6 p.m. today at Citibank Ballpark. Midland is expected to start RHP Ethan Hollingsworth (5-4, 3.39 ERA) against Naturals LHP Will Smith (10-8, 4.25).

Ports Launch Their Way To 9-2 Victory

Stockton Ports

ADELANTO, Calif. - After two nights off offensive disappointment, the Stockton Ports finally came alive in hitter-friendly High Desert on Saturday night. The Ports hit three two-run homers en route to a 9-2 win over the High Desert Mavericks, their first victory in a four-game set that wraps up on Sunday in Adelanto.

It didn't take long for the Ports to get on the board. In the top of the 1st, Myrio Richard got the game started with a single to left, followed by a two-run homer to right from Conner Crumbliss to give the Ports a 2-0 lead.

High Desert got a run back in the 3rd. Joe Dunigan led off the frame with an opposite-field home run-his third of the series-to make it a 2-1 ballgame.

Stockton's offense, however, provided plenty of support to Ports starter Murphy Smith (5-8). With one on and two out in the 4th, Ryan Lipkin hit a two-run shot to left-center to make it a 4-2 Ports lead.

The Mavericks again got a run back on a solo home run, this time from Jamie McOwen in the 4th to make it 4-2.

In the 5th with one on and two out, Michael Gilmartin homered to right to make it a 6-2 Stockton advantage.

All three Ports home runs came off Mavs starter Chris Sorce (7-10), who took the loss after allowing six runs on 10 hits over five innings of work.

Smith allowed the two solo home runs, but that was all over his seven innings of work. Smith picked up his second victory in a row, allowing two runs on six hits while striking out four.

A.J. Huttenlocker and Josh Lansford each pitched a perfect inning of relief. Smith, Huttenlocker and Lansford combined to retire the final 11 Mavericks hitters, the second straight night Ports pitchers have done that to close out the game.

The Ports added a run in the 6th as Rashun Dixon led off the inning with a triple and scored on an infield single by Richard. It was the only run allowed by Mavericks reliever Austin Hudson. Stockton scored two more in the 8th off Kali'l Zablan, taking advantage of three Mavs errors in the frame.

Stockton will try and earn a series split on Sunday in their season-series finale with High Desert. James Simmons (1-2, 7.20 ERA) will toe the rubber for the Ports, opposed by Mavericks right-hander Jandy Sena (2-3, 5.20 ERA). First pitch is set for 5:05 p.m. PDT.

Beloit "Snaps" At Extra Opportunity

By Jon Versteeg, Burlington Bees

BELOIT, WI- The Beloit Snappers (23-25) scored an unearned run in the fifth inning to beat the Burlington Bees (17-31) by a score of 3-1 before 1,668 fans at Pohlman Field on Saturday night.

The Bees scored a single run in the fourth inning against Beloit RHP Pedro Guerra (1-1). DH Beau Taylor (0-3) walked and moved to third base on a double by CF Jose Rivero (1-4). SS Yordy Cabrera (0-3) hit a sacrifice fly to center field to score Taylor for a 1-0 lead.

The Snappers scored a run in the fourth inning against Burlington RHP Josh Bowman (7-5). After retiring the first nine hitters in a row, CF Wong-Wei Lin (1-4) led off the fourth inning with a single against Bowman and went to second base on a groundout by SS Adam Bryant (0-4). 1B Lance Ray (1-3) singled Lin home for a 1-1 tied score.

In the fifth inning Beloit 2B Tyler Grimes (0-2) walked with one out and stole second base. The throw from C John Nester sailed into center field and was misplayed by CF Jose Rivero. Grimes scored for a 2-1 lead.

The Snappers scored an insurance run in the eighth inning for a 3-1 lead. LF Derek McCallum (0-1) walked and went to second base on a sacrifice bunt by C Jhonatan Arias (0-0). 3B Andrew Leer (0-3) hit a ground ball that SS Yordy Cabrera played and threw wide of third base. The fielder's choice put runners at first and third base with just one out for Lin, who hit an RBI groundout to score McCallum for a 3-1 lead.

Bowman pitched five innings and allowed one earned run on two hits for the "tough-luck" loss.

The Bees and Snappers continue their series on Sunday afternoon at 2:00 p.m. RHP Jose Macias (4-3, 5.05) gets the start for Burlington against RHP A.J. Achter (1-2, 4.61) for Beloit. Pre-game coverage begins at 1:40 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at gobees.com.

Vermont 8-3 Win At Batavia Saturday

By Paul Stanfield / Vermont Lake Monsters

BATAVIA, NY --- Bobby Crocker and Chad Lewis both hit two-run homers, while Michael Fabiaschi and Chih-Fang Pan each had three hits as the Vermont Lake Monsters ran its winning streak to three straight games with an 8-3 New York-Penn League victory over the Batavia Muckdogs on Saturday night at Dwyer Stadium.

Vermont trailed 1-0 in the third inning when they scored four runs on a Pan two-run single and Crocker's first professional home run, a two-run shot to centerfield. The Lake Monsters added another run in the fifth on back-to-back one-out singles from Fabiaschi, who also had two doubles, and Pan before a Nick Rickles RBI groundout.

The Muckdogs got a pair of runs back off Vermont starter Brent Powers in the bottom of the fifth on Roberto Reyes second solo home run of the game and an RBI single from Garrett Wittels to cut the deficit to 5-3. Powers (3-2) picked up his third win in his last four starts, allowing three runs on seven hits with three strikeouts over five innings.

The game stayed 5-3 until the eighth when Rickles led off the inning with a bunt single to extend his hitting streak to 11 games and Lewis followed one-out later with his third home run of the season. The Lake Monsters have hit four home runs in the last two games and six in the last six games after just two homers in previous 15 games.

Vermont added another run in the ninth on Pan's third hit of the game to score Sean Jamieson. Pan has now hit in 12 straight games, going 17-for-45 (.378), and has hit safely in 28 of 33 games started overall. Crocker's home run also gave him at least one hit in all 13 games started since joining Vermont on July 31st.

Relievers Drew Bailey (two innings), Nathan Kilcrease (one) and Logan Chitwood (one) combined to toss four hitless innings of relief with one walk and five strikeouts as Vermont (28-27) won their third straight game for the fourth time this season.

The Lake Monsters will try to win a season-high fourth straight as they wrap up a six-game roadtrip at Batavia on Sunday afternoon beginning at 1:05 pm in the final game before the New York-Penn League All-Star Game Tuesday at Lowell. Vermont returns home to Centennial Field on Wednesday night to begin a six-game homestand against Mahoning Valley and Hudson Valley.