

**A's catcher Kurt Suzuki saves win against Orioles**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Kurt Suzuki did a lot offensively Wednesday, but the A's catcher secured a victory by standing his ground defensively in the ninth inning.

After right fielder David DeJesus' potentially disastrous misplay on Nick Markakis' single, Suzuki corralled DeJesus' throw to home plate and put the tag on Baltimore Orioles' pinch runner Blake Davis, who tried to score the tying run from first, for the final out at the O.co Coliseum.

The play clinched a 6-5 A's win that was tougher than anticipated.

It also capped a confidence-boosting afternoon for Suzuki, who is hitting just .230 and has struggled defensively.

Suzuki homered twice off Orioles starter Alfredo Simon (3-6), and he nailed Mark Reynolds trying to steal second in the fourth.

"It was a weird day," Suzuki said. "You go from where you feel like you're completely lost and haven't played baseball in your entire life, to a day where you're feeling really good at the plate and really good behind the plate and everything is clicking."

The A's, who entered the day with a league-high 100 errors, nearly saw DeJesus' miscue sabotage them.

Closer Andrew Bailey, holding a 6-4 lead, struck out the first two hitters in the ninth before allowing Robert Andino's double and J.J. Hardy's infield single to put runners on the corners.

Markakis followed with an RBI single to right. DeJesus, who entered as a defensive substitute to begin the inning, let the slow-rolling ball slip under his glove. As DeJesus scrambled to retrieve it, Davis -- running for Hardy -- headed for home.

"(DeJesus) bobbled the ball, but you have to keep your wits about you," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "He made a heck of a throw."

Suzuki peeked to his left and saw Davis -- a former teammate at Cal State Fullerton -- barreling down on him.

"I figured he was going to try to slide around me, or trick me and try to run me over," Suzuki said.

He took DeJesus' one-hop throw and cut off the plate, dropping the tag on Davis as Davis slid by. Home plate umpire Brian Gorman studied the scene for several seconds, finally signaling out when Suzuki stood holding the ball in his right hand.

"I was just hoping that he was out," DeJesus said. "That would have been ridiculous."

The A's, after being swept in three games by Texas, took two of three from the Orioles.

Baltimore scored two in the first off Brandon McCarthy (6-6), but the A's took the lead for good with three in the bottom half, including Josh Willingham's two-run double to left.

A's first baseman Brandon Allen continued to impress, and it will be tough for Melvin to remove him from the lineup when Conor Jackson returns from a neck injury.

Allen delivered a sacrifice fly in the first. In the third, he drove a triple off the center field wall, racing around to score when Adam Jones mishandled the ball for an error.

That was the second triple in two days for Allen, 8 for 15 and displaying a smooth glove at first since being recalled from Triple-A Sacramento.

Melvin values Jackson's right-handed bat against lefties (Allen hits left-handed), but Melvin praised the overall game of Allen, listed at 6-foot-2 and 235 pounds.

"Not only is he a big, strong kid who looks like he could hit, he's also an athletic defender," Melvin said. "That's a good attribute to have with some of the problems we've had in the infield. He's a big target over there."

### **Rookie slams door on O's to keep A's in the game**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Reliever Fautino De Los Santos played a big role in the A's 6-5 win over Baltimore on Wednesday.

The rookie replaced starter Brandon McCarthy in the seventh with runners on the corners and no outs and didn't allow a run, preserving what was a 6-4 A's lead at the time.

De Los Santos inherited a similar scenario Monday -- bases loaded and no outs in the seventh -- and allowed four runs to score in a 6-2 loss.

"That was huge, especially after the other night, bringing him into a similar situation," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "He made an adjustment. He really pitched this time as opposed to in the past, where we've seen him come in and he tried to overpower."

De Los Santos retired No. 9 hitter Craig Tatum on a shallow fly for the first out. Next up was Robert Andino, who had hit a fastball from De Los Santos for a two-run double Monday.

This time De Los Santos got him swinging on a slider, then he got J.J. Hardy to chase a slider for the third out.

□ Melvin talked about his growing confidence in lefty reliever Brian Fuentes, who has endured an overall poor season after signing a two-year, \$10.5 million deal in the winter.

Fuentes leads major league relievers with eight losses and sports a 4.07 ERA, but his ERA is 1.10 over his past 18 appearances.

Melvin had been using Fuentes in low-pressure situations but said he considers Fuentes as Melvin's seventh-inning man along with De Los Santos, a right-hander.

"He really should be an important guy for us," Melvin said. "That's what he was brought in for."

□ McCarthy improved to 5-1 since the All-Star break, allowing four runs on eight hits over six-plus innings.

He steadied himself after allowing two runs in the first and benefited from the early support. He was pitching with a 5-2 lead after three innings.

McCarthy has issued two walks or fewer in all 18 of his starts.

□ Andrew Bailey withstood a turbulent ninth to notch his 15th save. He's 30 for 30 for his career in save opportunities after the All-Star break.

### **Chin Music: Brandon Allen playing his way into more starts**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 8/17/2011 12:26pm

The lineups for the A's-Orioles series finale:

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

O's: Andino 2B, Hardy SS, Markakis RF, Jones CF, Vlad DH, Reynolds 1B, Reimold LF, Bell 3B, Tatum C; Simon RHP.

-The daily storyline with the A's is whether Brandon Allen remains in the lineup once Conor Jackson is back from a neck injury. It seems clear that Allen has to keep playing based on how he's performed so far, and judging from manager Bob Melvin's praise of Allen, I'd expect him to keep getting at-bats even when Jackson is healthy. "We'll see how it goes," Melvin said. "There will be some days off for Allen too against left-handers. But he's doing a nice job right now and deserves some at-bats." Melvin said he values Jackson's bat against lefties, and Toronto will start three lefties over the next four games

against Oakland starting Thursday. But Allen also has impressed against lefties, showing he can take the ball the other way. And it's possible we could see Jackson and Allen in the lineup at the same time if Josh Willingham needs a day off — expect to see Jackson in left field and Allen at first in that situation.

With the way Allen is playing — offensively and defensively — it's tough to imagine how his stock fell in the eyes of the Diamondbacks. It shows you that a change of scenery can work wonders for a guy. But it's still a very small sample size with Allen, so temper that enthusiasm just a bit.

### **A's catcher Kurt Suzuki finally has winning day**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Kurt Suzuki would like to forget much of this year - but not Wednesday's game at the Coliseum.

The A's catcher, having his worst season as a big-leaguer, was a central figure in Oakland's 6-5 victory over the Orioles. He smacked two home runs, threw out a runner and finished the game with style, emphatically tagging out pinch-runner Blake Davis at the plate and then holding up the ball for home-plate umpire Dan Bellino.

Bellino made an almost equally emphatic out call, and the A's, the league's worst team when it comes to one-run games, survived Baltimore's two-out push.

"Obviously, it's a year Kurt won't be thrilled with at the end, but games like this, where he's lights out, have got to be great for his confidence," Oakland starter Brandon McCarthy said. "He was outstanding today."

Oakland took a two-run lead into the ninth, with closer Andrew Bailey on the mound, but Robert Andino's two-out double and a base hit by J.J. Hardy put men at the corners.

Nick Markakis knocked an RBI single to right, and David DeJesus - just into the game - flubbed the pickup. As he tried to recover, third-base coach Willie Randolph waved Davis around third.

DeJesus made a strong, high throw, and Suzuki blocked the plate well. Suzuki said he knew Davis, his former Cal State Fullerton teammate, would try to go around him, and he was ready. He took the throw, and he got the tag on Davis quickly.

"I knew it was going to be bang-bang," Suzuki said. Davis said if he had it to do again, he would have gone straight at Suzuki instead.

DeJesus was watching the play unfold with some anxiety after mangling things initially.

"I'm just hoping he's out, because that would have been ridiculous - I'm coming in for defense," DeJesus said. "But I was still able to make the last out, even though it was crazy. ... I was finally able to breathe."

DeJesus wasn't the only one who found the wait excruciating.

"In my mind, it took about an hour for the ball to get to home plate," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "That's one thing we talked about the other day - when you make a mistake, don't drop your head. David had the awareness to know where the runner was, and he made a great throw."

Suzuki entered the day batting .229 overall and .201 in his past 55 games, and since May 6, opponents had an 89 percent success rate stealing bases against him.

He has 12 homers this season, and 11 have come with the bases empty, including those in the second and sixth innings Wednesday, his second career two-homer game.

"This is a weird game," Suzuki said. "You go for a few days and feel completely lost, like you haven't played baseball in your entire life, to everything totally clicking."

Brandon Allen, called up Saturday, understands the clicking part pretty well. He provided a sacrifice fly in the first inning, then connected on his second triple in two games in the third. He kept going and scored when Baltimore center fielder Adam Jones could not cleanly pick up the ball.

"He was running hard the whole way - a lot of guys stop at third," Melvin said. "He's very athletic, he runs the bases well, he's dynamic. You don't get that out of most first basemen."

In Allen's next plate appearance, he worked an 11-pitch walk, and he's 8 for his past 13 overall. Melvin indicated that, though Allen might get an occasional day off against a left-hander (the A's face three in the next four games), he is likely to remain in the lineup when Conor Jackson returns from neck stiffness in the next day or two.

### **A's Fautino De Los Santos thrives in tough spot**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

On Monday night against Baltimore, rookie **Fautino De Los Santos** entered the game with the bases loaded and nobody out in the seventh, and after recording a strikeout, he gave up a two-run double to **Robert Andino** and a two-run single by **Josh Bell**.

On Wednesday, the right-hander was summoned again in a similar situation: seventh inning, runners at the corners, nobody out. This time he responded well, getting a shallow flyball from **Craig Tatum**, then striking out Andino and **J.J. Hardy**.

Starter **Brandon McCarthy**, who'd already allowed one run in the inning, said that De Los Santos and catcher **Kurt Suzuki** "saved me."

"His slider is disgusting," McCarthy said. "When he's throwing it like that, it isn't a fair fight."

"He was huge," Suzuki said. "The first night was pretty much the same situation, but he showed his composure and this time shut 'em down. For a young pitcher to do that is pretty incredible."

**Briefly:** McCarthy, who also allowed two runs in the first inning, is 5-1 with a 4.10 ERA since the break. He said he struggled with his sharpness all day; he'd left his previous outing after getting hit in the right knee by a line drive. ... Many scouts are speculating that the Giants might develop interest in some of the A's outfielders or in pitcher **Rich Harden**, given San Francisco's injury troubles.

### **Leading off**

**Edging the O's:** The A's took the season series against Baltimore 5-4, winning five of six at home. The Orioles swept three in Baltimore in June; the next day, Bob Melvin replaced Bob Geren as the A's manager. The A's are 77-35 against Baltimore over the past 12 years.

## **Drumbeat: Brandon Allen still might get playing time when Jackson back**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum, 8/17/2011 12:09pm

Conor Jackson (neck stiffness) might be available today to pinch hit (or pinch run, though he's not the top option for such duties on the bench). So he could return to starting duties in the next day or two.

I asked manager Bob Melvin - who said Saturday when Brandon Allen was called up that Jackson will remain the primary first baseman - if, considering how well Allen has performed, he could see having both men in the lineup when Jackson is healthy. Both can play the outfield, though Allen would man first if they both were in the lineup.

Melvin said that Allen "is doing a nice job and we do have flexibility. We'll see how it goes - there will be some days off against left-handers. But he's doing a nice job right now and deserves some at-bats."

Yes.

Melvin also mentioned that he's steadily moving Brian Fuentes back into a more prominent bullpen role. He sees the seventh inning as a combination of Fuentes and Fautino De Los Santos.

De Los Santos is improving one area of his game that is often a problem for young relievers - he's getting better at holding baserunners. Melvin said that his time to the plate was 1.6, 1.65 seconds when he was first up and he's shaved that down to 1.3, 1.35 on occasion, and is usually around 1.4 seconds. "That's not only difficult for a young guy, but especially at the big-league level in a prominent role," Melvin said. "He's made big strides there."

Here's the lineup behind Brandon McCarthy: Weeks 2b, Crisp cf, Matsui dh, Willingham lf, Allen 1b, Sweeney rf, Pennington ss, Suzuki c, Sizemore 3b.

It's just a day off for David DeJesus - Melvin doesn't want Ryan Sweeney getting too rusty.

## **Suzuki, A's halt late O's rally to take series**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Though manager Bob Melvin could have done without the dramatics, perhaps it was only fitting that Wednesday's 6-5 A's victory over the Orioles ended the way it did.

Especially after the day Kurt Suzuki had.

With runners on the corners and the A's leading by two with two outs in the ninth, Baltimore's Nick Markakis delivered a run-scoring base hit to right field off Andrew Bailey that drove in Robert Andino and nearly drove both clubs to extra innings.

The ball got past David DeJesus -- who had just entered as a defensive replacement to start the frame -- but DeJesus recovered and made a perfect throw to the plate, where Suzuki firmly stood and applied the tag to end the game.

"In my mind, it took about an hour for the ball to get to home plate," Melvin said, smiling.

DeJesus and Suzuki, though, remained unmoved the whole time. Well, almost the whole time.

"I came at it, saw the hop and thought it was going to hop up, but it hit my foot," DeJesus said. "I kind of found the ball and saw the guy round third base and tried to throw it as straight as possible. And I was able to get the guy at home.

"I was just hoping he was out. That would have been ridiculous. Once he called him out, I was finally able to breathe a little bit."

Said Suzuki, who was teammates with Davis at Cal State Fullerton: "The plays from right field, those are the toughest ones, because you can't really judge where the runner is. I took one last peek right before David got the ball, and I knew it was

going to be a bang-bang play. Fortunately, I played with Blake in college for two years and knew he was going to slide around me -- either that or trip me and run me over -- but with the tying run right there, I made sure I had it in my glove before tagging him."

Should the ex-teammates meet at the plate again, Davis is likely to take a different approach.

"I was just trying to go around the tag, and he blocked the plate pretty good," he said. "You can do that or you can just try and run him over. The first thing on my mind was to see where that ball was going to be, and to try to go around him. He ended up blocking the plate. Looking back, it probably would have been a better idea to just go right into him. Especially being the tying run."

Most impressive, Melvin said, was DeJesus' ability to wipe away a poor play with a great one.

"He bobbled the ball, but you want to keep your wits about you, and that's something we talked about the other day," the A's skipper said. "Defensively, once you make a miscue, don't drop your head but heighten your awareness. In that instance, he had the awareness to know what was going on and where the runners were. And he made a heck of a throw. We'll take it."

The late-inning shenanigans capped an overall strong effort from the A's, who utilized seven extra-base hits -- including two triples and a pair of Suzuki homers -- to distance themselves from a Baltimore club that has dropped 16 of its last 20 road games.

It marked quite the feat for Oakland -- which entered the day ranked 12th in the American League in extra-base hits, ahead of only the Twins and Mariners -- and especially for Suzuki, who has endured a second straight season of deep offensive struggles.

"You go from a few days where you feel like you're completely lost and haven't played baseball in your entire life, to a day where you feel really good at the plate, really good behind the plate and everything's clicking," he said. "Moving forward, this definitely gives you a little more confidence. I've just gotta keep it going."

The A's catcher, who entered the contest batting just .226, collected solo shots off Baltimore hurler Alfredo Simon in both the second and sixth innings to give him his second career two-homer game. He has just 21 hits in 86 at-bats since the All-Star break, but 14 of those have been for extra bases. He also threw a runner out in the first, having tossed out just 16 of the previous 94.

"It was a big day for him," Melvin said. "He had one of his better throws of the year, hits two home runs, makes a great play at the plate, and then the game-calling as well. What I like about Kurt is that he doesn't settle into the fact that it's just going to be an off year. He keeps grinding every day. I told him, 'You have two choices. You can accept the fact that you're having a bad year or you can go crazy.' And he chooses to go crazy, which I like."

Suzuki's efforts combined nicely with those around him. Before his first long ball exited the park, the A's had already posted a three-spot against Simon in the first, thanks to a two-run double off the bat of Josh Willingham and a sacrifice fly from Brandon Allen to erase a 2-0 Orioles lead.

Allen's productivity, which has been on display since his Saturday callup, continued in the third, when he collected his second triple in as many days and then scored on the play after center fielder Adam Jones fumbled the ball.

A's starter Brandon McCarthy, meanwhile, bounced back from a shaky two-run first inning to give the club five more frames, surrendering four earned runs on eight hits. He walked two and struck out three.

McCarthy compiled four scoreless innings after the first before allowing Baltimore to cut Oakland's three-run lead to two via a one-out homer from Markakis in the sixth. Josh Bell's RBI double off the right-hander with no outs in the seventh led to his departure, at which point righty Fautino De Los Santos got three quick outs to strand two and end the frame.

"In that situation right there," McCarthy said, "that's how you have to get out of it, and he did an unbelievable job."

The A's have now claimed victory in three of their past four series and will look to build on such momentum come Thursday, when they begin a four-game set against the visiting Blue Jays.

### **Romero goes for fifth consecutive victory in Oakland**

By Jon Star / MLB.com

A twist in the schedule has the Blue Jays facing American League West opponents in 13 consecutive games both home and away. And that stretch continues on Thursday when Toronto heads down the coast from Seattle to Oakland.

The two teams met last week in Toronto. The opener will feature a pair of pitchers who were left out of last week's series in Trevor Cahill and Ricky Romero, though the two did meet on April 7 at Rogers Centre.

Cahill got the best of that duel, allowing one earned run on three hits over eight innings en route to the win. Romero lasted 7 1/3 innings, also allowing one earned run with five strikeouts.

The hurlers had mixed results in their previous outings. Romero, who has won four straight decisions, comes off a victory against the Angels on Saturday when he allowed one earned run on two hits in seven innings. Cahill, however, allowed four runs (three earned) against the Rangers and took his fifth loss in his last six decisions.

Cahill could receive additional offensive support pending Conor Jackson's return to the lineup on Thursday following a neck injury. However, manager Bob Melvin has a decision to make when it comes to Brandon Allen and his continued playing time. Allen went 8-for-15 with two RBIs, five runs scored, two triples and a double in his time spelling Jackson.

"He's been consistent," Melvin said. "It's been a short sampling, but just as impressive is his athletic ability. Defensively, he's handled everything. So not only is he a big, strong kid who looks like he can hit, but he's a good defender, and that's a good attribute to have. With some of the problems we've had in the infield, too, he's a big target over there. And with a lot of guys, that can give them confidence over there, knowing that they don't have to be perfect with their throws. So he's looked really good all the way around."

Melvin acknowledged that he will try to find room for both Allen and Jackson, and that could mean Jackson will see additional time in the outfield or third base.

"I think Allen is doing a nice job over at first base at this point, and we do have some flexibility with some of our guys when Jackson comes back," Melvin said. "Conor's a key guy for us, especially against left-handers, but [Allen] is doing a nice job right now and deserves some at-bats."

Jackson hit .235 (8-for-34) with four RBIs and three runs scored in nine games this month prior to the injury.

### **Blue Jays: Litsch's lift in relief**

Jesse Litsch was moved to the bullpen at the end of July, and so far, the decision is paying off. Litsch, who went 4-3 with a 4.66 ERA in eight starts, has allowed just one earned run and three hits in 10 2/3 innings of relief. He struck out 14 batters and walked just two in that span. Litsch's contributions will help a Blue Jays bullpen that recently lost Jon Rauch, who went on the 15-day disabled list after undergoing an appendectomy on Tuesday morning.

### **Athletics: Offense on fire**

Oakland regularly struggled to score runs during the season's first half, but the tide has changed since the All-Star break. The A's are hitting .287 in the second half, which ranks third in the American League. They have scored 169 runs in 30 games (5.6 runs per game) since the break, after scoring 301 runs in 92 games in the first half (3.4 runs per game). The added runs have been needed, as Oakland's pitching staff has just a 4.91 second-half ERA.

### **Worth noting**

Hideki Matsui is hitting .384 (45-for-117) with five home runs and 26 RBIs in 30 games since the All-Star break. Matsui hit .209 in 76 games prior to the break.

### **Fuentes thriving in second half of season**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Brian Fuentes' first half of the season was well documented through multiple woes both on and off the field, the latter issues stemming from what he deemed a lack of communication with then-manager Bob Geren.

More than two months have passed since Geren's dismissal, and Fuentes has utilized the new beginning -- along with a fresh second half -- to his advantage, stringing together several strong performances in quiet fashion.

The A's lefty entered Wednesday with a 1.10 ERA over his past 18 appearances after posting an 8.31 ERA in his previous 10. Moreover, he reached the All-Star break with a 1-8 record, a 4.82 ERA and a 1.42 WHIP, along with 20 earned runs and 16 walks spanning 37 1/3 innings. Since, he has a 1.59 ERA and a 1.06 WHIP while allowing just two earned runs and two walks in 11 1/3 innings.

Needless to say, it marked a rocky start for Fuentes, who struggled as the team's closer while Andrew Bailey was sidelined on the disabled list. Then those problems mounted even further as Fuentes took on an undefined relief role upon Bailey's return.

"Sometimes, premier guys like him -- he's been a closer, he's done everything -- have some struggles," manager Bob Melvin said. "And there was a period where he struggled some and ended up getting a lot of losses for it, and that can mount on you a little bit. So I talked to him about moving him back a little bit -- in a few different scenarios to work on some things -- and then scooting him back up into more prominent roles, which I've done."

On Tuesday, Fuentes was brought in for the seventh inning, following starter Guillermo Moscoso's departure, to get two outs, and he did just that. Such a role -- sharing seventh-inning duties with Fautino De Los Santos -- is what Melvin envisions at the time being for Fuentes, who was signed to a two-year deal worth \$10.5 million this offseason.

"You're going to start seeing him in more prominent roles," Melvin said. "And that's why he's here, that's why he was signed, to pitch in those important roles. He's going to be a key guy for us. It might not be a full inning -- it might be matching him up for a couple of hitters and bringing somebody else in -- and at some point in time, it'll be back to giving him the whole inning."

"But he's done real well for us, and I want to ease him back into those type of roles. To this point, he's handled it really, really well as of late."

### **Worth noting**

- David DeJesus received the day off on Wednesday, while Ryan Sweeney made the start in right field against Orioles right-hander Alfredo Simon.



"We need to keep [Sweeney] current and find a way to get him some at-bats, so today seemed like the best way to do that," Melvin said.

- Conor Jackson (neck) remained out of the mix on Wednesday, allowing Brandon Allen to make his fifth straight start at first base. Though Jackson -- who was available to pinch-hit on Wednesday -- could return to starting duties as early as Thursday, Melvin indicated that Allen could possibly earn himself an everyday role, especially since Jackson can play the outfield.

"I think Allen is doing a nice job over at first base at this point, and we do have some flexibility with some of our guys when Jackson comes back," Melvin said. "Conor's a key guy for us, especially against left-handers, but [Allen] is doing a nice job right now and deserves some at-bats."

### **Suzuki hits 2 HRs in A's win**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Kurt Suzuki already had produced a stellar day; two solo home runs and a throw to second to nail a baserunner trying to steal.

Then Oakland's go-to catcher put a game-saving tag on his former Cal State Fullerton teammate to close the Athletics' 6-5 victory over the Baltimore Orioles on Wednesday.

He needed this one, too. It's been a rough year.

Suzuki connected in the second and sixth against Alfredo Simon (3-6) for his second career multihomer game, and right fielder David DeJesus cut down pinch-runner Blake Davis with a perfect throw to the plate for a dramatic finish.

"The plays to right field, those are the toughest ones because you can't really judge where the runner is," Suzuki said. "I took one last peek right before Dave got the ball to see where the runner was. I knew it was going to be a bang-bang play.

"I played with Blake in college for three years. I knew he was going to try to slide around me, either that or he was going to try to trick me and try to run me over."

Brandon Allen tripled and scored on the same play and also had a sacrifice fly for the A's, who snapped a four-game losing streak Tuesday night and followed that up with another victory for a winning series.

DeJesus — who entered as a defensive replacement for the final inning — flubbed Nick Markakis' RBI single but recovered to make a strong throw to Suzuki, who tagged Davis to deny the Orioles the tying run. It also preserved Andrew Bailey's 15th save after he gave up three hits in the ninth.

DeJesus held his breath as he watched the play unfold.

"I'm just hoping that he was out, 'cuz that would have been ridiculous," he said. "I came in for defense and was able to make the last out, even though it was crazy."

Home plate umpire Dan Bellino asked Suzuki to "show him the ball," and the catcher obliged. And the out call finally came.

"In my mind it took about an hour for the ball to get to home plate. He bobbled the ball, but you have to keep your wits about you," said A's manager Bob Melvin, who has been preaching staying poised after a defensive blunder. "He made a heck of a throw. We'll take it."

The Orioles were trying for their first road series win since mid-May and a winning season series with Oakland for the first time since going 8-3 in their 1998 matchups. The A's won this year's meetings 5-4.

Suzuki also hit two home runs on June 3, 2010, at Boston. Seven of Oakland's nine hits went for extra bases.

Baltimore wanted to force extra innings. Davis got the go signal from third-base coach Willie Randolph and charged toward home.

"He had a good throw, the ball beat me," Davis said. "I tried to go around the tag and he blocked the plate pretty good. You can do that or you can just try and run him over. ... Looking back, it probably would have been a better idea to just probably go right into him, especially being the tying run."

Adam Jones had a sacrifice fly and Vladimir Guerrero, a familiar Oakland nemesis from his days with the rival Angels, added an RBI double as Baltimore took a quick 2-0 lead in the first.

The A's loaded the bases with no outs in the bottom half against Simon. Jemile Weeks led off with a single, Coco Crisp walked and Hideki Matsui hit a bloop single into shallow center. Josh Willingham followed with a two-run double when the ball was misplayed by left fielder Nolan Reimold, and Allen's sacrifice fly made it 3-2.

Allen is quickly becoming a reliable regular since the A's acquired him from Arizona at the trade deadline and called him up from Triple-A Sacramento on Saturday. Starting the past five games, he is batting .533 (8 for 15).

Allen keeps doing his part — and then some. He tripled for the second straight day and scored on the third-inning play. Leaping center fielder Adam Jones made an error when Allen's ball came off the wall and bounced over his head. Jones then bobbled the ball trying to pick it up from the ground.

Melvin indicated before the game that Allen will continue to get steady playing time at first base even once Conor Jackson returns.

Jackson missed his fourth straight game with a stiff neck.

J.J. Hardy ended an 0-for-18 funk with a first-inning single off Brandon McCarthy to get Baltimore going. But it didn't last as the Orioles gave the runs right back in the bottom of the inning.

Markakis hit a solo homer in the sixth and Josh Bell had an RBI single in the seventh that chased McCarthy. The right-hander allowed four runs and eight hits in six-plus innings.

Fautino De Los Santos and Grant Balfour each pitched a scoreless inning before Bailey survived the rocky ninth.

"Awesome," he said of the ending. "That made it a lot less stressful."

McCarthy (6-6) was back on the mound after taking a line drive off his right knee in a 9-1 loss to Texas his last time out.

Baltimore won the series opener Monday — the Orioles' seventh time doing so on the road this year — but has gone 1-14 in games after that the last seven times it took the first game.

The Orioles have dropped 16 of their last 20 road games and have lost 10 of their last 12 series finales.

### **A's power bats fuel 6-5 win over Orioles, but defense saves the day**

Sam McPherson, examiner.com

The Oakland Athletics don't have a lot of power.

So when they hit two home runs and two triples in the same game, they better win.

And today, the A's did -- barely holding on for [a 6-5 win over the Baltimore Orioles](#) behind Kurt Suzuki's two solo home runs and triples by rookies Brandon Allen and Jemile Weeks.

Oakland hitters also had three doubles today, for seven extra-base hits total amongst the nine hits overall. In addition to Suzuki's two RBI, Josh Willingham also had two RBI.

Weeks, Suzuki and Scott Sizemore each delivered two hits on the day as well.

After taking a 5-2 lead early in the game, Oakland managed to fight off a late charge by the visiting team: single runs for Baltimore in the sixth, seventh and ninth innings closed the gap, and it took a great defensive play by David DeJesus and Suzuki to get the tying run out at the plate to end the game.

Nick Markakis' third hit of the game scored Robert Andino from second base, and when DeJesus booted the ball in right field, pinch runner Blake Davis was sent to home plate. The A's right fielder delivered a near-perfect strike to Suzuki, who successfully blocked the plate and made the tag to secure the win.

Brandon McCarthy delivered a mediocre start to get the win, giving up four runs in six-plus innings. Fautino De Los Santos saved McCarthy's bacon in the seventh, getting three outs after the A's starter left two men on with no outs and one run already in. The Oakland reliever secured his first hold of the season with two strikeouts.

After Grant Balfour pitched a scoreless eighth inning, Andrew Bailey came in to close the game -- but he struggled, allowing three hits and the run noted above.

(Perhaps A's manager Bob Melvin should learn not to use Bailey in non-save situations as he did on Tuesday night -- thus saving him for the more important outings like this one, that almost ended in disaster.)

Thus the A's took both the short series and the season series against the Orioles with the win today, and now they will host the Toronto Blue Jays for four games starting tomorrow to close this single, August homestand.

### **McCarthy tries to rebound today against Baltimore**

Sam McPherson, examiner.com

(OAKLAND) -- Last Friday night was not Oakland Athletics starter Brandon McCarthy's best night.

Facing his former team, the A's right-hander got rocked for seven runs in 3 1/3 innings against the Texas Rangers on August 12.

McCarthy (5-6, 3.62 ERA) would like to do a little better today against the Baltimore Orioles and help his Oakland teammates win the season series against the Birds for the 13th season in a row.

The A's lost Monday and won Tuesday to set up the rubber match of this short series -- and the season series overall, tied at 4-4 currently -- in the matinee game. Alfredo Simon (3-5, 4.35) takes the mound for Baltimore.

The Orioles haven't won a short series in their last 13 tries this year, dating back to late June. Oakland would like to keep them struggling and get back on the winning track themselves after getting swept by the Rangers over the weekend.

Today's game won't mean much in the grand scheme of the baseball universe, obviously, but the Orioles would like to get the series wins.

Both teams are at the bottom of the American League this year, and combined, the two organizations have gone 19 seasons without a winning record or a playoff berth.

For two proud franchises -- in fact, the only AL teams (along with the New York Yankees) to win three straight league pennants since division play began in 1969 -- these are hard, ugly times.

The Orioles have the worst record (47-73) in the league and the second-worst mark in the majors, trailing only the Houston Astros. Meanwhile, the A's are only six games better than Baltimore (54-68) themselves.

Each squad has struggled in its own division in 2011, creating a lot of problems in pursuing a playoff spot: Baltimore is 14-31 against the AL East, and Oakland is 16-23 against the AL West.

Buck Showalter, manager of the Orioles, has juggled the lineup for today's game, moving second baseman Robert Andino to the leadoff spot and dropping former leadoff hitter Nolan Reimold (left field) to seventh in the order.

Meanwhile, A's manager Bob Melvin continues to plug first baseman Brandon Allen into the five-hole of the lineup. Allen has responded so far with a .538 batting average since joining the team Saturday.

## **Contra Costa Blog: Oakland A's stars hang with kids in Richmond**

San Francisco Chronicle, August 17, 2011 10:01am

The Richmond Police Activities League gymnasium rocked with hundreds of kids and parents Tuesday. For the parents, it was the free backpacks full of school supplies. For the kids, the big draw was getting autographs and taking pictures with local Major League stars.

"To see these guys up close, it's special for these kids," said Richard Cheney, a Richmond resident, while his 4-year-old son Noah shouldered a hefty backpack. "The kids in Richmond need this kind of thing."

Oakland A's all-star starting pitcher Gio Gonzalez and reliever Fautino De Los Santos wowed the kids and parents at "Backpacks 4 Their Future," which relied on a range of organizations and private donors to distribute 500 backpacks filled with binders, pencils, rulers, scissors and other school supplies to Richmond schoolkids.

### **Oakland A's stars, free backpacks, a hit with Richmond students**

By: By Robert Rogers and Tyler Orsburn, Richmond Confidential

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More than a dozen local police were also on hand to interact with the crowd at the Police Activities League gym, where kids played in jump houses and listened to booming music before the big leaguers arrived.

When Gonzalez and De Los Santos arrived wearing green A's jerseys, the already buzzing gymnasium ramped up to a near-fever pitch. Smiling kids bounded toward the table where the players sat to sign and pose for pictures and kids and parents formed a line hundreds of feet long to get autographs, mug for pictures and chat with the affable young players.

Parents and uniformed police officers also posed with the Oakland ballplayers. The Florida-born Gonzalez was gregarious and humorous with kids, parents and reporters. De Los Santos, a 25-year-old from the Dominican Republic, speaks limited English, but chatted up the many Spanish-speaking children and parents.

"This is awesome, just awesome," said Gonzalez, a 25-year-old lefthander who made his first American League All-Star team this season, as he signed autographs for a trio of youngsters wearing A's caps. "This is my first time in Richmond, and to see these kids light up ... I am more than happy to stay and sign every autograph and pose for every picture."

The event was made possible by several partners, led by Ellen Ellery, a KTVU News executive, who served as the chief organizer and fundraiser. Donations were also made by utilities company PG&E, the Oakland A's franchise, the Richmond PAL and the Richmond police officers' and managers' unions.

This was the back-to-school backpack event's fifth year, but the first year that it was held at the Richmond PAL gym, Ellery said.

Ellery said she launched the backpack giveaway program 5 years ago with a tax rebate she received, and that it has grown in supporters and beneficiaries ever since. She said the program is intended to benefit kids from families whose finances are tight by making sure they have the necessarily supplies for the coming school year.

"I have a friend who's a teacher and she says that the most important thing for the kids is to be like everyone else," Ellery said. "So if they show up to school the first day and they don't have the tools they need they're behind from the very first day. This way they know they have a new backpack and they have new supplies and they feel good about themselves."

As the program has grown, more kids have benefited from the increased supply of backpacks. This year was the largest in terms of materials given away, venue, and total crowd.

Utility company PG&E donated 300 of the backpacks and several volunteers. "This is the first year we've been involved in this, but it's a great event and we're open to continuing to support this in the future," said Tamar Sarkissian, a PG&E spokesperson.

After signing and posing for hundreds of fans, Gonzalez gave interviews to local media before hitting the road with De Los Santos and an A's staff member to go to the ballpark for a 7:05 p.m. game vs. the Baltimore Orioles.

"Waking up this morning it was the first thing that came to mind," Gonzalez said. "Coming out to Richmond and joining up with these kids that are here ... everything worked out perfect today."

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **Bullpen, Recker's game-winner lift River Cats**

By Mike Morris / Sacramento River Cats

Sacramento won in walk-off fashion Wednesday afternoon after a bases-loaded single from Anthony Recker gave the River Cats a 4-3, 13-inning victory over Albuquerque.

It looked as though Sacramento was finished after infielder Andy LaRoche allowed a ground-rule double in the top of the 13th to give Albuquerque a 3-2 lead..

"My plan was to go up there and throw the ball as hard as I could," said LaRoche after picking up his first win in his first professional pitching appearance.

Although LaRoche finished the game with the win, Sacramento's regular relievers deserve much of the credit. Before LaRoche allowed two hits and the go-ahead run in the 13th inning, the River Cats bullpen allowed just five hits through scoreless 9.1 innings.

"Our bullpen came in and stepped up," Recker said. "A lot of those guys are tired and have been pitching a lot lately, so for them to come in and shut a team like that down it says a lot."

Sacramento left-hander Josh Outman struggled early, allowing two runs in the third inning while Albuquerque left-hander Alberto Bastardo pitched a gem for the Isotopes.

The Albuquerque starter made his second start since returning from the disabled list, recovering from a severely sprained ankle that occurred June 5. Bastardo pitched 2.0 innings in his first game back (August 12 in Fresno), allowing a season-high seven runs (six earned), while walking two. Wednesday afternoon would be different, as he allowed just three hits in 5.1 innings of work.

Outman allowed two runs in 2.2 innings while walking five. August has not served Outman well as his ERA has climbed from 3.21 to 4.05. On August 1, Outman pitched 5.0 solid innings, allowing just two hits and one unearned run. In three starts since, he has pitched 11.2 innings, allowing 15 hits and 11 runs (all earned).

Isotope shortstop Ivan Ochoa was walked to start the third inning and stole second, putting himself in position to be the first run on the board. Usually a reliable man in the outfield, Jermaine Mitchell miss-played a ball with two outs, allowing the Isotopes to score their first of two runs of the inning.

After two walks and a hit-by-pitch, Outman was pulled with two outs in the third inning. Right-hander Andrew Carignan retired the side.

Albuquerque came into this game with the fourth best team batting average in the Pacific Coast League (.296), with 6-of-9 starters hitting over .300. That offense was nowhere to be seen after the third inning as the River Cats bullpen allowed just three hits until late in the game. The River Cats matched the Isotopes' two runs with two of their own in the seventh inning. Chris Carter walked to start the seventh inning and scored off of a single by Jai Miller. LaRoche followed the Carter walk with a single to center, extending his hit-streak to 13 games. With LaRoche on third, Recker bunted in the tying run. The same guy that tied it for Sacramento in the seventh came up big at the end of the game driving in the final runs to win it.

"Going up there with the bases loaded and a position player on the mound, the last thing I wanted to do is tie the game," Recker said, "but I was going to try and get a run in any way I could. Fortunately, I got the count that allowed me to get a pitch I could hit."

The extra-inning win is Sacramento's sixth of the year (6-3) and their fifth walk-off victory since July 17.

### **Rancho Rallies in Ninth To Take Series**

Stockton Ports

RANCHO CUCAMONGA, Calif. - The Stockton Ports had a chance to lock up a winning record on their seven-game Southern California road trip on Wednesday night in Rancho Cucamonga, but fell shy of completing the feat by two outs at The Epicenter. Taking a 6-3 lead into the 9th inning, the Quakes scored four runs off Ports closer Jose Guzman (2-3) to come from behind and hand the Ports a 7-6 loss.

The game began as a pitcher's duel between Ports starter Dan Straily and Cal-League ERA leader JonMichael Redding. The teams were scoreless heading into the 4th before the Ports came through with their biggest inning of the night. Stockton loaded the bases with nobody out and Redding walked Anthony Aliotti to give the Ports a 1-0 lead. Petey Paramore came up next and grounded to short, bringing in Conner Crumbliss to make it a 2-0 advantage. After Dusty Coleman hit into a fielder's choice resulting in an out at the plate, Mitch LeVier came up and whacked a three-run homer to right to make it a 5-0 lead.

Redding would be ejected following the 4th inning after arguing with the home plate umpire on his way to the dugout. Redding, like Straily, would receive a no-decision, going four innings and allowing five runs on four hits while walking two and striking out five.

The Quakes would plate an unearned run off Straily in the 4th. With one out, Tony Delmonico doubled and Austin Gallagher followed with a single to right. Rashun Dixon came up firing to the plate and threw a perfect strike to Paramore, who applied the tag on Delmonico for the out at the plate. Wilberto Ortiz then singled to put runners at first and second and Jaime Pedroza followed by reaching on an error made by first baseman Anthony Aliotti, allowing Gallagher to score and making it a 5-1 game.

Rancho Cucamonga scored once more off Straily in the 6th. With two on and two out after a pair of walks, Preston Mattingly singled to right to make it a 5-2 contest.

Straily would receive a no-decision, going six full innings and allowing two runs (one earned) on six hits while striking out five.

In the 7th, the Ports added a run on a two-out RBI double from Conner Crumbliss to make it a 6-2 game. The run came off Quakes reliever Josh Walter, and it was the only run he allowed in three innings of work.

The Quakes countered with a run in the bottom half of the inning off Ports reliever Josh Lansford. With one out, Nick Buss tripled to right and scored on an ensuing groundout from Rafael Ynoa to pull the Quakes to within three runs at 6-2. It was the only run allowed by Lansford in two innings of work.

The Ports had a chance to extend their lead in the 8th as Quakes reliever Carlos Frias walked four batters in two-thirds of an inning of work. Stockton, however, came up empty as Paramore hit into a double-play and Jason Christian grounded out to end the inning.

Jose Guzman (2-3) came on to start the 9th inning for Stockton and ran into some trouble. After getting the first batter to fly out, Guzman walked Pedro Guerrero who went to second on a passed ball and scored on an ensuing single from Buss to make it 6-4. Ynoa singled and Delmonico walked to load the bases and chase Guzman from the contest. Mike Hart was then summoned from the bullpen and, with the bases loaded, walked Gallagher to make it a one-run game at 6-5. Wilberto Ortiz followed with a game-winning two-run single to left to give the Quakes a dramatic 7-6 win over the Ports.

Guzman would be charged with the loss, allowing all four runs on two hits and two walks in a third of an inning of work. Hart was charged with a blown save.

After going 3-4 on their South Division road trip, the Ports return home on Thursday night to begin a four-game series with the Lancaster JetHawks. Right-hander Murphy Smith (5-8, 4.30 ERA) will take the mound in the series opener for Stockton, opposed by Lancaster left-hander Wes Musick (2-5, 5.35 ERA). First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

### **Leyja and Joseph Lead the Charge**

By Jon Versteeg, Burlington Bees

BURLINGTON, IA- 2B Nino Leyja (1-4) hit a two-run home run and RHP Jonathan Joseph (4-4) allowed two unearned runs over seven innings to lead the Burlington Bees (20-31) to a 4-2 win over the Cedar Rapids Kernels (20-31) before 670 fans at Community Field on Wednesday night at Community Field.

In the third inning, Burlington RF Jose Crisotomo (2-4) reached base with a single and Leyja pulled a pitch from RHP P.J. Jang (1-5) over the left field wall for a 2-0 advantage.

Burlington scored two more runs in the sixth inning. C John Nester (1-3) hit a one-out single and scored on a double by SS Yordy Cabrera (1-2). CF Tyreece House (1-3) lined an RBI single to right field to score Cabrera and make it 4-0.

Cedar Rapids got on the scoreboard in the sixth inning. 1B Ricky Alvarez (1-4) reached base on an error and scored on a double by RF Randal Grichuk (1-4). DH Justin Bass (1-4) flew out to center field and Grichuk moved to third base. Grichuk scored on a passed ball to make it 4-2.

RHP Zack Thornton pitched two scoreless innings to pick up his fifth save.

The Bees and Kernels continue their series on Thursday night at 6:30 p.m. It's "Thirsty Thursday" at Community Field. Fans can enjoy 2 for \$3.00 Pepsi products and 2 for \$4.50 deals on select beers. RHP Jairo Diaz (4-1, 4.08 AZL Angels) gets the start for Cedar Rapids against RHP Nate Long (6-6, 3.27) for Burlington. Pre-game coverage starts at 6:10 p.m. on AM 1490 KBUR and online at gobees.com.

### **Lake Monsters Fall 5-1 Wednesday**

By Paul Stanfield / Vermont Lake Monsters

BURLINGTON, VT --- Tony Wolters snapped a 1-1 tie with an RBI single in the top of the seventh inning and the Mahoning Valley Scrappers added three insurance runs in the eighth for a 5-1 victory over the Vermont Lake Monsters in New York-Penn League action Wednesday night at historic Centennial Field.

Vermont, which scored just one run in a game for the 12th time this season, got its lone run in the third inning as Dusty Robinson walked with one out, stole second base and advanced to third on a throwing error by catcher Alex Lavisky before scoring an unearned run on a Sean Jamieson RBI groundout.

Lake Monster starter Seth Frankoff held the Scrappers off the scoreboard until the sixth when a out-out walk and two infield singles, including a Cody Elliott two-out RBI infield single to third, tied the game 1-1. J.C Menna took over for Frankoff in the seventh allowing a leadoff single to Jerrud Sabourin, who scored on the Wolters single.

Mahoning Valley (33-24) scored its three runs in the eighth after there were two outs and no one on as a single and two walks preceded a Bryson Myles two-run single for a 4-1 lead. The Scrappers fifth run also scored on the single as rightfielder Bobby Crocker's throw home got away from Nick Rickles allowing Aaron Siliga to score.

Frankoff allowed one run on three hits over six innings, but also gave up five of Vermont's season-high nine walks. Menna (2-6) was charged with three runs in 1 2/3 innings for the loss, while Scrapper reliever Drew Rucinski (2-0) tossed 1 1/3 scoreless innings for the win as three Mahoning Valley relievers combined to allow just two hits in 4 1/3 shutout frames.

The loss snapped a three-game winning streak for Vermont (28-28), which hosts Mahoning Valley in the second of the three-game series on Thursday night at 7:05 pm. It is Comcast Family Night at Centennial and "Kids Eat Free" Thursday for the first 500 kids.