



# SEATTLE MARINERS NEWS CLIPS

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## Kyle Seager fits just fine at third base for Mariners

The prevailing notion has been that third base needs to be a power position. But when it comes to power, manager Eric Wedge says, "I don't care where it comes from, as long as we have it."

Larry Stone

Seattle Times baseball reporter

The other day, Mariners manager Eric Wedge was asked about rookie Kyle Seager, and whether he was concerned about how Seager fit the classic profile of a third baseman.

The prevailing notion has been that third base needs to be a power position, with the optimal prototype being Mike Schmidt or Eddie Mathews, both of whom are in the Hall of Fame with more than 500 home runs.

"A lot of people talk about profile," Wedge responded. "I'm going to give you my definition of profile: I don't care where the hell they are, as long as we have them out there in our nine. It doesn't have to be by position. I don't care where it comes from, as long as we have it.

"If we don't have power at one position, then we need to get it somewhere else. Power, by definition, most people just think of it as just home runs. I define power as extra bases and the ability to drive in runs. Hey, I love home runs as much as the next guy, but we're talking about scoring runs."

That question — and answer — is pertinent as the Mariners look to 2012 and putting together a roster that doesn't once again sink to the bottom of the American League in virtually every offensive category.

Last year, they scored just 513 runs, the lowest total in the majors since the designated hitter was instituted in 1973. They not only finished last among the 30 MLB teams in homers, with 101, but also in doubles (227), triples (16) and on-base-plus-slugging percentage (.637).

This season, taken cumulatively, has only been incrementally better. Through Friday's 9-2 loss in Oakland, they had scored 475 runs in 137 games, lowest in the AL and 29th in the majors, ahead of only the defending World Series champion Giants (466 runs in 138 games).

The Mariners project to score 554 runs in 2011, which would mark an improvement of 41 runs from last year, but still categorize them as a dismal offensive team. They rank 28th in MLB in homers (last in the AL) with 87, 25th in doubles (13th in the AL) with 215, 23rd in triples (11th in AL) with 19, and dead last in the majors in OPS at .642.

It's a grim picture, but it brightens when you focus on the last month, in which the Mariners have turned their lineup over to five rookies — Seager, Dustin Ackley, Mike Carp, Trayvon Robinson and Casper Wells. That has coincided with an upturn by center fielder Franklin Gutierrez, who hit .295 in August after going .176 and .190 the previous two months; and Ichiro, whose .293 August was his best month since a .328 April.

The Mariners scored 121 runs in 28 August games, ranking in the middle of the pack — 17th — in MLB, and tied for 10th in the AL. Project that production over a full season, and they'd score 700 runs — not great, but not historically bad, either.

Their August OPS of .736 represented more than a 100-point improvement from where they stood as July ended, and was 11th in the AL, 19th in the majors.

Again, not exactly the 1927 Yankees — or, more pertinent, the 2011 Red Sox — but it gives a glimpse of hope for the future. They still ranked next-to-last in the AL with 22 homers (25th in the majors for the month), but they were tied for fifth in the AL with 56 doubles.

Carp has certainly locked down a spot for next season somewhere — he can play first base, outfield and designated hitter — with a .901 OPS in 40 games since he came back up the second time.

Ackley is seemingly ensconced at second base. There are still some who advocate moving him to the outfield to clear a spot for Seager at second. But if you can get All-Star production from Ackley at second — which is what he has been giving — you're that much ahead of the game.

It goes back to Wedge's comment: "I don't care where it comes from, as long as we have it."

The Mariners must still add power to the lineup if they want to even think about contending next year. The spots where they can do so are limited, especially with Ichiro locked up for another year in right field.

Third base would seem to be one area for the Mariners to look outside the organization for a power upgrade (I can't envision Chone Figgins being given another shot at regular playing time, despite the \$17 million still owed him over the next two years).

Yet Seager looks more appealing the closer you examine. In August, when Seager took off after feeling his way through his initial days as a major-leaguer, he put up a .506 slugging percentage and .878 OPS in 22 games.

Those numbers, if projected over a full season, would put Seager among the elite third basemen in the majors. Aramis Ramirez leads all major-league third basemen this year with a .862 OPS, followed by Kevin Youkilis (.855), Alex Rodriguez (.839), Pablo Sandoval (.838), David Wright (.832), Chipper Jones (.827), Ryan Zimmerman (.820), Adrian Beltre (.816), Mark Reynolds (.805) and Evan Longoria (.802).

Those are all the third basemen over .800 OPS. Ramirez, at .512, is the only one with a slugging percentage over .500. Just four have more than 20 homers: Reynolds (31), Ramirez (24), Longoria (24) and Beltre (20). The free-agent market for third baseman this coming winter looks grim, with Ramirez — who is 33 and doesn't come with the best clubhouse reputation — joined by the likes of Wilson Betemit, Greg Dobbs, Eric Chavez and Mark DeRosa.

It's simply not an era of Schmidts and Mathewses, and there are not even many Graig Nettles, Ron Santos or Ken Boyers. The archetype now might be more along the lines of George Brett and Wade Boggs, who made it to the Hall of Fame without being home-run hitters (though Brett did hit 317).

The Mariners must decide if what Seager did in August is indicative of what he can do over the course of a season. If so, then he profiles as a positive solution at third base, home runs or not.

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**Mariners fall 3-0 to Oakland Athletics**

**Rookie Michael Pineda took the loss Saturday, but showed off a much-improved changeup.**

By Geoff Baker

Seattle Times staff reporter

OAKLAND, Calif. — One of the bigger stories of this Mariners season was unfolding just beneath the surface of yet another all-too-routine offensive fold.

It involved Michael Pineda unleashing up to 15 changeups that appeared to be tying the Oakland Athletics in knots. Pineda couldn't tie enough knots to prevent what became a 3-0 loss on a Saturday afternoon his team mustered just three hits off A's starter Brandon McCarthy.

But in a rookie season in which Pineda has relied almost exclusively on a fastball-slider combination, the first concrete evidence of a workable third pitch was a development this team has long waited for.

"My changeup was nasty," Pineda said. "My changeup is getting better now. In April, I was throwing a lot of sliders and teams knew I'd be throwing sliders during the game. Now, when teams think I'm going to throw a slider, I throw them a changeup. And that's a good thing."

Good enough to help Pineda record seven strikeouts over six innings in this one. His only stumbles were a 3-0 fastball that Cliff Pennington drilled to the left-field corner for a double and the only two runs Oakland needed, then a solo homer to left by Scott Sizemore in the sixth.

On a day the Mariners enabled McCarthy to go the distance and match his career high with 10 strikeouts in front of 19,732 fans at the Coliseum, the only victories left for Seattle were going to be of the moral kind. Pineda said his changeup might be a little slower than in the past, but the big difference now is "it has great movement."

Mariners catcher Josh Bard could attest to that.

Bard said the changeups he was getting from Pineda were the most consistent yet and are starting to resemble what Felix Hernandez throws.

"It's a pitch that's hopefully going to be a separator for him," Bard said. "I know that it is for Felix."

Like Hernandez, the Pineda changeup is one Bard figures will eventually come in between 85 and 90 mph. That's not as soft as some pitchers like it, but given how Pineda throws a mid- to high-90s fastball, it can be enough of a differential to keep hitters off-balance velocity-wise.

But Bard agrees that the movement on the pitch, coupled with the arm speed at which Pineda throws it, is an even bigger difference-maker. He likened it to a pitch Hernandez throws, which is gripped like a changeup but comes in so hard and drops off so sharply it resembles a split-fingered fastball.

Pineda has spent much time around Hernandez this year, so it's hardly a surprise he would come up with a similar third pitch.

"I've learned a lot from him," Pineda said. "He's treated me very well, which I appreciate very much."

Mariners manager Eric Wedge thought Pineda "threw the ball outstanding," but pulled him after 105 pitches in a continuing bid to preserve his arm.

Right now, the overall state of the team both offensively and pitching-wise is starting to raise some red flags given its youth and some of the on-field performances of late. Seattle has lost seven of its past nine games and is going with a plethora of youngsters, some of whom appear to be wearing down as the long season unfolds.

Wedge didn't want to rush to judgment on that, but saw a lot of "long" swings against McCarthy that he hadn't noticed in a while. The Mariners were getting pitches to hit, but kept missing them.

Seattle has gone 17 innings without scoring since grabbing a 2-0 lead in the second inning on Friday, mustering only four hits and no runs in the interim.

Before that, they were held to four hits in a loss to the Angels, and before that Seattle had to come back to beat Los Angeles with two out in the eighth after trailing 1-0.

Wedge noted younger players do tend to wear down this time of year given that the minor-league schedule would normally be ending.

"I think there's always that possibility," he said. "But that's why we have to work through this. They have to fight through that. There's not much you can do to guard against it. They have to stay sharp mentally so they can stay on top of it physically. It probably starts more upstairs than anything."

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## Catcher Josh Bard has close encounter with tipped ball | Mariners notebook

Josh Bard had never before had a tipped ball get stuck in the grille of his mask. But that's just what happened in a bit of a scary moment for Bard in the sixth inning of Saturday's loss to the Oakland Athletics.

By Geoff Baker

Seattle Times staff reporter

OAKLAND, Calif. — This wasn't the way Josh Bard had practiced catching a foul tip.

The Mariners backup catcher had never before had a tipped ball get stuck in the grille of his mask. But that's just what happened in a bit of a scary moment for Bard in the sixth inning of Saturday's loss to the Oakland Athletics.

With two strikes on Cliff Pennington, the next pitch was fouled straight into Bard's mask. Bard looked up and started moving around, but the ball was planted firmly in his mask and wasn't dislodged until he did it by hand.

"It was scary," Bard said. "Obviously, I'm grateful to Wilson (the mask's manufacturer). I think they make a really good product. I just think it's one of those times where it just was perfect placement and maybe a softer ball than normal, and it just stuck.

"Obviously, I'm grateful that I still have my eye and my nose. I still have plenty of nose, so it's all good."

Mariners manager Eric Wedge said he had never seen that happen in a game. Normally, he said, the ball is supposed to deflect straight off the mask.

"I know one thing, I wouldn't have taken the mask back out there," Wedge said with a laugh. "Because if it got stuck, that means it almost got through."

Bard was somewhat dazed afterward. He considered changing masks between innings, but opted not to because the grille wasn't separated at all.

"Like I said, maybe (the ball) was just softer," he said. "We go through hundreds of thousands of balls a year in the major leagues, and so maybe one had that."

## Notes

- Mike Carp entered Saturday's game leading the major leagues in batting average on first-pitch swings among players with at least 25 at-bats in such situations.

He is 16 for 27 (.593) with two doubles, a triple, a home run and 11 runs batted in with an .852 slugging percentage when swinging at the first pitch.

- Dustin Ackley extended his hitting streak to a career-high seven games with a single in the fourth inning.
- The Mariners have been shut out 13 times this season.
- Seattle is 15-32 since the All-Star break after going 43-48 before it.

For the record: W-L: 58-80 W PCT: .420 Streak: L3 Home: 34-37 Road: 24-43 AL West: 18-26 L.A.: 6-10 Oakland: 9-6 Texas: 3-10 AL East: 16-24 AL Cent: 15-21 NL: 9-9 LHP: 10-23 RHP: 48-57 Day: 16-25 Night: 42-55 One-run: 22-24 Extra inngs: 5-5

## Next five

Sunday @ Oakland, 1:05 p.m., ROOT | Beavan (3-4, 4.11) vs. Cahill (9-13, 4.26)

Monday @ L.A. Angels, 6:05 p.m., ROOT | Vasquez (1-1, 11.57) vs. Haren (13-8, 3.16)

Tue. @ L.A. Angels, 7:05 p.m., ROOT | Hernandez (13-11, 3.27) vs. Santana (11-9, 3.27)

Wed. @ L.A. Angels, 7:05 p.m., ROOT | Furbush (3-7, 4.97) vs. Weaver (15-7, 2.28)

Thursday vs. Kansas City, 7:10 p.m. | Vargas (7-13, 4.59) vs. Hochevar (9-10, 5.01)

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## Ex-Mariner Fister finally finds some support

Larry Stone

Seattle Times baseball reporter

Fister, traded to Detroit the day before the deadline, has accomplished the same feat for the Tigers. And this time, the Tigers won all three starts, and Fister got the "W" in two of them.

Earlier this year, while still with the Mariners, Doug Fister had a stretch of three straight starts in which he worked at least seven innings and didn't allow more than one earned run.

He didn't pick up a victory in any of those games. The first one was the infamous night in which the Mariners blew a 5-1 lead in the ninth inning against the Nationals and wound up losing, 6-5.

The Mariners won the second one, 2-1 against the Marlins, but Fister didn't get a decision. And in the third game, Fister went the distance but took the loss in a 1-0 Padres' victory.

Now Fister, traded to Detroit the day before the deadline, has accomplished the same feat for the Tigers. And this time, the Tigers won all three starts, and Fister got the "W" in two of them.

In his most recent start against Kansas City on Tuesday, Fister retired the first 18 hitters he faced. He left down 1-0 in the eighth inning — *deja vu* — and got a standing ovation from Detroit fans. Fister said it gave him goose bumps.

Lee on a roll

Cliff Lee is living up to expectations in Philadelphia. After earning NL Pitcher of the Month honors in June, when he went 5-0 with a 0.21 earned-run average, Lee is the favorite to win the same award in August after going 5-0 with a 0.45 ERA.

He has five shutouts in 27 starts, after coming into the season with five career shutouts in 218 starts.

That doesn't even count this past Wednesday, when Lee had the Reds shut out with two outs and no one on base in the ninth, but couldn't get the final out.

Lee is also two strikeouts shy of the first 200-K season of his career.

The only thing keeping this season from being epic for Lee is the fact that in April, May and July, he was a combined 5-7 with a 4.22 ERA.

Mayberry Jr. hits stride

The Phillies have gotten the desired boost from outfielder Hunter Pence, acquired at the trade deadline.

They've also gotten an unexpected boost from the right side via the emergence of outfielder John Mayberry Jr.

Mayberry, 28, has been shuttling between the minors and majors in recent years, and did so in the first half of this season. But since his recall on July 5, he is hitting .298 (31 for 104) in 35 games (24 starts), with nine homers, nine doubles and 29 runs batted in.

That's led to some talk by Phillies fans that Mayberry, a first-round draft pick of the Mariners in 2002 (he didn't sign, choosing to attend Stanford instead), should supplant ex-Mariner Raul Ibanez as the everyday left fielder.

Ibanez is hitting .240 with 17 homers and 67 RBI in 119 games. He has a .703 OPS, compared to .843 for Mayberry.

Notes

- For the Indians, first baseman Matt LaPorta was the centerpiece of the deal that sent CC Sabathia to Milwaukee in July of 2008.

LaPorta, however, has been a disappointment, never developing into the consistent power hitter the Indians envisioned. On Tuesday, Cleveland optioned LaPorta to Class AAA Columbus to get starting pitcher Jeanmar Gomez on the roster.

LaPorta was hitting .238 with a .289 on-base percentage and only 20 walks in 319 at-bats. He had 11 home runs and 44 RBI, and the right-handed hitter was batting just .205 vs. lefty pitchers.

Asked how he assessed LaPorta's season, manager Manny Acta told reporters, "A lot of inconsistencies. He still shows flashes of being the player we think he can be, but he needs to work on his plate discipline. He's projected to be a high walks and power guy, but it's still not there."

- Pirates center fielder Andrew McCutchen has quietly emerged as a star. This week, he became the eighth Pirates player to achieve 20 homers and 20 steals in a season. The others were Dave Parker, Barry Bonds, Andy Van Slyke, Al Martin, Kevin Young, Jason Bay and Nate McLouth.

- Tigers manager Jim Leyland threw his support behind struggling outfielder Magglio Ordonez.

"I just believe in him," Leyland told the Detroit Free Press. "There's enough left, and he's been such a smart hitter, that he's not going to panic. He can make some contributions.

"We're all aware that it's probably not the Magglio of old. But this guy has been a professional. If I was ever pulling for anybody to contribute down this stretch, it's Magglio."

Two days later, Ordonez had his best game of the season with two doubles and a homer.

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## Larry Stone's power rankings

Larry Stone

Seattle Times baseball reporter

Last weeks rankings in parentheses

### Team

- 1 Phillies (1) Polanco playing with sports hernia; he'd prefer an arts and crafts hernia
- 2 Yankees (3) New book on Jeter's Yankee captaincy: "The Old Man And the 'C' "
- 3 Red Sox (2) New book on Varitek's Red Sox captaincy: "We Gave 'Em Slocumb, I swear"
- 4 Braves (4) When it comes time to talk contract, Braves could get a Bourn ultimatum
- 5 Brewers (5) Brewers hope to get Rickie Weeks back from ankle injury by mid-September
- 6 Diamondbacks (9) Miguel Montero is best catcher no one's heard of (except for fantasy-leaguers)
- 7 Rangers (6) Beltre comes off DL, thankful it wasn't again for severely contused right testicle
- 8 Tigers (8) Verlander up for MVP, Cy Young and the Irving G. Thalberg Award
- 9 Rays (10) Rays propose new playoff system: Yankees and Red Sox aren't eligible
- 10 Angels (7) Judging by the one HR Bobby has given up, not many hitters can rock the Cassevah
- 11 Cardinals (12) That .300-30 HR-100 RBI line you penciled in for Pujols? Go ahead and pen it in
- 12 Giants (11) You know your offense stinks when your goal is to score runs like the Mariners
- 13 Indians (15) "Manny Being Manny" could mean Manager of the Year for Acta
- 14 White Sox (14) To cut down on ejections, Ozzie tweets his displeasure to umpires
- 15 Blue Jays (13) Bautista is the Player of the Year, but is he the MVP?
- 16 Dodgers (21) McCourt offers generous donation to charity for every Jamey Carroll home run
- 17 Reds (16) Reds contemplating making Chapman a starter next season
- 18 Mets (20) Wilpon offers generous donation to charity for every Dickey fastball over 95 mph
- 19 Rockies (17) With Tulowitzki, Kouzmanoff and Ianetta, scorer goes on DL with writers cramp
- 20 Pirates (19) McCutchen no doubt has same dreams as other young Pirates' stars: Free agency
- 21 A's (23) Soccer-loving Billy Beane decided that all A's games this year would be "friendlies"

- 22 Nationals (18) No. 1 fall attraction: Bryce Harper and Mike Trout on Scottsdale Scorpions (AFL)
- 23 Twins (26) Twins go as far as Mauer and Morneau take them, and this year it wasn't far
- 24 Mariners (24) With Jack traded, Dan retired and Josh released, Mike is the last Wilson standing
- 25 Marlins (25) Marlins are collapsing, but at least Yahoo isn't investigating them
- 26 Orioles (29) Orioles making patented September drive to finish less than 25 games under .500
- 27 Padres (22) Bud Black wishes he could have pitched against the team he manages
- 28 Cubs (27) Zambrano sent home for the season at the Aug. 31 tirade deadline
- 29 Royals (28) Where's Carlos Febles when you really need him?
- 30 Astros (30) Roger Clemens ordered to stand trial, hopes he's not designated for confinement

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## Larry Stone's thumbs up, thumbs down

Larry Stone

Seattle Times baseball reporter

### Thumbs up

Lou Marson, Indians: Marson caught 25 innings in 20 hours — a 16-inning, 4-3 win over Oakland on Wednesday night, and a 7-0 loss to the A's on Thursday afternoon. "My shin guards felt heavy," he said afterward.

### Thumbs down

Minnesota Twins: In the midst of a disappointing season, the Twins were hit with another blow Thursday when it was learned that Kyle Gibson, their top pitching prospect, needs Tommy John surgery.

### Ex-Mariner of the week

Jack Hannahan, Indians: Hannahan, hitting .214 on July 31, batted .420 in the month of August (21 for 50) to raise his average to .249.

### Quote

"It's kind of ridiculous." — Boston's Dustin Pedroia on the 4-2 Red Sox-Yankees game on Thursday that took 4 hours and 21 minutes and featured 381 pitches.

## Pineda strong, but Mariners fall to A's

By Eric Gilmore / Special to MLB.com | 9/3/2011 8:46 PM ET

OAKLAND -- It's been over a month since Mariners rookie Michael Pineda posted a victory, on July 30 over Tampa Bay.

But as the losses and no-decisions have mounted, Pineda has continued to make progress. The latest example came Saturday against the Oakland A's. Pineda had his third straight quality start, but he suffered his second straight loss, this time 3-0 to the A's and right-hander Brandon McCarthy.

Pineda allowed three runs on five hits over six innings. He struck out seven and walked only two.

Unfortunately for Pineda, McCarthy was even better. He pitched a complete-game shutout, allowing just three hits and striking out a career-high-tying 10.



"He looked really good," Mariners manager Eric Wedge said of Pineda. "I thought he threw the ball very well today. He was under control. He had good tempo. He was throwing the ball where he wanted to, mixed his pitches. I thought he threw the ball outstanding."

When Pineda wasn't firing mid-90s fastballs, he was keeping the A's off-balance with his ever-improving changeup, a pitch he added to his arsenal this year.

"His changeup was really good today," Mariners catcher Josh Bard said. "It's something that we've been working really hard on with him, and he's been working hard on. I think it's a pitch that's hopefully going to be a separator for him. I know it has been for Felix [Hernandez], and Felix has been the No. 1 salesman to him about it. Michael obviously respects Felix a lot, as he should, and he's been trying to listen to [him]."

Pineda blanked the A's through three innings, but they took a 2-0 lead in the fourth. Hideki Matsui, who ripped a three-run double Friday night in a 9-2 A's win, led off with a single then moved to second with one out on David DeJesus' single to right.

Pineda retired Brandon Allen on a fly ball to right, but A's shortstop Cliff Pennington got ahead 3-0 then got the green light from manager Bob Melvin. He sliced a 93 mph Pineda fastball to left field for an opposite-field double that scored Matsui and DeJesus.

"It's 3-0 so I tried to throw a fastball in the middle for a strike," Pineda said. "Double. I said, 'Wow.'"

Melvin said it was "an easy decision" to let Pennington swing away on 3-0 against Pineda.

"You know you're going to get a fastball, and you have a guy up there that's our hottest hitter. It's a left-hander on top of it," Melvin said.

The A's made it 3-0 in the fifth when Scott Sizemore, their No. 9 hitter, launched a leadoff home run to left.

Pineda will likely get two more starts this season, and he plans to keep working on his changeup, a pitch that complements his fastball and slider.

Pineda said his changeup was "nasty" on Saturday.

"My changeup's getting better," he said. "I have great movement on my changeup. It's pretty good."

McCarthy had a perfect game through 3 2/3 innings before Mariners second baseman Dustin Ackley singled sharply to right. Ackley stole second, but that's as far as he got. Hot-hitting rookie Mike Carp struck out, ending the inning.

The Mariners had another chance to score in the sixth after Ichiro Suzuki ripped a one-out single to right and moved to second when Franklin Gutierrez grounded out. But Ackley struck out, ending the threat.

"The story for me was our offense, or lack of," Wedge said. "A ton of swing and miss today. More so than what we've seen in a while. We had a lot of swing and miss today. Their guy did a nice job, but I felt like we should have done a better job."

"I thought we had some pitches to hit today, but we just looked a little bit long up there with our swings today."

Bard gave plenty of credit to McCarthy for those strikeouts.

"He just never made a mistake," Bard said. "Just cut, sinking, curving. Everything was on the edge. He threw the ball up, out of the zone. He's really turned himself into a good pitcher in the fact that he never got into 2-0 counts. He was ahead all day. It was a little sink, little cut, little four-seamer."

Eric Gilmore is a contributor to MLB.com. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.

## Bard OK after ball gets stuck in facemask

By Eric Gilmore / Special to MLB.com | 09/03/11 8:48 PM ET

OAKLAND -- Mariners catcher Josh Bard survived a scary incident in the bottom of the sixth inning Saturday with A's shortstop Cliff Pennington at the plate.

Pennington got a first-pitch fastball from Mariners right-hander Michael Pineda and fouled it straight back.

The ball slammed into Bard's catcher's mask -- and stuck between the bars.

"I think it was just one of those times when it was a perfect placement and maybe a softer ball than normal," Bard said. "It just stuck. Obviously I'm grateful that I still have my eye and nose. I still have plenty of nose," he joked. "So it's all good."

Bard said he was dazed "a little bit" by the foul ball.

"That's part of the territory," he said.

Bard stayed in the game and, after inspecting his mask, continued using it for the remainder of the game.

"I've never seen it before, that's for sure," Mariners manager Eric Wedge said. "I've never seen it get stuck.

"I wouldn't have taken the mask back out there, because if it got stuck, it almost got through, but he stuck with it."

Eric Gilmore is a contributor to MLB.com. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.

## Kelley excited to be back on mound for Seattle

By Eric Gilmore / Special to MLB.com | 09/03/11 8:48 PM ET

OAKLAND -- Mariners right-hander Shawn Kelley has pitched plenty of scoreless innings during his career as a relief pitcher, but probably none as emotional as the one he pitched Friday night in a 9-2 loss to the A's.

Kelley, who opened the sixth inning, made his first big-league appearance since June 15, 2010. He underwent season-ending and career-threatening surgery on his pitching elbow that season.

"It was really exciting," Kelley said Saturday morning, speaking about Friday night's action. "A lot of anticipation leading up to that and when it would come and if it would come this year or ever again. There were a lot of emotions out there. I really haven't pitched in front of this coaching staff, a lot of my teammates.

"I was excited to get out there and try to show them what I could do, but at the same time remember that I still have to be me and do what I have to do out there. But yeah, coming off the mound it was a pretty cool feeling to finally be back out there after a long road with a few setbacks. It was cool."

Kelley underwent Tommy John surgery in 2002. His surgery in 2010 was Tommy John with a twist, he said. Surgeons didn't replace the elbow ligament.

"They actually kept the ligament in there this time when they went in there and reattached it at one end," Kelley said. "It had pulled off the bone. So they did the Tommy John at one end of the ligament with the ligament in there. The doctors said they had never done that before and they hoped it went well."

During his rehabilitation, Kelley said he had a couple setbacks and wondered if he should have had the damaged ligament replaced.

"For all I knew, I might have been done, but I kept working at it, and I finally made it back here," he said.

Kelley was 1-0 with a 1.84 ERA at Triple-A Tacoma in 12 relief appearances from July 27-Aug. 29 this season. The Mariners recalled him Thursday when rosters were expanded.

"I'm continuing to get better and get stronger," Kelley said. "My velocity's not all the way back, but I'd say I'm pretty close to 100 percent as far as my feel out there, and my command and my other pitches. I'm good right now. I feel like I'm where I need to be, and I'll continue to work this offseason, too, to get the strength back and get the velocity back."

Eric Gilmore is a contributor to MLB.com. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.

## Wells relieved that skid at plate is over

By Eric Gilmore / Special to MLB.com | 09/03/11 8:48 PM ET

OAKLAND -- Rookie outfielder Casper Wells was on an 0-for-30 skid when he came to the plate in the second inning Friday night to face A's right-hander Guillermo Moscoso, his former Minor League teammate in the Tigers' organization.

Wells hadn't had a hit since Aug. 23 at Cleveland. But with two out and Kyle Seager on first, Wells smoked a double to left. Can you say relief?

"I think sometimes you can let some stuff build, you try to do too much instead of sticking to being relaxed and letting things happen as they may," Wells said before Saturday's game against the A's.

"It's kind of similar to trying to get your first Major League hit," Wells added. "That was at this park, actually. Go figure. Maybe you just feel a little more comfortable at the dish. Maybe that put me in a good spot to move forward. I felt pretty comfortable up there after that. I made solid contact. That's all you can do, is make solid contact with the ball."

That double was Wells' only hit of the game, but in the seventh inning he made solid contact and flew out to deep center.

To some, it was a surprise that Wells was even in the starting lineup. He certainly seemed due for a break, but Mariners manager Eric Wedge said he wanted Wells to work his way out of his slump. That's the same approach he's using for many of his young players as he grooms them for next season and beyond.

"There's a method to the madness, because it's going to come back to us," Wedge said. "'Why were you playing Casper Wells yesterday when he's oh-for-whatever?' Because you want him to have a day like he had yesterday

to figure it out. Otherwise, what are you doing? You just keep spinning. We can't keep spinning. We've been doing that too long here."

Despite his skid, Wells is still batting .244 with 10 home runs and 26 RBIs in just 201 at-bats.

"If you think about numbers it could eat you up." Wells said. "If you think about more than you need to be thinking about. You just need to go out there and let your abilities take over. But it definitely felt good getting that hit."

Worth noting

- Third baseman Chone Figgins (right hip flexor) will likely be activated from the disabled list next week, Mariners manager Eric Wedge said.

"He had a good work day yesterday. He's working again today," Wedge said. "Obviously the whole Triple-A [rehab] thing is out of the mix now. What we'll do is activate him and break him back in here."

Figgins hasn't played since being injured Aug. 1 against the A's.

- Designated hitter/outfielder Wily Mo Pena missed his third straight game to be with his pregnant wife, but he is expected to rejoin the team for Sunday's game, Wedge said.

Eric Gilmore is a contributor to MLB.com. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.

## Cahill takes hill as A's go for sweep

By Cash Kruth / MLB.com | 9/3/2011 7:17 PM ET

Blake Beavan knows what he is.

The Mariners right-hander doesn't have over-powering stuff that will light up a radar gun. What he does have, however, is precision control, which he has displayed often during his first Major League season. Not only did the youngster issue zero walks in his last start, but he's allowed two or fewer free passes in each of his 10 starts.

"I'm not a guy that tries to strike guys out or has unhittable stuff. I'm a guy that is going to give up hits and is going to give the defense lots of work," said Beavan, who starts Sunday against the A's. "I've always been a ground-ball pitcher. I've kept it that way, for the most part, since I've been up here. I've gotten more ground balls than fly balls. Really, just for me, [I'm] just trying to go deep in games, keep my pitch count down and give our team a chance to win, whether it's four or five runs, or two or three runs."

Despite his solid rookie campaign thus far, Beavan said he isn't satisfied with his season.

"It's just good to be up here and get to feel out all the hitters, really get to learn and see what they can do off of you and how your stuff plays at the highest level and just try to make adjustments when you can," Beavan said. "Most of the time, first time being up here, it's hard to make those adjustments sometimes during the game. It takes those bad outings to learn and see what you need to do next time when you come up against good teams, teams like we just got done playing, the Angels, rival teams. Hopefully we can be in their shoes next year and be chasing the playoffs."

Opposing Beavan is another guy certainly not satisfied with his 2011 season. A's right-hander Trevor Cahill takes the mound for Oakland, looking to rebound after a very poor August. In six starts last month, Cahill went

0-4 with a 7.15 ERA and .327 average against. That included an Aug. 1 loss against the Mariners in which the righty gave up seven runs on 12 hits in four-plus innings.

He closed August on yet another sour note, allowing five runs in 5 1/3 innings against the Indians.

"Even in the innings I didn't give up runs, I just felt like I was fighting myself," Cahill said afterward. "When you're doing that the whole game, it's tough to get big league hitters out. I feel like recently, I could command the ball even if I got hit, and today, I just felt like I didn't know where it was going."

**Mariners: Wells out of slump**

Outfielder Casper Wells broke out of his slump Friday, but went 0-for-3 Saturday. Wells, who has 10 home runs and 26 RBIs in just 204 at-bats, said he wasn't sweating his struggles.

"If you think about numbers it could eat you up," Wells said. "You just need to go out there and let your abilities take over. But it definitely felt good getting that hit."

- Rookie second baseman Dustin Ackley has recorded at least one hit in 51 of his 67 games and reached base safely in 56 of them.
- Center fielder Franklin Gutierrez is hitting .280 in his last 26 games.

**Athletics: Lots of options**

With the expanded September rosters, A's manager Bob Melvin has plenty of options among his relief corps. With Brian Fuentes' return from the bereavement list Saturday, Oakland has 11 arms in the 'pen.

"We know what our group's going to be in the plus-games, from the late sixth, seventh inning on, and now the balance is going to be finding innings for everybody else," Melvin said.

- Beavan defeated the A's on Aug. 1, allowing three runs on seven hits in 6 2/3 innings.

**Worth noting**

- Ichiro is a career .429 (9-for-21) hitter against Cahill and has a .363 career average in Oakland.
- Mariners rookie Kyle Seager is hitting .364 with 10 runs, seven doubles and two home runs in his last 15 games.
- Seventy-two of Seattle's 138 games have been decided by two or fewer runs.

## Gillheeneey hurls seven hitless innings

### M's prospect fans five, records first Double-A win of season

By David Heck / Special to MLB.com

9/03/2011 11:25 PM ET

James Gillheeneey didn't change anything about his approach when he took the mound on Saturday. The results, however, were far from ordinary.

The Mariners prospect pitched seven hitless innings as the Double-A Jackson Generals pulled away for a 6-0 victory over the Jacksonville Suns.

Gillheeneey (1-3) threw 112 pitches as he matched his longest outing of the season and registered his first Double-A win in seven outings this year. He called the start the best of his professional career.

"I felt good tonight," Gillheeneey said. "I didn't really try to do anything out of the ordinary. I was just trying to go out there and do what I try to do every time, which is get early contact and get my team in the dugout to hit. Tonight, we just had a great, great win. I had great defense behind me and I executed pitches when I needed to."

Gillheeneey walked four, including the leadoff batter in the second, fourth and seventh. His most difficult inning was his last, when he had runners on the corners with two outs before getting Paul Gran to fly out.

"I was doing too much nibbling at the corners and I winded up walking two guys," he said. "Our catcher [Jesus Sucre] came out and calmed me down a little bit. He said, 'Just settle down and get ahead of this guy, get ahead of the next guy.' It ended up working out where I got through the seventh."

The 23-year-old left-hander turned over a 5-0 lead to Stephen Penney, who pitched a scoreless inning but surrendered the Suns' only hit -- a leadoff double to Neil Sellers.

"We were all kind of hoping we could hold it, but Penney's been a great pitcher for us all year and I'm sure he felt pretty bad about it," Gillheeneey said. "But he still got in there and got the job done and didn't give up any runs. I wasn't really too upset about it."

A 2008 eighth-round Draft pick, Gillheeneey went 6-5 with a 5.35 ERA for Class A Advanced High Desert before being promoted to Jackson. He posted a 6.68 ERA over 32 1/3 innings for the Generals prior to Saturday's outing.

"I was getting my off-speed pitches over for strikes when I needed to and I was throwing backwards in counts," Gillheeneey said. "I'm not a flamethrower, so that's my mentality when I get on the mound anyway. Tonight was just execution."

Looking back on his second full professional season, Gillheeneey said he's refined who he is as a pitcher.

"What I've learned most is really trying to attack hitters and not trying to pitch away from contact," he said. "Really trying to get early contact in the count and not fall behind hitters. Because at this level, they make it hurt."

"Executing off-speed down the in count is also big for me because, like I said, I'm not a flamethrower that can throw a fastball by guys. Those two things have been the most important things I've learned and are things that, start-by-start, I've been trying to get better at."

David Heck is a contributor to MLB.com. This story was not subject to the approval of the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues or its clubs.

## Mariners shut down by A's McCarthy

Updated 05:24 p.m., Saturday, September 3, 2011

The Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Michael Pineda was as surprised as anyone when Cliff Pennington swung at a 3-0 pitch in the fourth inning.

The rookie right-hander was even more stunned at the result — a two-run double that was a key play in the Seattle Mariners' 3-0 loss against the Oakland Athletics on Saturday.

"It's 3-0, so I tried to throw a fastball in the middle for a strike," Pineda said. "A double. I said, 'Wow.'"

That was more than enough to send Seattle to its seventh loss in nine games. The Mariners never figured out Brandon McCarthy, who pitched a three-hitter for his first shutout in more than two years.

Pineda (9-9) didn't pitch poorly, allowing only five hits and striking out seven. But the All-Star didn't receive any run support and remained winless in his last five starts.

"I'm feeling good," said Pineda, whose last win came on July 30 against Tampa Bay. "This is (my) first time pitching in September ... and my arm is very strong now."

McCarthy (8-7) matched his career high of 10 strikeouts and faced only four over the minimum while beating Seattle for the first time in three starts this season. The right-hander allowed three singles and finished the gem in style, slipping a called third strike past Mike Carp on his 114th pitch.

The Mariners didn't have more than one baserunner in any inning and only got two as far as second base.

Dustin Ackley, Ichiro Suzuki and Josh Bard had the Mariners' only hits. Seattle also had a runner reach on an error but couldn't sustain much of anything against McCarthy.

"The story for me was our offense, or lack of," Seattle manager Eric Wedge said. "A ton of swing and misses today. Their guy did a nice job, but I felt like we should have done a better job. We had some pitches to hit today, but we just look a little bit long up there with our swings today."

Suzuki finished 1 for 4 and needs 42 hits over the final 24 games to reach 200 for the 11th consecutive season.

Scott Sizemore homered to help the A's win their third straight after dropping five in a row.

Oakland's second straight win at home came after a 4-6 road trip that included long rain delays, a doubleheader in Boston and a 16-inning loss to Cleveland.

Guillermo Moscoso got the A's rolling with a solid start in the series opener, then McCarthy followed it up with his masterpiece.

McCarthy's fourth complete game of the season was his first shutout since blanking Houston on May 24, 2009, when he was still with Texas.

Seattle was shut out for the 13th time this season. The Mariners were held to three hits or fewer for the ninth time this year.

The A's didn't get their first runner until Kurt Suzuki's one-out walk in the third. Jemille Weeks followed with an infield single on a ball that glanced off the glove of diving second baseman Ackley.

Oakland got another infield hit almost the same way off Pineda in the fourth when first baseman Justin Smoak knocked down Hideki Matsui's leadoff grounder but was unable to make a play.

The A's made the most of that one.

Matsui went to second on David DeJesus' one-out single, and both runners scored when Pennington doubled down the left-field line with two down.

Pennington also committed his team-leading 20th error of the season when he bobbled Kyle Seager's grounder to shortstop in the fifth. It was the A's 109th error, the club's most since making a franchise-record 125 in 2001.

Sizemore hit his eighth home run of the season leading off the fifth.

NOTES: Ackley has a career-high seven-game hitting streak. ... Seattle SS Brendan Ryan is batting .132 (5 for 38) since coming off the disabled list. ... Blake Beaven (3-4), who got the win against Oakland on Aug. 1, pitches in the series final for Seattle. Trevor Cahill (9-13) goes for the A's and will attempt to snap a personal four-game losing streak that is one shy of his career high.

## A's McCarthy tosses 3-hitter

Updated 05:11 p.m., Saturday, September 3, 2011

The Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Brandon McCarthy nearly got caught up in the moment when he received a standing ovation as he trotted out to the mound to work the ninth inning.

This was one fun game for the right-hander.

McCarthy pitched a three-hitter for his first shutout in more than two years, leading the Oakland Athletics to a 3-0 victory over the Seattle Mariners on Saturday.

"As much time as I've spent hurt, and you've got everyone out there and behind you when things are going well, it kind of makes you feel like you're on top of the world," McCarthy said. "I had to remember to focus and not get caught up in it."

McCarthy (8-7) matched his career high of 10 strikeouts and faced only four over the minimum while beating Seattle for the first time in three starts this season. He allowed three singles and finished the gem in style, slipping a called third strike past Mike Carp on his 114th pitch.

The Mariners didn't have more than one baserunner in any inning and only got two as far as second base.

"He just never made a mistake," Seattle catcher Josh Bard said of McCarthy. "Everything was on the edge. He was ahead all day."

McCarthy retired 11 of his final 12 batters and got a big lift from Oakland's defense in the ninth. Dustin Ackley, who had one of the three hits off McCarthy, hit a grounder up the middle that second baseman Jemille Weeks backhanded with his glove and flipped to shortstop Cliff Pennington, who threw to first for the second out.

"That play was awesome," McCarthy said. "They were trying to upstage me there. They're going to get all the highlights and it's well-deserved. That was a really nice play."

Pennington also had a two-run double and Scott Sizemore homered to help the A's win their third straight after dropping five in a row.

Oakland's second straight win at home came after a 4-6 road trip that included long rain delays, a doubleheader in Boston and a 16-inning loss to Cleveland.

Ichiro Suzuki and Josh Bard had the other two hits for the Mariners. Seattle also had a runner reach on an error but couldn't sustain much of anything against McCarthy, who seemed to be just as strong in the ninth as he was in the first.



"Sometimes when you haven't been out there in the ninth inning it can be difficult psychologically," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "But the fact that there were no runners made the decision easy for me. Just a great game."

McCarthy's fourth complete game of the season was his first shutout since blanking Houston on May 24, 2009, when he was still with Texas.

Seattle was shut out for the 13th time this season. The Mariners were held to three hits or fewer for the ninth time this year.

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The A's didn't get their first runner until Kurt Suzuki's one-out walk in the third. Weeks followed with an infield single on a ball that glanced off the glove of diving second baseman Ackley.

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Suzuki finished 1 for 4 and needs 42 hits over the final 24 games to reach 200 for the 11th consecutive season.

NOTES: Pennington hit a foul ball in the sixth that stuck in the facemask of catcher Josh Bard. ... Oakland CF Coco Crisp left the game in the fifth after fouling a ball off his right foot. ... The A's reinstated LHP Brian Fuentes from the bereavement list. ... Trevor Cahill (9-13) pitches for Oakland in the series finale Sunday and will attempt to snap a personal four-game losing streak that is one shy of his career high. Blake Beaven (3-4), who got the win against Oakland on Aug. 1, goes for Seattle.

Published: Sunday, September 4, 2011

**Mariners: Here's the rest of the story**

**There's much, much more to the M's than what you see on the field**

By Kirby Arnold, Everett Herald Writer

The Seattle Mariners' season essentially has been a fact-finding mission for 2012 and beyond, which is another way of saying last place doesn't feel so lousy when the work they're doing now will avoid such a finish in the future.

That's the plan, anyway.

They've gotten an idea who can play for them at the big-league level (Michael Pineda, Dustin Ackley, Kyle Seager, Mike Carp), who can't (Milton Bradley, Jack Cust, Jack Wilson, Matt Tuiasosopo) and a clearer idea what their needs will be this offseason (Here's an oldie but goodie: A power bat!).

Away from the box scores and disappointments and expectations on the field, we've learned other things this year. It's stuff that makes you laugh, cry, smile and realize sometimes that in this fantasy world of big-league baseball, there's real life.

With that, here are a few things I've learned this season.

Bernandez

Felix, or "Larry," loves his alter-ego. Over the years, I've seen a few veteran players deliver a death stare to team employees asking a favor -- anything from catching the ceremonial first pitch to something a lot more off-the-wall

What Hernandez did last week was as off-the-wall as it gets.

On "Larry Hernandez" bobblehead night last weekend, the Mariners thought it would be cool if somebody dressed as "Larry" handed out the bobbleheads to fans as they entered Safeco Field. Better than that, what if Felix actually wore the Hernandez outfit (long hair, black horn-rimmed glasses, No. 34 Hernandez jersey doctored to read "Bernandez" as it was in the popular TV commercial)?

The Mariners approached Felix with it and he couldn't wait to put on the disguise.

He spent 15 minutes at the front gate handing out bobbleheads and, he was as into it as he is a two-strike four-seamer.

He may have been too good at the bobblehead thing because many fans had no idea it was Felix Hernandez himself handing them out.

"You look just like that actor who was in the commercial," one woman told him.

Felix -- or, "Larry" -- told her, "Well, thank-you."

She then looked at him as if she couldn't believe her good fortune and said, "Oh my gosh! You ARE the actor from the commercial!"

The real deals

I hear scouts say Kyle Seager doesn't project as a major-league third baseman, but he's playing better there than anyone since Adrian Beltre. I've heard people within the organization for years doubt Mike Carp's ability to hit major league pitching, but he's been one of the few to do it this season.

Amazing what happens when you give guys a chance.

Funny guy

Maybe he doesn't intend to be, but Tom Wilhelmsen, the Mariners' rookie relief pitcher, can make you laugh when he's standing still saying nothing. And when he speaks, he throws out some real gems.

A few weeks ago after he'd been called up for his second stint with the Mariners, I asked if he still recognized anyone in a clubhouse that had undergone quite a personnel churn in the weeks since he was on the team.

"I was going around today saying, 'Hi, I'm Tom and I'm a Sagittarius,'" he said.

Then there's this from a Tacoma News Tribune story last week: Wilhelmsen is a collector like a lot of ballplayers. Baseball memorabilia? No. He collects sand.

"I keep it in five, six-ounce vials from everywhere I've gone," Wilhelmsen told The News Tribune's Larry LaRue. "My favorites? I've got black sand from Maui, purple sand from Fire Island in New York and pebbles from the beaches in eastern France."

LaRue asked if Wilhelmsen ever wanted to scoop dirt from the mounds he has pitched from.

"Yes, I did," he said. "But (wife) Cassie said 'No more dirt!' and that was that."

A good side to Chone Figgins

Say what you want about the minimal impact Chone Figgins has had on the field with the Mariners. Off the field, Figgins has been a pleasantly positive influence on the young players.

The day Kyle Seager was called up to play third base, essentially knocking Figgins out of his position, guess who was at Seager's side helping make the adjustment easier to the big leagues? Figgins.

"He has been really good with the kids," first base coach Mike Brumley said.

So give Figgins credit for that, because he could have sulked to the point that it soured the young players and made the clubhouse a miserable place to be.

Selfish or opportunistic?

Ichiro Suzuki catches a lot of heat these days for laying down bunts, not taking walks and basically doing things that cement his image in many people's minds that he's a selfish player. I'm not going to argue with that.

However, my recollection is that Suzuki turns selfish -- if you want to call it that -- when there's little else to accomplish, especially from a team standpoint. We didn't hear the "selfish" argument 10 years ago when the Mariners were a first-place team.

Heartbreak beyond the diamond

When a ballplayer goes through a horrible slump or a demotion to the minors, we often can sense their end-of-the-world disappointment. This is a dream they're living and having it taken away can be crushing.

But it's not real life.

Real life is the team executive who sits down before the game and talks about the death in his family and the grandchild who's suffering a developmental disorder. The pain in those eyes runs a lot deeper than what we see from a player who's just been sent to the minors.

Speed freaks

Last week when NASCAR star Kurt Bush visited Safeco Field, among those who got a little revved-up over it was Mariners pitching coach Carl Willis, who grew up in the South and lives in Durham, N.C. in the offseason. That's the heart of NASCAR country.

"I like the sport, but it wasn't until last October that I went to my first race," he said. "My son and I went to Martinsville and it was incredible."

A cute side note to Kurt Busch's visit: Angels closer Jordan Walden, a big guy who can throw the ball 100 mph, is a huge racing fan and was smitten being on the field last Wednesday when Busch watched batting practice. But Walden was too timid to approach Busch and talk with him.

Wildly quiet

Mariners closer Brandon League has a rock-star look with tattoos from his neck to his calves and a Mohawk haircut. What's one of his favorite activities away from the field? Having a tea party at home with his daughters.

Right man, right time

Eric Wedge won't win the manager of the year award, and probably won't get a vote. But his my way/highway approach has been just what the Mariners needed this year as they sifted through the players who will carry them forward.

However, if he'd been saddled with the issues that caused Don Wakamatsu's downfall last year, I'm not sure Wedge's fate would have been any different.

Read Kirby Arnold's blog on the Mariners at [www.heraldnet.com/marinersblog](http://www.heraldnet.com/marinersblog) and follow his Twitter updates at @kirbyarnold.

Published: Saturday, September 3, 2011

## AquaSox's season ends with 4-2 loss to Spokane

Everett Herald staff

SPOKANE -- When the Everett AquaSox needed it most, their bats simply ran out of steam in their final at bat in the final game of the Northwest League season.

Needing a win against the Spokane Indians and a Eugene loss to advance to the NWL playoffs, the AquaSox loaded the bases with no outs in the top of the ninth trailing 4-2. But three consecutive strikeouts ended the game and Everett's season Saturday night at Avista Stadium in Spokane.

The ninth inning for Everett (21-17, 37-39 overall) began with consecutive walks by James Wood and Ramon Morla. A bunt single by Larry Gonzalez loaded the bases, but Indians reliever Gregory Williams struck out Jarrett Burgess for the first out. Williams was relieved by right-hander Jerad Eickhoff, who subsequently struck out Marcus Littlewood and Jorge Agudelo to end the game.

The Aquasox began the final day of the regular season trailing first-place Eugene by one game in the NWL's West Division. An Everett victory combined with a Eugene loss would have allowed the Frogs to tie the Ems for first place in the West Division in the second half of the season. Eugene won the first-half title, and the Frogs would have earned a playoff berth by finishing in a tie for first place.

Eugene lost 5-4 loss to Yakima, but with Everett's loss, Vancouver was awarded the West Division's second playoff berth because the Canadians had the best overall record in the league, except for Eugene and Tri-City, both of which had already qualified for the playoffs.

AquaSox starter Joseph DiRocco (1-3) pitched five innings, allowing three runs on four hits and took the loss.

Everett immediately got on the board in the top of the first inning. Littlewood struck out, but was safe at first on a passed ball by Spokane catcher Yefry Castillo. After an Agudelo single and a Jabari Blash walk, Littlewood scored on a sacrifice fly to right field by Jharmidy De Jesus. Wood then doubled to bring home Agudelo, and the AquaSox took a 2-0 lead.

Spokane (15-23, 35-41) took the lead, and the playoffs, away in the sixth. Consecutive hits by Edwin Garcia, Drew Robinson and Nick Vickerson plated one run and chased DiRocco. After a strikeout, reliever Kyle Hunter hit Nick Urbanus with a pitch to load the bases, and Castillo followed with a two-run double to give the Indians a 3-2 lead.

Spokane added a run in the bottom of the eighth on a Ruben Sierra single. Sierra is the son of the former major-leaguer, and Seattle Mariner, who goes by the same name.

## Rainiers set attendance mark, lose

DON RUIZ; Staff writer

Published: 09/04/11 3:48 am

The Tacoma News Tribune

The Tacoma Rainiers doomed themselves to a losing record Saturday, but they also set a franchise record in the stands.

A crowd of 7,590 filled Cheney Stadium as the Fresno Grizzlies took a 4-2 win from the home team.

When fan No. 7,134 stepped through the gates, it established an attendance record for Triple-A baseball in Tacoma. With two games remaining, 364,092 have watched Rainiers home games this season, topping the 2010 record of 363,635.

This is the third straight season the club has increased its attendance record. The Saturday crowd also extended the club record to 18 sellouts this season.

“I think the new ballpark is obviously a big part of it,” Rainiers president Aaron Artman said. “... It’s just really neat to see the way the community has supported the team. I think we’re all pretty humble and grateful for the support we get out here, and Tacoma seems to be embracing it.”

The attendance record follows a \$30 million renovation of Cheney Stadium, which opened in 1960. However, the Rainiers began this final weekend of the season drawing an average of 5,242 per home game – 12th among the 16 teams in the Pacific Coast League. Round Rock (Texas) leads the PCL with an average of 8,478.

“For one thing, our park is smaller than a lot of the ones that rank higher, so we’ll never match the guys that can draw,” Artman said. “We can fit 7,500 max – standing room only – in the park. So that is one of the challenges there if we were going to compete with them. I think we’re pleased with how many people came out. ... When you look at April and May especially, with the weather that we had, we had a lot more people in the stands in April and May than we had (most seasons). ... I think we’re really pleased with where we are.”

The attendance increase also came despite a decline on the diamond. The 2010 Rainiers won the PCL championship, while the current team fell to 69-73 Saturday and is now assured of its first losing season since 2007.

Tacoma never led as starting pitcher Jarrett Grube gave up two runs in the first inning. Grube got the loss, falling to 4-4. Michael Saunders and Johan Limonta led the Rainiers with two hits each.

“I thought Grube wasn’t as good as he has been, but he wasn’t bad: He gave us a chance to win,” manager Daren Brown said. “... Offensively we had some chances. ... We just came up short.”

## ON TAP

The Rainiers and Grizzlies continue their series at 1:35 p.m. today. Probable starting pitchers are Fresno right-hander Shane Loux (8-12, 4.70 ERA) and Tacoma right-hander Erasmo Ramirez (3-2, 5.60).

Don Ruiz, 253-597-8808 don.ruiz@thenewstribune.com

## Postseason scarce this year after big production last season

MIKE CURTO; Contributing writer

Published: 09/04/11 12:05 am

The Tacoma News Tribune

The minor league system feeding the Seattle Mariners put up winning records everywhere last year, with eight of the nine affiliates notching winning seasons and reaching the playoffs.

Let’s take a look at results this year:

Triple-A Tacoma: With a 69-72 record entering Saturday, Tacoma needed to win its final three games to reach .500. The defending Pacific Coast League champions will miss the playoffs for the first time since 2008.

Double-A Jackson: Seattle’s Southern League affiliate in Jackson, Tenn., missed out on the playoffs and was 66-71 for the season, entering Saturday.

Advanced-A High Desert: The Mavericks struggled in the second half of California League play, and they are 21 games under .500.

Class-A Clinton: Riding the strength of a strong second half, the Lumber Kings have locked up a playoff berth in the Midwest League. Clinton is 61-75 this season – but most of that losing came in the first half, and the league’s split-season format rewarded the Lumber Kings for going 37-29 in the second half.

Short-season Class-A Everett: The AquaSox (37-38, but 21-16 in the second half) went into Saturday night with playoff hopes: they trailed Eugene by one game in the second-half standings, with one game remaining. The needed a win and a Eugene loss on the final day of the regular season to get in.

Rookie Pulaski: The Appalachian League does not play a split-season format, but it does have wild-card playoff teams. Still, the Pulaski Mariners were unable to qualify, going 32-36.

Arizona Rookie League: The Seattle team in this circuit went 25-31 and did not advance to the playoffs.

Latin America: The Mariners’ affiliate in the Dominican Summer League had the best record in the organization, going 45-24 and advancing to the postseason. Seattle’s entry in the Venezuelan Summer League finished two games out of first place in its division.

In total, the Mariners have two teams and possibly a third (Everett) in their respective playoffs. Only the Dominican and Venezuelan teams finished with winning records.

## LIDDI'S MILESTONE

Third baseman Alex Liddi became just the second player in the Tacoma franchise's 52-year Pacific Coast League history to reach 100 runs scored and 100 RBI in the same season when he picked up his 100th RBI on Friday night.

He joined Craig Kusick of the 1973 Tacoma Twins as the only player to accomplish the feat.

If Kusick played today, fans would be clamoring for a call-up.

Kusick, then 24 years old and in his first Triple-A season, hit .305 with 27 home runs, 104 RBI, 102 runs, and 103 walks with 92 strikeouts. He put up a .424 on-base percentage and slugged .518.

Kusick split the 1974 and 1975 seasons between Tacoma and Minnesota before securing a reserve role in the major leagues from 1976-79.

Kusick retired after spending the 1980 season with the Hawaii Islanders of the PCL and splitting the 1981 seasons between Hawaii and Evansville.

Mike Curto is the radio broadcaster for the Tacoma Rainiers.

## Alex Liddi could make history for Italy

Jon Paul Morosi

Fox Sports.com

Updated Sep 3, 2011 4:41 PM ET

Any day now, Alex Liddi could make history.

If the Mariners promote him to the majors after his season at Class AAA Tacoma concludes on Monday, Liddi will become the first player born and raised in Italy to play in the big leagues.

Six Italian-born players have appeared in the major leagues, but all of them immigrated to North America during childhood, according to Riccardo Schiroli, communications manager for the Federazione Italiana Baseball Softball. Liddi, by contrast, was born in San Remo, Italy, and played amateur baseball there before signing with the Mariners at age 17 in 2005.

Liddi, now 23, leads the Pacific Coast League with 118 runs scored and is only the second player in team history to amass 100 runs and 100 RBI in the same season. While strikeout-prone — he's fanned 168 times, second-most in the PCL — the third baseman has the combination of performance and tools to merit a September call-up.

And with the players in Italy's top pro soccer league currently on strike, a promotion for Liddi might cause an even bigger splash in his homeland than it otherwise would.

"It would be really special," Liddi said in a telephone interview this week, when asked about the potential call-up. "It would be something to be proud of for my family and my country. It would be good for the baseball movement in Italy, to start more kids playing baseball.

“Soccer is still the biggest sport. But hopefully if we get some Italian players to the big leagues, they will start televising baseball there more. Some of us need to get up there and get publicity for the Italian people, so more kids start trying to play.”

Liddi’s grandparents moved from Italy to Los Angeles to find work around the middle of the last century, and his father played baseball while growing up in the U.S. The family ultimately returned to Italy — and brought their baseball knowledge with them. Alex fell in love with the sport, despite the absence of a strong youth program in the country at the time.

While the sport is growing there, Italy still lags behind the Netherlands in baseball infrastructure among European countries. But the Mariners, who have a well-developed network of international scouts, saw Liddi play at a number of tournaments in Europe, including a youth competition in Trieste, Italy, when he was 16.

“Italy isn’t like Latin America or the U.S., but it’s getting better,” said Bob Engle, the Mariners’ vice president of international operations. “They have structure. The World Baseball Classic has really increased interest in the sport. There are young players to follow there.”

Schirotti said a number of Italian baseball blogs are monitoring Liddi’s progress every day.

“The press is pretty much ready,” he said in an email. “It is difficult to say how the average sport fan feels, because in Italy you do not really have the ‘average sport fan.’ They are mostly supporting one team, either in soccer or other sports.

“We can take for granted that a lot of kids will start playing baseball, if their families realize you can be ‘someone’ by playing baseball. ... It will move player development to the next level here. Until now, most people believed you could not develop MLB prospects in Italy.”

Liddi is on the verge of shattering that myth. And while he’s acknowledged as the best Italian-born player in the minor leagues, there are others, such as Class A left-hander Luca Panerati (Reds) and Rookie-level right-hander Andrea Pizziconi (Royals).

It’s probably a stretch to call Liddi the Mariners’ third baseman of the future, with 23-year-old Kyle Seager already in Seattle and performing well at the position.

But Liddi is on his way to the majors, and probably sooner rather than later. We’ll have to see if youngsters in Rome and Florence break out bats and balls in celebration when the big day arrives.

## The curious case of Chone Figgins

By KEVIN BAXTER

Los Angeles Times

Published: Saturday, Sep. 3, 2011 - 1:00 am

He was one of the most popular players in franchise history, and he was coming off an All-Star season, one in which he led the American League in walks, was second in runs and third in stolen bases.

But after the L.A. Angels of Anaheim let Chone Figgins leave as a free agent following the 2009 season, his numbers plummeted. By the time he went on the disabled list with a hip flexor injury last month, Figgins had lost his starting job and had a .188 batting average and .241 on-base percentage.

So what happened?



"It's hard to say," said Figgins, 33, as he slumped in front of his locker at Seattle's Safeco Field. "You feel good sometimes, and then sometimes you don't feel good. I remember talking to older guys. They said great players always have one rough year in their career. And this is mine."

Actually, this would be two rough years. He batted a career-low .259 in 2010, when he also feuded with former Seattle Mariners Manager Don Wakamatsu.

The Angels and General Manager Tony Reagins were criticized for letting Figgins get away, failing to come close to matching the four-year \$36-million deal Seattle offered. And though the Angels have struggled to replace the production he gave them in the leadoff role, Figgins' rapid decline has proved Reagins right.

But, Figgins promises, this story isn't over.

"I'm going to be great again," he said in an uncommon boast. "The best part is I'm not worried about it. I'm keeping my head up."

Weathering a storm

The Philadelphia Phillies and New York Yankees are going to the playoffs. But their paths to the postseason just got more difficult because of Hurricane Irene.

The Baltimore Orioles refused the Yankees' suggestion to play a Friday doubleheader in anticipation of last month's storm, and a day later the teams were rained out, leaving New York to play 31 games in the season's final 31 days.

That's a light schedule compared to what the Phillies face. Because of storm-caused rainouts, Philadelphia is slated to play 33 games in 31 days.

The Phillies and Yankees figure to use minor league call-ups to absorb much of the additional workload, but it will have an impact nonetheless. The Yankees are locked in a tight battle with Boston for home-field advantage in the postseason. Philadelphia is trying to hold off Milwaukee for the same advantage in the National League.

Statwatch (believe it or not edition)

The Florida Marlins drew a "crowd" of 347 for the first game of a midweek doubleheader in Miami last month. The team did not release a turnstile count, but fan Justin Cohen did a head count, then tweeted his findings, which the club did not publicly contest.

Seattle's Ichiro Suzuki entered the weekend needing 44 hits to reach 200 for the 11th consecutive season. And yes, that's within reach for Ichiro, who has collected 50 or more hits in a month four times in his career.

One reason why Tampa Bay's James Shields leads the majors with 10 complete games is he's economical, averaging a baseball-low 14.3 pitches an inning. In four complete games, he needed less than 107 pitches.

## Mariners GM is committed to rebuilding

By KEVIN BAXTER

Los Angeles Times

Published: Saturday, Sep. 3, 2011 - 1:00 am

SEATTLE -- Jack Zduriencik is not your typical general manager.

He smiles more than he frowns, for example, and he laughs easily and frequently.

If you didn't know better, you'd figure Zduriencik was running the playoff-bound Philadelphia Phillies or Milwaukee Brewers.

Instead, he's in charge of the Seattle Mariners, who are on pace to lose more than 90 games this year after dropping 101 last summer.

The Mariners were last in the majors in scoring and hitting a year ago, and they're last in the American League in both categories this season, when they also endured a franchise-record 17-game losing streak.

Oh, and did we mention they haven't been to the postseason since 2001?

So why is this man smiling?

Well, for one, he recently signed a multiyear contract extension. For another, he's still confident in his master plan, one he got away from last year.

After spending \$117 million on the AL's losingest team in 2008, a performance that cost then-GM Bill Bavasi his job, Mariners management decided to go in another direction. Rather than playing the expensive and uncertain free-agent lottery, they decided on a plan to cut payroll by about 20 percent over the next three seasons and invest that money in player development.

Zduriencik (pronounced Zur-EN-sik), a former scouting director for the Los Angeles Dodgers who rebuilt the once-dismal Brewers farm system, was brought in to guide the program.

"We're going to build this thing and we're in the process of doing that now," he says. "I think the plan is clear. You're going to see a lot of young kids."

The jury is still out on how that's working. But it's got a better chance for success than the quick-fix strategy the Mariners tried in 2010.

Knowing that Seattle's spacious ballpark has been one of the toughest places to score over the last four years, Zduriencik tried to build his club around pitching, speed and defense.

It looked good on paper, too. With a pitching staff headed by Cliff Lee, Felix Hernandez and Erik Bedard; a defense that featured three Gold Glove winners; and an offensive catalyst in former Angel Chone Figgins, the Mariners were the sexy pick to win the AL West.

Instead, Bedard missed the season with injury, Lee was traded in July, Ken Griffey retired and Figgins batted a career-low .259 as the punchless Mariners finished last, costing Manager Don Wakamatsu his job.

"I can't give you a reason for what happened," Figgins says. "You look at paper, everybody looks good until the season starts. You never know which direction it will go."

Zduriencik remains committed to a defense-first strategy and says now that he didn't really expect last year's club to compete. He also claims he never took his eye off the team's long-term reconstruction.

"Any time you build an organization, you have to be realistic about where you're at," he says. "We were trying to do some things at the big league level and some things worked out real well. Some other things didn't.

"But we never really got away from our plan. And that was to build this thing from the ground up. That's what we're in the process of doing."

So, after starting five players with six or more years of big league experience on opening day last year, Seattle started five rookies in last week's series with the Angels. Four members of the starting rotation are first-year players as well, leaving Seattle with the fifth-youngest roster in baseball.

Gone are the likes of Griffey, Lee, Bedard, Milton Bradley, Casey Kotchman, Russell Branyan, Jack Wilson and Eric Byrnes, only one of whom is younger than 30. In their place, the Mariners have Michael Pineda, Dustin Ackley, Mike Carp, Trayvon Robinson and Kyle Seager, none older than 25.

The Mariners say they are intent on protecting those young players too, especially the pitchers - even if they have to challenge convention to do it. Last year, the team created the unusual position of director of sports science and performance, then hired Harvard-educated doctor Marcus Elliott to fill it.

If sabermetrics changed the way baseball defines performance, Zduriencik thinks Elliott's approach to fitness - which included removing the weights from the Mariners' minor league weight rooms - will revolutionize conditioning.

No one knows whether any of this will pay off with a title, but the Mariners' frugal management has given Zduriencik at least two more years to find out.

"Any general manager will tell you, you make decisions and do what you think is the very best," he says. "Sometimes you get really surprised by a player. Sometimes you get very disappointed."

"I think we've turned the page, and the direction is clear."

## Mariner bats AWOL with Pineda pitching again

September 3, 2011, 5:45 pm

John Hickey

Comcast SportsNet NW

The reason the Mariners are limiting the number of starts the final month of the season for rookie right-hander Michael Pineda is that he's already pitched more innings this year than in any year of his life.

He's only going to get three starts in September, the best to make sure he gets through the season healthy.

There could be a side benefit, one that's totally unintended.

Having Pineda, who threw six innings in a 3-0 loss to Oakland Saturday in the Coliseum, down to make just two more starts this season, might give the Seattle offense a push.

For whatever reason, the Mariners aren't much addicted to scoring when Pineda's on the mound. His last two games have seen the Mariners shut out.

Saturday was his 26th start, and in more than half of them (14), they've scored three runs or less while he's been in the game. Six times, all of them since June 1, have seen the Mariners score either one or zero runs while Pineda was in the game.

Is there any correlation? Certainly not. The Mariners have an equal opportunity offense - they're perfectly willing to not score for anybody. Remember Doug Fister?

So while Pineda closes out the season with one start next Saturday at home against Kansas City and another on Sept. 21 in Minnesota, the Mariners have 24 games left in which to figure out if the offensive surge they seemed to show in August was a mirage or the real deal.

Saturday against Brandon McCarthy of the A's, it looked very much like the former.

Four Seattle batters reached base. Dustin Ackley, Ichiro Suzuki and Josh Bard each had a single. Kyle Seager was safe on an error. And that was it. Ackley and Ichiro both got to second base, but neither got any further.

And so the Mariners are burying themselves deeper in the cellar in the American League West, 4½ games behind the third-place A's. Oakland pitching has allowed the Mariners nine hits in the last two games, just four hits in the last 15 innings.

Are the young Mariners, many of whom are looking at a full September schedule for the first time, wearing down?

Manager Eric Wedge, someone who doesn't like those kinds of excuses as a general rule, suggested there may be something to that.

“Wearing down? There always that possibility,” Wedge said after his team fell to a season-high 22 games under .500. “But we've got to fight through it. Some of the guys are in a time of year they haven't been before, so they've got to fight through it so we can be better next year.

“It starts more upstairs. You need to be sharp when you come to the park and then see it through, do your routines and trust it.”

Ichiro has been able to do that over the years, but he's got 11 years in the big leagues and another eight years in Japan, which is about as much playing time owned by the rest of the entire lineup the Mariners put on the field Saturday against the A's.

He's been fighting through it as much as anyone – hits in 26 of his last 29 games – but even he isn't immune to the late-season ups and downs the club has show.

One thing Wedge says he will do is have the Mariners take a full batting practice before Sunday's series finale. That seems a little counter-intuitive, given that Sunday mornings are generally a half-day off so that players can get their rest. But after watching the Mariners flair at entirely too many pitches they should have hit, Wedge says it's time to get after it again.

“The story for me today was our offense, or lack of it,” Wedge said. “There were a ton of swings and misses. Their guy (McCarthy) did a good job, but we should have been better. We had some pitches to hit, but it looked like a lot of our swings were a little bit long.”

Saturday, September 3, 2011 @ 11:54am

## Wedge pushing his vets and rookies

Shannon Drayer

MyNorthwest.com

All season long we have seen Eric Wedge try to take as much pressure of his hitters as he possibly could and give them the freedom to go out there and swing the bat. If there is one thing he doesn't want it is for them to be undecided or in between once they step into the batter's box. They should know that they get more points so to

speak for swinging and missing at the right pitch than they do taking it. Again, from what I have seen this year Wedge has tried to give them the freedom to swing.

I asked Wedge today how he can give that freedom to perform to the pitchers. It is not as clear cut as just letting it go out on the mound when they release the ball. Wedge said we saw a big example last night with Jason Vargas who struggled to get through five innings. There was a reason he was left out there as long as he was.

"It would have been real easy to go get him early on in that fifth inning," Wedge said. "He was already up there at 100 pitches, hell I let him throw 115-116 in five and you know me, I don't do that but I did that for him for the rest of this year, for next year, to give him every opportunity to do what he needed to do to fight through it. To find it."

After the fifth Wedge had a long talk with Vargas on the bench that left Vargas wanting to go back out for the sixth. That wasn't going to happen after the number of pitches he threw but it was an example of the manager sticking in there with a struggling player trying to get everything out of him. The game was lost but there was the next game to look forward to.

"The point is we are trying to do something here so I have got to have the discipline and the guts to allow that to happen." Wedge said.

"When everybody in the world is calling for me to go get somebody, if I leave him out there you better be damn sure there is a reason I am leaving him out there and you can use that with so many other situations too. There is a method in the madness because it is all going to come back to us. Why are you playing Casper Wells when he is 0 for whatever? Because you want him to have a day like he had yesterday to figure it out. Otherwise what are you doing? Just keep spinning. We cant keep spinning. We have been doing that here too long."

Rookies, veterans who could be a part of the future, it doesn't matter. In Wedge's mind there is still plenty to be gained in the final month of the season. An example would be with Miguel Olivo who is on pace to set a career high in games caught. I asked Wedge if he planned on perhaps giving him a few extra days off the rest of the way. Turns out that is not the plan.

"I want to push him. I do." Wedge said. "I think he has earned it, he takes care of himself, I think it is going to come back to us next year too. It's part of the big puzzle. I have got a thought process there too. (laughs). When I tell him, I will tell you."

September 3, 2011 at 5:23 PM

## Real good news about Michael Pineda and his changeup in this game

Posted by Geoff Baker

Seattle Times Blog

There is a lot to worry about offensively and overall when it comes to how this team might perform down the stretch. But some of the best news fans might receive all year came out of the post-game session in regards to Michael Pineda and his changeup.

The third pitch has been a work-in-progress for Pineda all year, but today it was more. Today it became a useful weapon.

"My changeup was nasty," Pineda said. "My changeup is getting better now. In April, I was throwing a lot of sliders and teams knew I'd be throwing sliders during the game. Now, when teams think I'm going to throw a slider, I throw them a changeup. And that's a good thing."

Josh Bard figured Pineda threw about 15 changeups today to go along with his usual fastball-slider combo. Pineda wound up with seven strikeouts on the day and allowed just three runs over six innings in the 3-0 loss.

"It's something we've been working really hard on with him and he's been working really hard," Bard said. "I think it's a pitch that's hopefully going to be a separator for him. I know it is for Felix (Hernandez). Felix has been the No. 1 salesman to him about it and Michael obviously respects Felix a lot as he should."

Pineda said of Hernandez: "I have learned a lot from him. He has treated me very well, which I appreciate a lot."

The speed of the changeup isn't really the difference these days. More like the movement. Pineda and Bard both felt the movement was a huge improvement over what he's thrown before.

Bard compared it to Hernandez's changeup, which "acts like a splitter."

The catcher says he can envision Pineda with a "power changeup" similar to Hernandez's, which can be a finishing pitch in an at-bat the way his slider now is. The problem with the slider, Bard added, is that a few more times around the league and everyone will be expecting it.

The third pitch only adds to the guessing and makes getting beaten by a lucky swing a lot less likely.

So, that's the good news. The real progress shown by Pineda in advancing towards the third pitch. If he can hone it by next year, the team could have a solid No. 2 starter on its hands who can stare down both lefties and righties.

If not, you have a two-pitch guy prone to the old "sophomore jinx" which is really just a fancy catchphrase for hitters getting a book on a guy and adjusting to him.

Speaking of young guys, M's manager Eric Wedge said he saw far more "long" swings on hittable pitches than normal today. I asked him whether that's a sign the team could be wearing down and he said he didn't want to jump to conclusions.

But he did say that young teams like this one can be prone to September energy outages. The Class AAA season ends in two days and that's normally when a lot of these guys would be heading home for the winter.

Now, they've got 3 1/2 weeks still to play. The M's have lost seven of nine and 11 of 16. They are 15-32 since the all-star break and 15-37 since last being a .500 team just five days prior to the break.

"I think there's always that possibility," Wedge said of the team wearing down. "But that's why we have to work through this. They have to fight through that. There's not much you can do to guard against it. They have to stay sharp mentally so they can stay on top of it physically. It probably starts more upstairs than anything."

Like I said, this is about the development of the young guys. And that means staying on top of them when they lose, not just wondrously applauding the hits they get when the team wins. Young guys on all teams have gotten hits in August and September before and while fans may cutely applaud that as a refreshing change from slumping veterans, it has to transition beyond the initial infatuation into something meaningful.

The team performing out there right now will be -- we assume -- largely the same one taking the field on Opening Day just seven months from now. It's not too early to expect something more than we've seen the last week or so. The M's need a team that can finish. If not, we'll be going through this same exercise over and over again in the years ahead.

There's a huge difference between a championship team and one that's gone 15-37 since waking up on July 6. The games now may not be all about wins and losses. But they're not about rolling over like the M's did on offense today, last night and for most of the past week. This team needs to pick it up.

September 3, 2011 at 3:32 PM

## Mariners continue offensive slide, fall 3-0 to Oakland Athletics

Posted by Geoff Baker

Seattle Times Blog

After last night's loss, we talked about some negative trends emerging with this Seattle offense. Through all the excitement over "playing the kids" that's percolated around the city for a while, the fact is that the team has now lost 11 of 16 -- up to and including today's 3-0 defeat to the Oakland Athletics.

We saw some good pitching once again from Michael Pineda, who threw another six innings of three-run ball. But this offense has spent the past week heading into a noticeable decline.

It really became apparent today, when the M's mustered only three hits. Brandon McCarthy went the distance against them and tied a career high with 10 strikeouts.

So, that's four hits -- one of them that should have been an error -- over the last 16 innings of baseball played by the M's. No, they haven't scored during that time.

They had four hits the game prior and had one run through the first 7 2/3 innings the game before that.

Prior to that, they were down 12-2 in the seventh before scoring a few more.

In other words, not enough scoring going on to win games. Some of you are already into footb all mode and don't care.

But part of evaluating the "kids" is to actually evaluate them. And again, they just looked flat today. These games are ending just a little too easily for opponents.

Something Eric Wedge and friends will have to get on in a hurry because the schedule only gets tougher from here.

September 3, 2011 at 2:49 PM

## Mariners at Oakland Athletics: Sept. 3, 2011 game thread

Posted by Geoff Baker

Seattle Times Blog

Nice finish to the sixth inning for Michael Pineda, who gets the side in order with a strikeout on Cliff Pennington.

But Pineda trails 3-0 after allowing a solo homer to left field by Scott Sizemore in the bottom of the fifth.

Seattle has two singles today so far and a third baserunner who reached on an error. Ichiro collected a single in the sixth inning and now needs 42 more to reach 200 on the season.

He'll have 24 games left after today. And he'll get all 24 to do it in.

2:22 p.m.: We're now in the bottom of the fourth and this one is pretty much playing out according to the pre-game script, with a strong-looking Michael Pineda trailing the Oakland A's 2-0. Pineda looked particularly good the first three innings, striking out five.

But he ran into some trouble in the fourth, allowing two singles, then gave up the big blow -- a two-run double to the left field corner by Cliff Pennington.

The M's, meanwhile, are continuing the offensive slide we've seen telling signs of this past week. Brandon McCarthy retired the first 11 batters he faced before a clean single by Dustin Ackley. McCarthy then retired the next three in a row -- all on strikeouts -- before an error in the fourth by shortstop Pennington on a routine grounder.

Josh Bard grounded out right after that.

For those keeping score at home, that's 15 of 17 retired by McCarthy today and 34 of 37 set down by Oakland pitching since the second inning last night.

Of the three M's to reach base during that time, one made it on an error and other on a "single" that should have been an error in last night's ninth.

So, yes, this offense has to figure some things out.

12:47 p.m.: The Mariners have had some trouble on offense of late, managing just one "hit" (that should have been an error) after the second inning last night, four hits the night before and waiting until the eighth inning to score the prior night. So, they could use a little bat action today, especially with Michael Pineda on the mound.

The A's are the type of team Pineda likes to face because they can be overpowered by his type of stuff.

Justin Smoak is back in at first base today after breaking in as the DH last night. Mike Carp serves as today's DH while Casper Wells moves over to left so Trayvon Robinson can sit and Ichiro can pursue his 200-hit season.

The lineups:

Mariners (58-79)

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51 Ichiro Suzuki (L) RF  
21 Franklin Gutierrez CF  
13 Dustin Ackley (L) 2B  
20 Mike Carp (L) DH  
17 Justin Smoak (S) 1B  
33 Casper Wells LF  
15 Kyle Seager (L) 3B  
3 Josh Bard (S) C  
26 Brendan Ryan SS

-----  
36 Michael Pineda RHP

Athletics (62-76)



19 Jemile Weeks (S) 2B  
4 Coco Crisp (S) CF  
55 Hideki Matsui (L) DH  
16 Josh Willingham LF  
12 David DeJesus (L) RF  
31 Brandon Allen (L) 1B  
2 Cliff Pennington (S) SS  
8 Kurt Suzuki C  
29 Scott Sizemore 3B

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32 Brandon McCarthy RHP

Originally published September 3, 2011 at 6:48 PM | Page modified September 3, 2011 at 6:59 PM

## Miguel Cabrera's home run caps Tigers rally | Baseball notebook

By The Associated Press

DETROIT — By the time Miguel Cabrera came to the plate in the ninth inning, the Detroit Tigers had already erased a seven-run deficit.

Cabrera needed only one swing to cap one of baseball's best comebacks of the season.

The big first baseman hit a game-ending solo homer Saturday, lifting the Tigers to a 9-8 win over the Chicago White Sox.

Detroit trailed 8-1 in the fifth inning and 8-6 in the ninth, but Ryan Raburn tied it with a two-run shot off Sergio Santos, and Cabrera won it one out later with his 25th homer of the year.

"That was an unbelievable inning," Detroit manager Jim Leyland said. "I'm not sure I've ever been part of a game exactly like that one, with a two-run homer to tie it, and then boom, another one to win it."

It was only the fifth time this season a team rallied from a deficit of at least seven runs to win, according to STATS, LLC.

"I think every loss hurts when you play this game or when you compete," said manager Ozzie Guillen, whose team trails Detroit by 7 ½ games in the AL Central. "But this one is very painful. This game was huge for us."

### Notes

- Marlins SS Hanley Ramirez, out since Aug. 2, is expected to undergo season-ending left shoulder surgery. The day for the operation has not been set.
- Angel Villalona appears headed for a second chance with the Giants after being cleared of murder charges in his native Dominican Republic. Bobby Evans, Giants vice president of baseball operations, says the first baseman could be reinstated into the organization's farm system in the coming weeks. The Giants are in the process of working to resolve a lawsuit brought against them by Villalona seeking back wages and punitive damages.

Villalona had been charged in the September 2009 death of a 25-year-old man at a bar in his homeland.