

Oakland A's sweep Seattle Mariners with 8-5 victory

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

A lot of good things happened offensively for the A's on Sunday, and Hideki Matsui was the common thread in most of them.

He tied an Oakland record with three doubles -- each one banging off the outfield wall in different spots -- and scored three runs as the A's dispatched the Seattle Mariners 8-5 to complete their first series sweep in 2½ months.

Matsui was all smiles after the game, joking with his teammates after Oakland's fourth straight win.

Will he be sharing in whatever good times the A's experience in 2012? That's a big decision facing the A's, as their outfielder/DH is finishing a one-year, \$4.25 million contract.

Matsui's second-half performance -- he's hitting .343 since the All-Star break after a .209 showing in the first half -- gives the team reason at least to consider it.

"I don't know how I fit in, honestly, for this team," Matsui, 37, said through interpreter Roger Kahlon. "But I wish I would have helped the team in terms of the scoring part a little bit more. That's one part I'm a little bit disappointed about."

The A's fell out of contention early, due in large part because they scored the second-fewest runs in the American League before the All-Star break.

They've enjoyed an offensive spike in the second half, and scoring was no problem Sunday. Six of their 10 hits went for extra bases.

Ryan Sweeney delivered a two-run triple, David DeJesus drove in two runs, and rookie first baseman Brandon Allen had two doubles and an RBI.

The A's notched their first sweep since taking three from the Giants on June 17-19, and Trevor Cahill (10-13) snapped a string of six starts without a win.

Matsui is hitting .264 overall with 11 homers and 68 RBIs. With 22 games left, he'll likely fall short of the 21 homers and 84 RBIs he posted for the Angels last season. But A's manager Bob Melvin said the veteran's contributions go beyond statistics.

"I think (there's value) for younger players here to watch him prepare," Melvin said. "You watch his focus, his preparation. He's pretty adamant about what he does in preparation for each and every game."

Sweeney said hitting coach Gerald Perry often asks for Matsui's input about opposing pitchers during pregame meetings.

"He knows what he's going to do against a guy before he goes up there," Sweeney said. "He's got such a good game plan."

Matsui doubled in the third and fifth to begin scoring rallies. After Seattle closed to within 4-3 in the top of the seventh, the A's broke things open with four runs in the bottom half off Mariners reliever Josh Lueke.

Matsui slammed a double off the "367" sign in right to put runners on second and third. Josh Willingham delivered a sacrifice fly, and Sweeney scored two with a soft liner to left that got past the diving Trayvon Robinson and wound up a triple.

Sweeney scored on a wild pitch to give the A's an 8-3 lead.

Whether Matsui re-signs with the A's depends on how much interest he commands on the open market this winter, and whether the A's feel they can find a better DH option.

Power-hitting prospect Chris Carter, currently with Triple-A Sacramento, could fit the bill, but he's hit just .170 in 34 major league games.

Matsui said there are too many unknowns to speculate on where he might land next season.

"It's going to be his decision on coming back," Melvin said, "but he means a lot to this team."

Oakland A's update: Trevor Cahill pulled after five innings but gets win

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Trevor Cahill's outing was shorter than expected Sunday, but he wasn't complaining about the result.

The right-hander allowed one run over five innings in the A's 8-5 victory over Seattle, breaking his string of six outings without a win.

Cahill had thrown just 83 pitches when manager Bob Melvin had reliever Josh Outman open the sixth.

"I just shortened him a little bit today," Melvin said. "His last game (a loss at Cleveland), he was fighting himself a little bit. Maybe there was a little of that going on today. He's (thrown) a lot of innings."

Cahill, who came in 1-6 with a 7.15 ERA since the All-Star break, said he was surprised but fine with the decision.

After Brandon McCarthy threw a shutout Saturday, the bullpen was well-rested.

"The bullpen was pretty fresh," Cahill said. "Maybe he gave me a little break. All those innings (Sunday) were kind of high-intensity innings."

Cahill escaped a second-inning jam unscathed after loading the bases with one out. He allowed five hits and two walks.

Melvin had said that he planned to start recently promoted Michael Taylor in right field Sunday, but the manager instead went with David DeJesus.

"I put my foot in my mouth on that one," Melvin said with a smile before the game. "I'll ease (Taylor) in against left-handers. He'll get to play some. There's a chance he could get in there (Monday). He's not here to sit, that's for sure."

Taylor went 0 for 3 with a walk and committed a first-inning error Friday in his big league debut.

According to Elias Sports Bureau, McCarthy on Saturday became the first A's pitcher to throw a shutout with double-digit strikeouts since Barry Zito struck out 11 in blanking the Cleveland Indians on Aug. 20, 2001.

McCarthy also is the first Oakland pitcher since Vida Blue in 1971 to pitch back-to-back complete games with 10 or more strikeouts, according to A's historian David Feldman.

Center fielder Coco Crisp didn't play after fouling a ball off his right foot Saturday.

The A's raised \$63,200 on Breast Cancer Awareness Day, with proceeds benefiting the American Cancer Society, the Cancer Prevention Institute of California and Susan G. Komen for the Cure.

Chin Music: No Coco Crisp (or Michael Taylor) in A's lineup

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 9/4/2011 12:43pm

Here's the lineups as the A's go for a sweep of Seattle ...

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

Mariners: Ichiro RF, Gutierrez CF, Ackley 2B, Carp DH, Smoak 1B, Olivo C, Seager 3B, Wells LF, Rodriguez SS; Beavan RHP.

You'll notice no Michael Taylor in the lineup for the A's. Manager Bob Melvin mentioned Friday that Taylor would start in right field today, but said this morning he had a change of heart. "I put my foot in my mouth on that one," Melvin said with a smile. "I'll ease him in against left-handers. He'll get to play some. I jumped the gun on that one. There's a chance he could get in there (Monday). He's not here to sit, that's for sure." Melvin added that it's not a situation where the right-handed hitting Taylor will play ONLY against lefties.

It's going to be interesting to see how Melvin handles Taylor's playing time through the end of the season. In my book, if you bring a guy like that up in early September, he should be playing regularly. This guy is a big-time prospect, and the A's

need to find out what they have in him. But there's logic to choosing the spots for a young guy, playing him when you think he's got the best chance to succeed and build his confidence. Then again, the A's know what they have in David DeJesus at this point. They're less certain about Taylor, which is why I think he needs to play – often.

–Coco Crisp, who fouled a ball off his foot Saturday, is out of the lineup as expected. Melvin said Crisp is doing a little better but that the team is being cautious with him.

–A couple interesting stats from yesterday: Brandon McCarthy became the first A's pitcher to throw a shutout with double-digit strikeouts since Barry Zito struck out 11 in blanking Cleveland on Aug. 20, 2001, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

And this from A's stats guru David Feldman: McCarthy is just the fourth pitcher in Oakland history to throw back-to-back complete games with 10 or more strikeouts. He's the first to do it since Vida Blue in 1971.

A's beat Mariners 8-5, completing the sweep

Ron Kroichick, Chronicle Staff Writer

-- Less than two months ago, Hideki Matsui seemed symptomatic of the A's problems. He dragged a .209 batting average into the All-Star break, and it was natural to view him as a free-agent bust: an aging, past-his-prime hitter.

Now, as Labor Day arrives, Matsui has cast himself in an entirely new light. He's hitting .343 since the break, prompting a fresh wave of questions - about his interest in returning to the A's next season.

Matsui rapped out three doubles Sunday, matching an Oakland record, as the A's rolled to an 8-5 victory and completed a three-game sweep of Seattle at the Coliseum. It was the A's first series sweep since they took three straight from the Giants, June 17-19.

Matsui and first baseman Brandon Allen (two doubles) paced the offense, which extended its return to respectability. The A's were flat-out dreadful in the first half, only to show steady signs of life the past two months.

Sunday's win lifted their record to 25-23 since the All-Star break - not exactly a breakthrough, but at least a small step in the right direction. It's logical to think the progress stems, in part, from Matsui joining forces with Josh Willingham to give the A's a strong middle-of-the-lineup presence.

Willingham pocketed his 80th RBI on Sunday. Matsui stayed at 68, though each of his doubles contributed to an A's rally (and he scored all three times).

"He means a lot to this team, partly because young players can watch him prepare, his focus, the way he gets ready for games," manager Bob Melvin said of Matsui. "Our young players can learn a lot watching him."

That's helpful, no doubt, but the A's gave Matsui, now 37, a one-year, \$4.25 million contract to do more than show off his work ethic. They also need him to produce runs and knock pitches off the wall, as he did Sunday.

Worth noting: Matsui went the opposite way for his first two doubles, then turned on a seventh-inning pitch and nearly whacked it into the right-field bleachers.

"I honestly don't know how I fit in, but I wish I would have helped the team a little more as far as scoring runs," Matsui said through interpreter Roger Kahlon. "That's one thing I'm a little disappointed about. ..."

"I'm not really thinking about next season. There are just too many unknowns."

Allen counts as one of the unknowns. He potentially gives the A's a lively left-handed bat, though it's hard to know just yet. Allen hit .354 in his first 13 games with the A's, after the July 31 trade from Arizona, but then he hit .121 in his next eight games (with 16 strikeouts).

Allen ripped two searing, line-drive doubles Sunday.

"I just had to relax a little," he said. "That's what this game is, ups and downs. You just push through it."

Trevor Cahill goes 5 innings, gets 10th win

Ron Kroichick, Chronicle Staff Writer

-- **Trevor Cahill** won 18 games last season for the A's. This year, he won one in July and none in August.

That's a tidy synopsis of Oakland's lost summer.

Cahill hopped back into the win column Sunday, collecting his first victory since July 27. He pitched five innings, repeatedly evading trouble before manager **Bob Melvin** went to his bullpen.

It seemed like a quick hook, but Melvin pointed to Cahill's workload - 30 starts, tying him for the American League lead, and 182 1/3 innings - and a rested bullpen.

"I was a little surprised, but our bullpen was fresh and he figured he'd give me a little break," Cahill said. "I had some high-intensity innings. It felt like I was trying to pitch out of key situations every inning."

Cahill (10-13) became the second pitcher in Oakland history to win 10-plus games in each of his first three seasons, joining **Tim Hudson** (1999-2001).

Taylor sits: Melvin had planned to give outfielder **Michael Taylor** another start Sunday, but **David DeJesus** played right field instead. Taylor should get playing time in the Kansas City series, with the Royals starting left-handers Tuesday night and Wednesday.

"He's not here to sit, that's for sure," Melvin said of Taylor.

Briefly: Jemile Weeks' hitting streak ended at 11 games. ... **Coco Crisp** didn't play after hitting a foul ball off his right foot in each of the two previous games, though Melvin said Crisp was "better." ... The A's raised \$63,200 on Breast Cancer Awareness Day. Pregame ceremonies featured more than 600 Bay Area breast-cancer survivors.

A'S LEADING OFF

History maker: Brandon McCarthy's gem Saturday made him the third A's pitcher in 98 years to throw a shutout with 10-plus strikeouts, no walks and three or fewer hits allowed (according to Elias). Bobby Witt did it in 1994, as did Catfish Hunter in his 1968 perfect game.

Drumbeat: A's pregame: Taylor sits

Ron Kroichick, San Francisco Chronicle, 9/4/2011 1:01pm

The A's are at the point of their season where the future carries more intrigue than the present. So the promotion of outfielder Michael Taylor created some anticipation, even if Taylor went 0-for-3 (and made an error) in his major-league debut Friday night.

Manager Bob Melvin had said Taylor would start again in today's series finale against Seattle -- but the lineup includes David DeJesus, not Taylor, in right field.

"I put my foot in my mouth there," Melvin said in his pregame session with reporters. "I'll ease him in against some lefties. I jumped the gun on that one. ... He might play tomorrow. He's not here to sit, that's for sure."

Taylor looks like a tight end or small forward, at 6-foot-5 and 250 pounds. He's not a huge power hitter -- he hit .272 this season at Triple-A Sacramento, with 16 homers and 64 RBIs.

Even if Taylor doesn't start Monday against Kansas City, he should get some playing time in the three-game series. The Royals are scheduled to start left-handed pitchers Tuesday night (Danny Duffy) and Wednesday afternoon (Bruce Chen).

Other pregame A's notes:

**Coco Crisp is not in today's lineup after fouling pitches off his right foot each of the past two games. Crisp was walking gingerly as he arrived at the ballpark, though Melvin said Crisp's leg was "better."

**Today's lineup: Weeks 2B, Pennington SS, Matsui LF, Willingham DH, DeJesus RF, Allen 1B, Sweeney CF, Suzuki C, Sizemore 3B, Cahill P.

**Leftover trivia on Brandon McCarthy's pitching gem Saturday, courtesy of Elias: McCarthy became the first A's pitcher in more than 10 years to throw a complete-game shutout with 10-plus strikeouts. (Barry Zito was the last to do it, on Aug. 20, 2001).

McCarthy is also only the third A's pitcher in the past 98 years -- dating to the franchise's time in Philadelphia and Kansas City -- to throw a complete-game shutout with at least 10 strikeouts, no walks and three or fewer hits allowed. The others are Bobby Witt (vs. Royals in 1994) and Catfish Hunter (perfect game vs. Twins in 1968).

A's fend off late-inning rally, sweep Mariners

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- With less than a month remaining in an already decided season, the A's are relishing small victories these days.

On Sunday, they found them in productive performances from the young and the old, a combo that ultimately equaled an 8-5 win and series sweep over the Mariners, marking just their third three-game sweep of the season.

Suddenly, the A's have won four straight after dropping five in a row. And despite their third-place standing with 22 games remaining on the calendar, they don't plan on backing off before September's end.

"From an individual perspective, at the least as a professional, you have to finish your job," Hideki Matsui said through translator Roger Kahlon. "You came here to play the whole season, so in that sense it's very important to play it out until the end.

"As a team, too, I think it's important to play well and finish the season strong because there's a good chance that however you finish will lead into the next season."

Matsui -- offering more of the same in a torrid second half by staying true to his own word -- and Brandon Allen -- continually cementing himself in Oakland's future plans, combined for five doubles and three runs, enabling righty Trevor Cahill to pick up his first victory since July 27.

It was his 10th win of the season, as he joined Tim Hudson as the only two pitchers in Oakland history and sixth in franchise history to win at least 10 games in each of his first three seasons.

Cahill, making his 30th start of the year, tying him with CC Sabathia and Justin Verlander for the American League lead, wasn't overly effective, tallying 83 pitches through five innings before getting the early hook.

"I just shortened him a bit today," manager Bob Melvin said. "He's got a lot of innings and, at that point in time in the game, I just felt it was time."

But Cahill's work -- one run on five hits and two walks with four strikeouts -- kept the A's ahead the entire way.

Allen was the first to score, reaching home in the second on Kurt Suzuki's RBI single off Seattle hurler Blake Beaven. In the third, Matsui collected his first of three doubles on the day, moving to third on a Josh Willingham base hit before scoring Oakland's second run, courtesy David DeJesus' sacrifice fly.

After Seattle scored in the top of the fifth, the A's doubled their run total in the bottom half of the frame, when Matsui again reached base via a two-bagger and found his way home on another RBI hit from DeJesus, this time a groundball single to left. Another double from Allen brought home DeJesus to make it 4-1.

A two-run homer off the bat of Mariners second baseman Dustin Ackley against lefty Brian Fuentes narrowed Oakland's lead to one in the seventh, but the A's responded in fine fashion, posting four more runs in the bottom half of the inning.

Cliff Pennington led off with a walk, and Matsui's ensuing double -- which nearly cleared the right-field wall -- made him the 25th player in Oakland history to tally three in a single game. Pennington scored on Willingham's sacrifice fly and, following an intentional walk to DeJesus, Ryan Sweeney cleared the bases with a two-run triple.

Matsui is batting .343 since the All-Star break, going 62-for-181 during that span. Beaven deemed the veteran "a hot bat" and noted "he didn't miss anything today."

"He combined to be six feet short of three home runs, or 10 feet maybe," Melvin joked. "He swung the bat well, and it seems like he's always contributing in some way or another."

"He means a lot to this team, where we are right now, and I think just as much with younger players here to watch him prepare and watch his focus, his preparation, how he goes about his business and gets ready for games. I think any young player can learn from that."

Allen, who enjoyed a two-hit day, certainly has. The A's rookie is already experiencing the typical rollercoaster ride shared by many of the game's youngsters, as he entered the contest with just four hits in his previous 33 at-bats after hitting .354 over his first 13 games with the club.

"That's what the game is, lots of ups and downs," Allen said. "True character comes out when you're slumping, and you just have to push through it. I just want to play well, be able to help the team. It's nothing about next year, or trying to solidify something, I'm just happy and blessed to be out there. I'm taking nothing for granted and enjoying my time."

Said Melvin: "You learn a lot about yourself during those struggles, so you just grind through and stay positive and keep working and keep preparing and try not to bring the baggage of a couple days with you. He's focused every day and works hard."

Allen's efforts helped the A's -- who survived a scare in the eighth when Grant Balfour surrendered two runs -- up their season series with the Mariners to 7-9, with three games left to be played between the two clubs. Those contests will come later in the month in Seattle, where Oakland finishes out the year.

"There's not much season left, but we want to finish up strong heading into next year," Cahill said. "There are a lot of new faces here, so it's good to establish that winning mentality."

A's celebrate Breast Cancer Awareness Day

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The A's on Sunday raised more than \$63,000 while celebrating the 13th annual Breast Cancer Awareness Day, with proceeds benefiting several cancer foundations.

The American Cancer Society, Cancer Prevention Institute of California and Susan G. Komen for the Cure shared in the funds, and the event has now brought in more than \$1.2 million for breast cancer education and research since its inception.

On Sunday, more than 600 Bay Area breast cancer survivors, led by A's bench coach Joel Skinner's wife Jennifer (an eight-year survivor) and first-base coach Tye Waller's sister Teri Duncan (a two-year survivor), combined to form a symbolic human ribbon on the field.

It marked a dedication to survival, while the release of white doves served as a symbol of hope.

Crisp out with bruised foot

OAKLAND -- As expected, Coco Crisp was held out of Sunday's series finale against the Mariners because of a bruised right foot, but A's manager Bob Melvin believes the outfielder could potentially return as soon as Monday.

Melvin is making no promises, though, as the club wants to take a cautious approach with Crisp, who has played through multiple injuries this season.

Crisp initially left Saturday's game after fouling a ball off his right foot in the first inning for a second straight day. He played through 4 1/2 innings before Ryan Sweeney was inserted as a pinch-hitter in the fifth and remained in the game for the next frame in center field.

The 31-year-old Crisp is batting .275 with two home runs over his last 11 games, after collecting just five hits in his previous 34 at-bats.

Sweeney got the start in center field Sunday, with David DeJesus in right field despite Melvin's mention on Friday that Michael Taylor would get the nod.

"I put my foot in my mouth on that one," Melvin said, smiling. "I'll ease [Taylor] in against left-handers. He'll get to play some. I jumped the gun on that one. There's a chance he could get in there [Monday]. He's not here to sit, that's for sure."

Worth noting

- Right-hander Brandon McCarthy, winner of Saturday's 3-0 shutout against Seattle, became only the fourth A's pitcher in the last 98 years to throw a complete-game shutout with at least 10 strikeouts, no walks and three or fewer hits allowed.

The last was Barry Zito on Aug. 20, 2001, with Bobby Witt (1994) and Catfish Hunter ('68) representing the others.

Royals, A's set to face off in Oakland

By Taylor Soper / MLB.com

Scouting the opposing starting pitcher will be a little more difficult for Oakland than Kansas City before Monday's tilt at The Coliseum.

Rich Harden will be taking the mound for the A's - that much we know. The Royals, however, have two options: scheduled starter Felipe Paulino or alternate starter Nate Adcock.

Paulino's availability will be a game time decision, as the righty is just recovered from back spasms that caused him miss his last start at Detroit. He did well in a bullpen session on Saturday, but manager Ned Yost is still cautious.

"He threw and actually felt pretty good," Yost said on Sunday. "We'll see how he feels today and how he does on the plane today -- it's a long flight out to Oakland and it's tough on the back."

Adcock will be ready if needed. The Kentucky native came on in relief for Paulino last Wednesday, pitching 5 1/3 innings giving up just two runs. Paulino has struggled as of late, winning just once in his past eight starts.

Harden will make his 12th start of the season and is 2-0 with a 2.78 ERA in six career starts against Kansas City. He has yet to lose at home this year (2-0, 3.30 ERA).

Royals: Escobar set to return to lineup

Shortstop Alcides Escobar is expected to return to the starting lineup on Monday after missing the past two games with a minor sprain of his left ankle.

"Two days off is going to seem like a month to him because he's played every single day," manager Ned Yost said. "So it doesn't hurt to give him an extra day and get that ankle back to 100 percent."

- Royals right fielder Mitch Maier nailed Cleveland's Carlos Santana at home in yesterday's 9-6 loss. The Royals outfield now has a league-leading 46 assists on the year, many thanks to Alex Gordon, who leads the Majors with 20 of his own.
- Starter Jeff Francis picked up his 15th loss of the season on Sunday and also gave up one run in the first inning. The lefty has given up 30 of his 95 runs allowed in the first inning this season.

A's: Crisp could return to lineup after foot bruise

Coco Crisp, who has suffered multiple injuries this year, could return on Monday from a bruised right foot. The outfielder fouled a ball off his right foot on Saturday for the second straight day. Ryan Sweeney got the start at center on Sunday.

- Jemile Weeks saw his career-long 11-game hitting streak come to an end yesterday against the Mariners after an 0-for-5 effort. He leads American League rookies with eight triples and is second in stolen bases with 21.

Worth noting:

- Andrew Bailey has been on fire since the All-Star Break, converting on all 11 of his save opportunities and is 34 for 34 for saves after the break in his career.
- Royals right fielder Jeff Francoeur, who got a day off on Sunday, needs one double to set the team record for doubles in a season by an outfielder.

A's beat Mariners, 8-5, to complete sweep

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — David DeJesus and Ryan Sweeney each drove in two runs, Hideki Matsui doubled three times and the Oakland Athletics completed a three-game sweep of the Seattle Mariners with an 8-3 victory Sunday.

Kurt Suzuki, Brandon Allen and Josh Willingham also drove in runs for the A's, who won their third straight following a five-game losing streak.

Trevor Cahill (10-13) allowed a run and five hits over five innings to improve to 1-4 with a 6.46 ERA over his last seven starts. Andrew Bailey pitched the ninth for his 19th save in 21 chances.

Dustin Ackley hit a two-run homer and Ichiro Suzuki drove in a run for the Mariners, who have dropped four straight games. Luis Rodriguez added a two-run single.

Blake Beavan (3-5) pitched five innings for Seattle and was charged with four runs and seven hits. The rookie right-hander is 0-3 with a 6.44 ERA in his last five starts.

Mariners outfielder Casper Wells left with a bruised left elbow after getting hit by a pitch in the second inning. Franklin Gutierrez departed during his at-bat in the eighth inning, grabbing his left side after a swing and miss.

Cahill's previous victory came on July 27 against Tampa Bay. He's allowed 28 runs in 38 2-3 innings for a 6.52 ERA since holding the Rays scoreless over 7 1-3 innings.

Matsui is hitting .343 (62 for-181) since the All Star break. He hit .209 leading up to the break. The three doubles tied a single-game Oakland record.

Kurt Suzuki's RBI single in the second gave the A's the early edge. DeJesus added a sacrifice fly in the third and a run-scoring single in the fifth. Allen also drove in a run in the fifth.

Ichiro Suzuki hit an RBI single in the fifth for the Mariners' first run. Ackley hit his sixth homer with two outs in the seventh.

The Athletics responded with four runs in the bottom half of the seventh. Sweeney hit a two-run triple and Willingham had a sacrifice fly.

NOTES: A's OF Coco Crisp missed the game to recover from fouling a ball off his foot on Saturday. ... Mariners RHP Dan Cortes is expected to make a rehab appearance with Triple-A Tacoma on Monday, then join the team at home later in the week. ... A's OF Michael Taylor was not in the starting lineup two days after manager Bob Melvin said he would be. "I put my foot in my mouth there," Melvin said. "He'll start against some left-handers. He'll get a chance to play. He's not here to sit." ...

Mariners INF Brendan Ryan, who was on the disabled list in August with a left shoulder injury, got the day off. ... Oakland raised \$63,200 on A's Breast Cancer Awareness Day. ... LHP Anthony Vasquez starts for the Mariners when they open a series in Anaheim against the Los Angeles Angels on Monday. It will be his third major league start and his second against the Angels. ... RHP Rich Harden starts Monday's game for the A's against the Kansas City Royals. He has 64 strikeouts since the All-Star Break, fifth in the AL. He is 2-0 in five home starts.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Sacramento winning streak hits double digits

By Veronika Tafoya / Sacramento River Cats

The River Cats increased their winning streak to 10 games Sunday, taking an 8-7, 13-inning victory over host Colorado Springs. The winning streak ties the franchise record, which occurred twice in the 2000 season.

Sacramento started the game with a solo home run by Chris Carter, who has has 10 hits in his last three games. The Sky Sox took the lead in the bottom of the frame, with Jordan Pacheco scoring the first run and Joe Mather the second to give Colorado a 2-1 lead.

The River Cats didn't allow Colorado Springs to have the lead for long, picking up another run in the third with an RBI single from Jermaine Mitchell that scored Joel Galarraga. Mitchell and Galarraga each had three hits and a run by the end of the game.

Colorado Springs showed they were hungry for hits in the bottom of the third. Scott Beerer singled and advanced to third on a hit from Pacheco. Joe Mather had an RBI single to score Beerer, Pacheco scored on a sacrifice fly and Radames Nazario's base hit knocked in two more runs. At the end of the four-run inning, Colorado led 6-2.

The River Cats matched Colorado Springs' four-run inning in the fifth. Mitchell started the rally with a base hit, his third in as many at-bats. Josh Donaldson knocked in two runners with a single, and two wild pitches in Jai Miller's at-bat allowed Adrian Cardenas to score and Donaldson to take third base with one out. Miller's broken bat base hit scored Donaldson to tie the game at six.

Colorado Springs and Sacramento had identical scores by the middle of the fifth at six runs, nine hits and two errors each. The score would remain tied until the 13th inning, despite Colorado Springs getting eight more hits and Sacramento picking up another nine.

The River Cats are on an offensive roll in the series against Colorado Springs, tallying 59 hits over the last three games.

The River Cats bullpen was lights out Sunday, with Vinnie Chulk pitching a three-up, three-down eighth inning and Justin Souza retiring all nine batters he faced over 3.0 innings. Fernando Cabrera took the win, and Jared Lansford was credited with the save.

Wes Timmons broke the seven-inning tie in his only plate appearance of the game with a base hit that scored Carter and Cardenas. Colorado squeaked in another run, but Timmons' two RBI gave Sacramento just enough support to top the Sky Sox, and extend his 15-game hitting streak.

Sacramento has been smashing on Colorado Springs this season, winning 14 of 15 games against the Sky Sox. On Monday at 12:05 p.m. the Cats hope to sweep Colorado Springs for the third time this season.

RockHounds blow 3-run lead

Midland Reporter-Telegram Midland Reporter-Telegram | 0 comments

FRISCO -- The Midland RockHounds were cruising in the top of the fifth when Michael Spina lined an RBI single to center to pad the RockHounds' narrow lead over the Frisco RoughRiders.

But the RoughRiders erased that lead in the bottom of the inning then grabbed it for good in the sixth on a Jared Bolden sacrifice fly that proved to be the difference in a 4-3 win Sunday at Dr Pepper Ballpark.

Midland (35-34) jumped out to a 2-0 lead early after Matt Sulentic scored on an RBI groundout by Spina in the top of the first and a throwing error by Jose Rivero allowed Jason Christian to score in the second.

RockHounds starter Anthony Capra was sharp in the early going as well, allowing just two hits in the first four innings and retiring six straight batters at one point.

Spina's RBI single in the fifth seemed to put Midland in even better shape, but the RoughRiders (39-30) finally figured out Capra in the bottom of the inning.

Down 3-0, Jose Felix slapped a leadoff single to left before a walk and a bunt by Renny Osuna loaded the bases with no outs.

The next batter, Davis Stoneburner, hit a sacrifice fly to put Frisco on the board before Mike Bianuccia tied it at three with a two-run single two batters later.

After the RockHounds went in order in the sixth, Elio Sarmiento led off the bottom of the inning with a line-drive single.

A walk and a sacrifice bunt moved Sarmiento to third before Bolden drove in the game-winning run with a sacrifice fly.

Midland wraps up its season today at 6 p.m. against the playoff-bound RoughRiders, who they've now dropped the last two games to.

Choice's 30th HR Takes Ports Past 66ers 3-0

Stockton Ports

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. - It took until the 9th inning for any runs to score on Sunday night at Arrowhead Credit Union Park, but for Michael Choice and the Stockton Ports it was definitely worth the wait. Choice broke a 0-0 tie in the game's final frame with a three-run blast to center to give the Boys of Banner Island a 3-0 win over the Inland Empire 66ers, Stockton's 4th shutout victory of the season.

Stockton's offense scattered three hits over the first four innings, and then were shut down from innings four through eight. 66ers starter Cody Evans went the first five innings and allowed three hits while striking out five. Kevin Johnson took over to start the 6th and tossed two perfect frames and Caleb Graham (1-2) started the 8th and set the side down in order in his first inning of work. In total, 23 of Stockton's first 26 hitters were retired, including 13 in a row to get through the 8th.

Ports starter Jake Brown shut down Inland Empire's offense over the first five innings, allowing four hits while striking out one in a solid starting effort. James Simmons (3-2) came on to start the 6th and pitched around a one-out double hit by Jean Segura, inducing a double-play to end the inning.

Simmons picked up the win, tossing three scoreless innings and allowing three hits while striking out three.

Rashun Dixon led off the 9th for Stockton with a single to right off Graham. Dixon was moved to second on a sac-bunt by Conner Crumbliss. Michael Gimartin came up next and worked the count to 3-1 before being given an intentional ball four to bring up Choice.

Daniel Tillman was brought in from the bullpen to face Choice, and on Tillman's first pitch, Choice hit a towering home run to straight-away center field off the batter's eye to put the Ports in front 3-0.

Two of the three runs were charged to Graham, who took the loss after 1.1 innings of work. Tillman, who was responsible for one of the three runs to score, retired the next two hitters to end the inning.

Connor Hoehn (SV, 7) pitched a perfect ninth and recorded two strikeouts, including one of Carlos Ramirez to end the ballgame.

With the home run, Choice becomes the first Cal-Leaguer to reach the 30 home run mark and now has 82 RBI on the season. It was the fourth time the Ports shut out an opponent, the last time coming on August 7th when they blanked Rancho Cucamonga.

The Ports and 66ers, both playoff-bound, will play the final game of the regular season on Monday night. Rob Gilliam (12-7, 5.20 ERA) will start the season finale for Stockton, opposed by left-hander Manuel Flores (12-9, 5.83 ERA) for Inland Empire. First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

Bees Stay Hot, Win 5th Straight

Burlington Bees

BURLINGTON, Iowa (Sept. 4) - The Burlington Bees (31-36) allowed only three hits as they defeated the Cedar Rapids Kernels (28-40) by a score of 7-0 Sunday afternoon.

The Bees started the scoring in the bottom of the first inning after DH Jose Crisotomo (1-5) hit a one-out single to left field. With RF Josh Whitaker (0-1) at the dish Crisotomo stole second and third base. Whitaker drew a walk. Crisotomo scored and Whitaker advanced to second base on a wild pitch by Cedar Rapids RHP Seth Fowler. 1B A.J. Kirby-Jones (2-5) hit a double to left field. A single to right field by 3B Wade Kirkland (3-4) plated Kirby-Jones to put the Bees up 3-0.

In the bottom of the fifth inning, Whitaker drew a one-out walk. Kirby-Jones hit a single to left field. Whitaker scored on a ground out by LF Douglas Landaeta (0-4) and Burlington went up 4-0.

Burlington C Beau Taylor (1-3) hit a single to right field to lead-off the bottom of the sixth inning. A single to right field by CF Tyreece House (1-3) moved Taylor to second base. With 2B Ryan Pineda (1-4) at the dish, Taylor stole third base and scored thanks to a throwing error by Kernels C Marcus Nidiffer, which put Burlington up 5-0.

The Bees put two more runs on the scoreboard in the bottom of the eighth inning. House drew a one-out walk in the bottom of the eighth inning and moved to second base on a single to left field by Pineda. Crisotomo reached first base on a force attempt, throwing error by Cedar Rapids 2B Kirby Young, which moved House to third base and Pineda to second base. House scored on a passed ball by Nidiffer, which moved Pineda to third base and Crisotomo to second base. Pineda scored on a ground out by RF Royce Consigli (0-2), who pinch-hit for Whitaker in the bottom of the sixth inning.

Burlington RHP Josh Bowman walked one and didn't allow a hit in two innings of work. RHP Nate Long (8-8) allowed two hits and fanned two over four innings of work, earning the win. RHP Daniel Tenholder walked one in an inning of work. RHP T.J. Walz allowed one hit and fanned one in two innings of work.

The Bees wrap up their series with the Kernels on Monday at 2:00 p.m. RHP Brian Diemer (9-11, 4.07) gets the start for Cedar Rapids against RHP Jose Macias (8-3, 3.48) for the Bees. Pre-game coverage begins at 1:40 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at www.gobees.com.

2011 Bees playoff tickets are on sale now! To purchase tickets, please give the Bees a call at (319) 754-5705, go online to www.gobees.com, or stop by the box office at Community Field during normal business hours.

Vermont clinches Stedler Division

By David Heck / Special to MLB.com

When Connecticut scored four runs in the bottom of the ninth against Lowell, it appeared the Tigers might have scored a playoff spot and the Vermont Lake Monsters were destined for disappointment. Instead, the opposite turned out to be true. Vermont defeated the Tri-City ValleyCats, 11-7, on Sunday, then listened over the stadium's PA system as Connecticut dropped a dramatic 16-inning game to the Spinners, 6-5. The two outcomes allowed the Lake Monsters to clinch the second-half title in the New York-Penn League's Stedler Division and will head to the playoffs for the first time since 1996.

"It just feels great," Vermont manager Rick Magnante said. "It was a long season. We've basically been a .500 club from the get-go. But as the old adage goes, it's not how you start, it's how you finish. We finished strong, on a roll here, and now we're playing for the marbles."

After Tri-City scored five runs in the second, Vermont responded by putting up a five-spot in the bottom of the frame. The Lake Monsters scored all five runs with two outs as Jacob Tanis came through with a two-RBI single and Sean Jamieson followed with a three-run homer.

"It was huge," Magnante said. "I would say in the last seven to 10 days, we've been able to muster that kind of resiliency and bounce back. I can't say enough for the character of this club."

With the game tied through six innings, 7-7, the Vermont offense again put up some much-needed crooked numbers. Taking advantage of five hits and two fielding errors by the ValleyCats, the Lake Monsters scored four total runs in the seventh and eighth to go ahead for good. B.A. Vollmuth -- an 11th-rounder in the June Draft who was promoted to Vermont on Thursday -- had the go-ahead hit, roping a two-run triple with two outs in the seventh.

"He's been here for four games, and if it wasn't for him, along with the rest of the team, we probably wouldn't be where we are today," Magnante said.

With Vermont's triumph, Connecticut had to defeat Lowell in order to take the division. Down in the eighth, 5-0, the Tigers scored one in the eighth and then four in the ninth to send the game to extra innings.

The Lake Monsters had a scare when it was announced that the Tigers had won in the bottom of the 10th on a bases-loaded single by Dean Green. That run was taken back, however, when it was ruled that the ball hit lead runner Eugenio Suarez, resulting in an out. Aaron Westlake then popped up to end the inning and keep the game going.

"The air came out of the balloon, then we got the clarification there had been an overruled play and [the Tigers] didn't score the winning run," Magnante said. "Then we tuned in and we prayed."

The game stayed tied until the top of the 16th, when the Spinners' Keury De La Cruz reached and got to second on a fielding error by left fielder Tyler Collins. De La Cruz advanced to third on a sacrifice bunt by Jose Garcia, then scored with two outs when pitcher Nicholas Avila threw a wild pitch.

The Tigers could not work up another rally in the bottom of the frame as only Zachary Maggard reached when he was hit by a pitch. Lowell outfielder Roberto Ramos (1-0) earned the win after he pitched the final two innings without allowing a hit.

"It was nerve-racking, especially when they brought the quasi-position player in for Lowell. And this guy got them out," Magnante said. "We want to call Lowell and thank them."

Magnante has a lot of respect with his team's first-round opponent, the Auburn Doubledays. But he acknowledges the unpredictable nature of the postseason.

"It's a 2-out-of-3 format and anything can happen," Magnante said. "We're playing a very good team in Auburn. They can hit and pitch and are solid. We know we have to give our best effort out there, and we're looking forward to the challenge."