

## A's News Clips, Tuesday, September 6, 2011

### Oakland A's bullpen yields five runs in ninth inning of 11-6 loss to Kansas City Royals

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The bullpen was considered a worry-free portion of the A's roster coming into this season.

As with the entire team, however, inconsistency has been the theme for Oakland's relief corps in 2011.

The A's four-game winning streak came to a halt with Monday's 11-6 loss to the visiting Kansas City Royals, who broke open a tie game with five runs in the ninth off Andrew Bailey and Neil Wagner.

The bullpen was handed no easy chore after starter Rich Harden went just five innings. But numbers tell the story:

Oakland's relievers carry a 6.90 ERA over the past 12 games. That stretches out to a 4.75 mark since the All-Star break.

"I think it's just the cyclical nature of the game," left-hander Craig Breslow said. "You expect some ups and downs from guys in the bullpen. Unfortunately they seem to be happening all at once."

Breslow relieved Michael Wuertz with a runner on first in the seventh, trying to protect a 6-4 lead. He recorded two outs before serving up Billy Butler's two-run homer to tie it.

Butler already had homered in the third, and Breslow was trying to get the free swinger to chase out of the zone. His first pitch caught too much of the plate, and Butler mashed it deep to center.

"We're a pitch or an out away from having a chance to win the game," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "We have to find a way to win that game."

Breslow, who had a 2.84 ERA in 135 combined appearances with the A's in 2009 and 2010, has posted a 4.11 mark in 58 games this season. Melvin has turned to him less in the second half, during which time the left-hander has made 20 appearances with a 6.00 ERA.

Bailey (0-4) is going through an odd stretch. He's converted all 11 of his save opportunities since the All-Star break, but he's been charged with eight earned runs over his past 10 outings, and he's given up at least one run in six of those 10 appearances.

With Melvin staying away from right-handers Grant Balfour and Fautino De Los Santos because of their recent heavy use, Bailey was brought into a 6-6 game in the ninth.

He allowed hits to three of his four batters faced, including Alex Gordon's go-ahead double down the right-field line and Melky Cabrera's RBI single to left-center.

"He hasn't blown a save (since the break), so he's getting outs when he has to," Melvin said of his two-time All-Star closer. "Maybe it's not as easy as he would like it at times, but you go through periods of the season when you don't have your best command."

"I feel healthy and I feel good," said Bailey, 19 for 21 in save opportunities overall. "The results haven't been what we'd like, but as long as I'm feeling good, it will come."

Strangely, the A's mustered just four hits Monday but generated plenty of offense.

After Harden allowed three runs in the first, the A's answered with four in the second off Felipe Paulino, highlighted by Scott Sizemore's three-run homer that bounced off the top of the wall in left-center.

Harden threw 98 pitches in just five innings, allowing four runs but striking out 10.

"We were a little bit worried (in Harden's last start) that he never really had the velocity, so we wanted to shorten him up today," Melvin said.

Harden's fastball touched 95 mph Monday.

## **Oakland A's update: Coco Crisp misses second consecutive game, but manager Bob Melvin expects center fielder back in lineup soon**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Coco Crisp missed his second straight game Monday with a sore right foot, but A's manager Bob Melvin doesn't expect his center fielder to be out much longer.

"Each day he seems to get better. It's a day-to-day proposition," Melvin said before an 11-6 loss to Kansas City.

Crisp fouled a ball off his foot in the first inning Saturday and would later leave the game. Melvin said Crisp also fouled a ball off the same area Friday night.

With 39 stolen bases, Crisp needs just one more to become the 10th player in Oakland history to notch a 40-steal season, though the feat has been accomplished 25 times among the nine players who have reached the mark.

Ryan Sweeney drew his second straight start in center, and Melvin praised Sweeney's ability to handle the position, particularly at O.co Coliseum.

"This can be a very difficult center field to play in day games," Melvin said. "The last few innings are as tough in center, sun-wise, as you're going to find anywhere. He handles it very well. He doesn't panic."

Sweeney went 0 for 1 in four plate appearances, scoring a run and tying his career high with three walks.

Reliever Michael Wuertz made his first big league appearance since July 29, throwing a 1-2-3 sixth and leaving after giving up Alcides Escobar's leadoff single in the seventh. He was charged with a run when Craig Breslow relieved him and surrendered Billy Butler's two-run homer.

Wuertz missed 31 games with tendinitis in his right thumb.

Left-hander Dallas Braden has been scarce around the A's clubhouse since undergoing season-ending surgery on his left shoulder in mid-May, but he did watch Sunday's game from the dugout.

Pitching coach Ron Romanick said Braden has been coming to the Coliseum regularly for treatment with the team's training staff. Romanick wouldn't speculate on whether Braden will be ready by spring training.

Melvin said recently promoted outfielder Michael Taylor will start Tuesday and Wednesday.

The announced attendance on the Labor Day holiday was just 14,577, and the crowd appeared smaller.

## **Chin Music: More matinee baseball at the Coliseum**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 9/5/2011 12:43pm

It's the third day game in a row at the Coliseum, which is pretty unusual. And it makes the days all feel the same, sort of like spring training. This definitely feels like a Sunday afternoon more so than Monday.

On to baseball ...

Coco Crisp remains out with a sore right foot, but A's manager Bob Melvin said it's a day to day thing that's getting better. Ryan Sweeney draws the start again in center field, and Melvin praised the way Sweeney can handle center when called upon. "This can be a very difficult center field to play in day games," Melvin said. "The last few innings are as tough in center field sun-wise as you're going to find anywhere. He handles it very well."

Melvin also said he plans to start Michael Taylor in the outfield Tuesday and Wednesday. The Royals are throwing lefties both days (Danny Duffy and Bruce Chen), though Melvin says he's willing to use the right-handed hitting Taylor against right-handers too ...

The lineups:

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

Royals — Gordon LF, Cabrera CF, Butler DH, Hosmer 1B, Francoeur RF, Moustakas 3B, Giavotella 2B, Perez C, Escobar SS; Paulino RHP.

### **A's cough up game to Billy Butler, Royals 11-6**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

The Royals wouldn't go away Monday at the Coliseum, with Billy Butler hitting not one but two game-tying home runs to set the stage for Kansas City's big push in the ninth.

That's when the Royals scored three runs off Oakland closer Andrew Bailey and two more off Neil Wagner to take the first game of the series 11-6. It was only the second time in Bailey's career that he has allowed as many as three runs.

"The object's not to give up runs, and I did that today," Bailey said. "Looking back at it, I don't think there's really much else I could do. Maybe execute a little better, but other than that, I felt good. It was just one of those days. They got me."

Rookie catcher Salvador Perez singled to start the ninth, and with one out, Alex Gordon drove in pinch-runner Chris Getz with a double to right. Melky Cabrera followed with an RBI single to left, and manager Bob Melvin took out Bailey, not needing his closer to throw too many pitches in a losing effort.

Wagner took the mound and allowed a walk and two hits, including a two-run double by Eric Hosmer.

Melvin said that right-handers Grant Balfour and Fautino De Los Santos were both unavailable after working Sunday.

Bailey is 11-for-11 in save opportunities since the break, but he hasn't pitched perfectly in doing so. He has allowed at least one run in six of his past 10 outings.

"He's getting outs when he has to," Melvin said. "I don't think it's been as easy at times."

Craig Breslow is the man having the most obvious struggles in the second half, with a 6.00 ERA in 20 outings. The left-hander allowed one of Butler's homers, a two-run shot in the seventh, and it came on a pitch that Breslow was trying to throw for a ball, down and away.

"He's always been aggressive, so you make use of that," Breslow said. "But it cut back over the plate."

With two outs and first base empty, Melvin said, perhaps he should have had Breslow walk Butler intentionally to face the left-handed-hitting Hosmer.

In all, Oakland's bullpen allowed seven runs, and the unit - one of the best in the league before the break - has a 6.90 ERA over the past 12 games and a 4.75 ERA since the break. Pre-break, the bullpen's ERA was 3.04.

"The numbers certainly haven't been as good," Melvin said, "but today was a day where you have to find a way to get it done."

A's starter Rich Harden gave up three runs in the first, giving up four consecutive one-out hits, including a two-run single by Jeff Francoeur.

"That was an odd first inning," Harden said. "Three quick groundballs found spots. They're a good-hitting team and when you get behind, that's what happens. After that, I got ahead and started putting them away."

In the third, Butler cracked a solo homer to left on a 2-2 changeup. Otherwise, Kansas City batters primarily were tromping back to the dugout, shaking their heads, because Harden struck out 10 batters in five innings. According to stats expert David Feldman, Harden is only of three Oakland pitchers to record at least 10 strikeouts in only five innings, along with Tim Hudson in 1999 and Kirk Saarloos in 2006; both struck out 11.

Melvin, wanting to limit Harden's pitch count in the final month, removed him after 98 pitches.

### **Adam Rosales looks to get on track in Mexico**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

**Adam Rosales**, a valuable backup for the A's last year, had foot surgery in December and hasn't found his stride this season.

So after a late start to 2011 and limited at-bats when he's been with the A's, Rosales plans to spend a month playing for Mexicali of the Mexican Winter League this fall.

"It's just been a crazy year, trying to come back from the foot thing," he said. "I kept hoping I'd feel good when I came back, but I haven't played the way the team needs me to play."

Rosales is in an 0-for-25 skid with Oakland, the longest hitless streak of his career. He also played for Mexicali after the 2009 season, mostly in left field. This time he believes he'll be playing all over the infield.

When Rosales comes back from Mexico in November, he's getting married to his girlfriend, **Callie Pack**.

**Briefly:** Oakland's four-run rally in the second came with two outs, and featured a broken-bat RBI single by **Kurt Suzuki** and a three-run homer by **Scott Sizemore** that skipped off the top of the wall in dead center on its way out. ... **Josh Willingham**, first-pitch swinging in the fifth, provided a one-out RBI single and **David DeJesus** added a sacrifice fly. ... In the fourth, the A's had men at first and second with one out when Sizemore hit a grounder to the left of second baseman **Johnny Giavotella**. Giavotella dived for the ball and fired to shortstop **Alcides Escobar**, who made the catch barehanded while coming across the bag and threw to first to complete the double play. ... **Coco Crisp** remained out with a bruised right foot.

### **Leading off**

**Special K:** Gio Gonzalez, tonight's starter, is averaging 8.95 strikeouts per nine innings, fourth best in the league. The franchise record, since 1901, is Todd Stottlemyre's 8.80 strikeouts per nine innings in 1995. Gonzalez has won each of his past three starts.

### **Drumbeat: Coco Crisp still out of A's lineup; beautiful Labor Day weather**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 9/5/2011 11:59am

Coco Crisp is still out of the lineup with that bruised right foot, and it sounds as if he's unlikely to be available off the bench. Ryan Sweeney is in center, and manager Bob Melvin likes the way Sweeney handles himself out there, particularly toward the end of day games, when it can be tough out there with the sun.

Michael Taylor is not in today's lineup, but we were not expecting him to be; Melvin had said yesterday that he'd like to work Taylor in against some left-handers to start with, so he'll be out there the next two nights.

Melvin expounded on that a bit today, saying that, in general, he likes to find spots for September callups to get good matchups and potential success to start off with. He reiterated that Taylor is not here to sit, but he does want to get him some places to shine initially. So he'll be in there tomorrow and Wednesday, and then Melvin said he'll go from there.

Anthony Recker will catcher either tomorrow night or Wednesday, Melvin said.

Here's the lineup, with Rich Harden on the mound for Oakland: Weeks 2b, Pennington ss, Matsui dh, Willingham lf, DeJesus rf, Allen 1b, Sweeney cf, Suzuki c, Sizemore 3b

It's gorgeous today at the ballpark, and on a holiday, too, but the A's aren't expecting a big crowd, or at least that's the word the ushers have heard. It's a bare sprinkling right now, an hour before game time. So if you're looking for a nice way to spend the day off, it's sunny at the Coliseum and the lines will be short.

### **Late rally ends A's winning streak at four**

By Alex Espinoza / Special to MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Since returning from the All-Star break, the A's have looked like a different team in the batter's box. Ditto for the bullpen, but it's not a change they wish to see. While Oakland kept up its second-half surge of offense, the bullpen blew up once again, leading to Oakland's 11-6 loss to the Royals on Monday.

"We were a pitch or an out away from having a good chance to win the game," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said. "The numbers certainly haven't been as good [since the All-Star Break], but today we have to find a way to win that game."

At the middle of the meltdown were Craig Breslow and Andrew Bailey, two of the A's most reliable back-end bullpen arms during the last couple of seasons.

Bailey's perfect 11-for-11 mark in second-half save opportunities has been well-noted this year, but he entered Monday's contest in a 6-6 tie. With fellow righties Grant Balfour and Fautino de los Santos unavailable, Melvin was a bit handcuffed, so he elected to go with his closer.

Bailey gave up a leadoff single to Salvador Perez before Alex Gordon roped a double down the right field line to give Kansas City a 7-6 lead. But the Royals were just getting started. Before Bailey would exit the game, he would give up another RBI single and be charged with a subsequent run allowed by Neil Wagner, only getting one out in the process.

By Bailey's standards, he is certainly having a sub-par second-half, as his 4.12 post-break ERA would attest. He's been mired in an even bigger funk since Aug. 14, posting a 6.97 ERA in his last 10 appearances.

"I feel healthy and I feel good," Bailey said. "The results haven't been what we'd like, but as long as I'm feeling good, it'll come. It's just kind of been bundled up here together and not spread out like they usually are."

While Bailey's struggles were certainly notable, he wasn't the only member of the relief corps to falter on Monday. Wagner also gave up a pair of runs as he tried to finish out the ninth, putting the game well out of reach for Oakland.

But if it weren't for missed location on a pitch to Royals slugger Billy Butler, perhaps Bailey would have been trotting out to the mound for another save opportunity.

Holding a 6-4 lead with one on and one out in the seventh, Breslow made quick work of the first two batters he faced. He wasn't so lucky with the next batter, Butler, who drilled the first pitch he saw to deep center for a two-run, game-tying home run. With first base open at the time, Melvin said he probably should have walked Butler intentionally, considering he had already belted a solo shot in the third inning.

"We're not trying to throw him a strike," Melvin said. "We're trying to get behind him and see if he'll swing at a pitch off the plate. That was really the one bad pitch [Breslow] made, he got too much of the plate for the guy. Ultimately, I should probably just walk him at that point."

A's starter Rich Harden wasn't spectacular, but he did enough to leave the game as a potential victor. Save for the first inning, when he allowed Kansas City to take an early 3-0 lead, Harden seemed to control the game.

With the aid of deceptive off-speed stuff, Harden racked up eight strikeouts through the first three frames. He finished five innings, allowing four earned runs on eight hits and a walks while striking out 10.

"He was throwing 95 miles an hour and a funky, nasty changeup that doesn't fade, it was cutting," Royals manager Ned Yost said. "Guys were saying, 'Is that a slider or is that a changeup?' But he was punching us out left and right on it. He caught us in-between -- it was hard, then soft, and it was hard to gauge it."

After striking out Gordon to start the game, Harden surrendered four straight hits, including an RBI double to Eric Hosmer and a two-run single to Jeff Francoeur. Oakland would claim its first lead of the day in the bottom of the second, with a quick four-run rally that included a three-run homer from Scott Sizemore. Sizemore's blast barely made it out of the park, bouncing off the top of the center field fence before going over.

Butler would tie the game up at 4 in the third when he hit a solo shot to left field off Harden. The score would remain deadlocked until the bottom of the fifth, when Josh Willingham scored Jemile Weeks with an RBI single and Cliff Pennington hit a sacrifice fly to give the A's a 6-4 lead. That all set the stage for seven unanswered runs from the Royals to close out the game.

### **Crisp out with sore right foot**

By Alex Espinoza / Special to MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Coco Crisp was held out of Oakland's starting lineup for the second straight game on Monday against the Kansas City Royals due to a sore right foot. Crisp fouled a ball off of his foot in each of Friday and Saturday's games and left in the fifth inning on Saturday. Manager Bob Melvin declared Crisp's status as day to day.

Since Crisp has been out, Ryan Sweeney has seen all the action in center field for the A's. Sweeney went 1-for-4 with a two-run triple in Sunday's 8-5 win over Seattle and received another start on Monday.

"This can be a very difficult center field to play in day games," Melvin said. "The last few innings are as tough a center field sun-wise as you're going to find anywhere. ... He doesn't panic, he's played here many times and he understands the dynamics of playing center field here and does a good job of it."

Recent callup Michael Taylor was also held out of the starting lineup on Monday, but Melvin said it was likely Taylor could return to the outfield on Tuesday and Wednesday, when the A's are scheduled to face a pair of left-handers. Taylor went 0-for-3 with a walk in his debut on Friday.

"You try to get them in there with some comfortable matchups to begin with, for the September guys," Melvin said. "You want them to get a little bit of success and kind of build off that. I think that if there's some matchups where you throw them in right away where the chance for success is less, then that can stick with you a little bit."

## **Worth noting**

- Southpaw Gio Gonzalez said he and his agent haven't spoken with the A's about a contract extension. Within the past two seasons, the A's have locked up fellow starters Brett Anderson and Trevor Cahill to long-term extensions.

"It's been nothing so far," Gonzalez said. "Just playing the season, not thinking about any contracts or anything like that. That decision is left up to the team, it's not left up to me. ... It's been very hush and it's been actually kind of cool not thinking about it. They're just letting me go out there and play. We're hoping for something, but we'll see."

## **Duffy, Gonzalez set to face off in Oakland**

By Louie Horvath / MLB.com

Royals left-hander Danny Duffy will try to make his final start of the season a good one -- for multiple reasons.

Since Duffy is nine innings away from the 150-inning cap the Royals put on him this season between both the Minors and Majors, Kansas City has said Tuesday's start against the A's will be the last one.

His last start at Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum was quite memorable, as he had a 150-person contingent who traveled from his hometown of Pompano Beach, Calif. to Oakland in order to see Duffy win his first Major League game on June 14.

"I don't think there's going to be that many this time. Maybe a few. We'll see," Duffy said. "Last time was more than enough. Everybody came up. It was a good time."

If Duffy is going to get the fourth win of his career, he will have to go through Gio Gonzalez, the A's ace who is on pace for the best season of his career.

While Gonzalez's win-loss record (12-11) is not as sparkling as the 15-9 mark he posted last year, his ERA is virtually identical, 3.23 in 2010 and 3.21 in '11, and he is striking out batters at a much higher rate.

Gonzalez averages 8.95 strikeouts per nine innings. If he maintains that pace through his final starts, he would break the Athletics franchise record, held by Todd Stottlemire at 8.80 strikeouts per nine innings.

Gonzalez has slowed in the second half, as he is 4-5 in nine starts with a 4.75 ERA after representing the A's in the All-Star Game. He has won his last three starts, however, so there are signs of a rebound from his malaise.

Athletics manager Bob Melvin thinks the Royals lineup will be a formidable challenge for Gonzalez.

"[They are] a team that definitely gets your attention," Melvin said. "Up and down the lineup they can score some runs. Going forward, they do have a nucleus that they're trying to build on and be successful in the coming years."

## **Kansas City Royals: Navarro likely to start Tuesday**

- Infielder Yamaico Navarro, a right-handed hitter just called up from Omaha, will probably start at third base on Tuesday night against left-hander Gio Gonzalez, with left-handed-hitter Mike Moustakas getting a day off.

## **Oakland Athletics: Gonzalez, agent haven't talked extension**

- Gio Gonzalez has not spoken with the A's about signing a contract extension. He said he is hoping the team reaches out to him.

"It's been nothing so far," Gonzalez said. "Just playing the season, not thinking about any contracts or anything like that. That decision is left up to the team, it's not left up to me. ... It's been very hush and it's been actually kind of cool not thinking about it. They're just letting me go out there and play. We're hoping for something, but we'll see."

### **Worth Noting**

- Gonzalez's 33 career strikeouts against the Royals is tied for the most of any opponent outside the American League West with the A's.
- Alex Gordon comes into Tuesday riding a 10 game hit streak, as he extended it with an RBI double in the top of the ninth inning on Monday's game.

### **A's yield 5 in 9th, lose to Royals 11-6**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — The worst outing of Andrew Bailey's career happened so quickly the closer barely broke a sweat.

Bailey threw just 11 pitches before Oakland manager Bob Melvin pulled the two-time All-Star after only one-third of an inning. By then, Kansas City had strung together three hits, scored twice and had another runner in scoring position.

So much for giving Oakland's depleted bullpen a break.

The Royals scored three runs off Bailey and five overall in the ninth to win 11-6 on Monday, ending Oakland's four-game winning streak.

"The object's not to give up runs, and I did that today," said Bailey, who had allowed three runs only once before in his career. "Looking back at it, I don't think there's really much else I could do. Maybe execute a little better, but other than that I felt good."

Scott Sizemore hit a three-run homer for the A's. David DeJesus, Josh Willingham and Kurt Suzuki each drove in a run.

Oakland overcame a 3-0 deficit in the first inning and held a 6-4 lead before the Royals tied it in the seventh on Billy Butler's second home run of the game.

Kansas City then posted a five-spot in the ninth to kick off its seven-game road trip with a win.

Bailey might not have even been in the game had Melvin had a full bullpen. But with right-handers Grant Balfour and Fautino De Los Santos unavailable, the manager turned to his closer, who has converted his last 11 save opportunities.

This time, there was no save on the line.

"That's a tougher situation for a closer, coming into a game that's tied," Melvin said. "With our right-handers, we were a little bit stuck (so) he needed to come in for the ninth."

Butler drove in three runs for the Royals, who avoided being mathematically eliminated for at least one more day. Jeff Francoeur, Eric Hosmer and Mike Moustakas had two RBIs apiece, and Melky Cabrera also drove in a run.

Butler connected against Rich Harden in the third and Craig Breslow in the seventh.

The A's had the go-ahead run at second with one out in the eighth but failed to score. Then came Bailey's blowup in the ninth.

Salvador Perez hit a leadoff single and was replaced by pinch-runner Chris Getz. After Alcides Escobar flied out, Alex Gordon doubled to right and scored on Cabrera's single to give Kansas City an 8-6 lead.

"They got me," Bailey said. "It just kind of happened quick and they got the best of me today."



Neil Wagner replaced Bailey (0-4) and walked Butler before Hosmer added an RBI double. Moustakas capped the scoring with a two-out, two-run single and was cut down trying to advance to second on the play.

Greg Holland (4-1) pitched a scoreless eighth to get the victory.

A's starter Rich Harden struck out 10 in five innings, but was charged with four runs and eight hits. He had eight Ks through three innings.

Kansas City starter Felipe Paulino also went five innings, allowing four hits and a season-high six runs. He issued a career-high six walks while striking out four.

Paulino, who was scratched from his last start with back spasms, has walked 22 hitters in his last 27 innings. He walked 19 in his previous 73 innings.

The Royals hit .325 on their last road trip and they picked up where they left off, scoring three times in the first inning, two on Francoeur's single.

Sizemore's homer gave the A's a 4-3 edge in the second. Suzuki singled in a run just ahead of Sizemore.

Butler hit a solo shot in the third but Willingham put the A's ahead again with an RBI single in the fifth. DeJesus followed with a sacrifice fly.

Everett Teaford helped the Royals stay in the game, pitching 2 2-3 scoreless innings in relief of Paulino.

NOTES: A's OF Coco Crisp missed his second game with a sore right foot, though Melvin said it's getting better. ... Oakland OF Michael Taylor is expected to be in the lineup both Tuesday and Wednesday against left-handers. ... LHP Gio Gonzalez will start for the A's on Tuesday night. The All-Star has won three consecutive starts and has a 2.18 ERA over that span. He's striking out an average of 8.95 batters per nine innings, which would be as franchise record. ... LHP Danny Duffy goes for the Royals on Tuesday. He averages 7.55 strikeouts per nine innings, third all-time among Kansas City rookie pitchers with at least 15 starts. He makes his third straight road start and is 2-2 with a 5.88 ERA away from home.

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **Cats fall to Sky Sox; playoffs open Wednesday**

Sacramento River Cats

Playoffs are here.

The River Cats fell 6-5 in 10 innings to host Colorado Springs on Monday afternoon, ending a 10-game winning streak in the regular-season finale.

Sacramento finished the season 7-4 in extra-inning games. The River Cats also went 14-2 against the Sky Sox this season, matching the team's best record against a conference foe. Sacramento also went 14-2 against Reno last season.

Sacramento opens the playoffs Wednesday night in Reno in Game 1 of a five-game series against the Interstate 80 rivals. Games 3, 4 and 5 (4 and 5, if necessary) will be played at Raley Field on Friday through Sunday.

Sacramento infielder Wes Timmons went 0-for-5 on Monday, snapping a 15-game hitting streak. He also took the loss on the mound after allowing the game-winning run in the 10th inning. Matt Pagnozzi doubled home the winning run off Timmons, who was making his first pitching appearance of the season as manager Darren Bush looked to keep his bullpen fresh with the playoffs looming.

Sacramento pinch-hitter Joel Galarraga tied the game in the top of the ninth with a two-out single to left field.

### **Hounds Finish Season On A Winning Note**

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

The RockHounds followed a "time-honored" philosophy to close the season with a win, earning a winning record for the second half in the process.

Good pitching ... solid defense ... and timely hitting pushed the 'Hounds past Frisco, 4-1, in the 2011 season's final game.

Sonny Gray went the first three-and-two-thirds innings, allowing just one run ... the first and only run he allowed in 20 innings with the RockHounds in his first pro season. Oakland's first round selection in the June, 2011 draft (out of Vanderbilt) finished with a 0.45 earned run average in five starts.

Relievers Brett Hunter, Paul Smyth and Jonathan Ortiz combined to go five-and-a third innings, allowing no runs on two hits and one walk, striking out eight. Hunter earned the win and Ortiz his first save. Jonathan had an outstanding second half, with an ERA just over two.

Jason Christian's solo home run broke a 1-1 tie in the fourth and would be the game-winner. Jason finished the season on a seven-game hitting streak, and hit .322 (19-for-59) in his second stint with the RockHounds this season.

Jose Rivero, called up just four days ago from (Single-A) Burlington to fill a roster spot, delivered a critical, two-run double in the sixth, building the lead to 4-1.

Jeremy Barfield recorded his Texas League leading 21st outfield assist, beginning a "9-4-2" putout at home plate, denying a Frisco run in the third inning.

- Bottom Line: The RockHounds finished the 2011 season at 63-77, which is the lowest winning percentage of the Oakland A's era, and is just the third sub-500 season in the 13-year affiliation (the previous two sub-500 clubs went 67-70 and 69-70).

The 36-34 second half marks the 19th half-season at five hundred or better in the Oakland A's / RockHounds era.

- Perspective: Although the 'Hounds did qualify in 2011, the club has been to the Texas League playoffs in 4-of-the-last-7 seasons (2005-2011), appearing in three league championship series and winning the title twice in that span. That compares to five playoff appearances in the Cubs and Angels eras combined, with two trips to the title series appearances and one (shared) title in 27 seasons.

- The franchise's 40th anniversary season was a record-breaker at Citibank Ballpark (a.k.a. Rocky Town), with attendance reaching 300,000 for the first time ever (308,810).

- 2011 Texas League Playoffs (best-of-5): The North Division is the "Battle of Arkansas," with the first half champion Arkansas Travelers (68-69) facing second half (and defending league) champion Northwest Arkansas (73-64). The Naturals won their fourth consecutive second half title, and are bidding for a third straight appearance in the league championship series, having faced the RockHounds in 2009 and 2010. Arkansas hosts games one and two in North Little Rock, with games three, four and five (as needed) at Springdale.

In the South, the league's top two clubs, overall, San Antonio and Frisco will square off. The Missions swept both half-season pennants in the South, and own (by far) the league's best overall record at 94-46. Frisco, however, earned their place as the wild card entry, posting the league's second-best record overall at 79-61. San Antonio, by virtue of sweeping both halves, will host games one, two and five (if necessary).

### **Playoff-Bound Ports Drop Season Finale 3-2**

Stockton Ports

**SAN BERNARDINO, Calif.** - Monday's season finale at Arrowhead Credit Union Park had no playoff implications for the Stockton Ports, and just as the game started, the Inland Empire 66ers found out it held no playoff implications for them either. The Ports and 66ers started their game as the Lake Elsinore Storm were in the midst of a blowout victory over the Lancaster JetHawks, assuring the 66ers of the number three seed in the South Division. Inland Empire, however, would score a late run and end their season on a winning note, edging the Ports by a final of 3-2 and earning a series split with Stockton.

Starting pitchers Rob Gilliam for Stockton and Manuel Flores (13-9) for Inland Empire were dominant early. In his final start of the season, Gilliam, who posted the most wins for a Ports pitcher since 2002, went five scoreless innings and allowed just one hit while striking out six.

Gilliam would have a chance to be the winning pitcher as the Ports scored the game's first run off Flores in the top of the 5th. Dusty Coleman led off the frame with a double and scored two batters later on a fielder's choice groundout from Leonardo Gil put the Ports in front 1-0.

Inland Empire would take the lead, however, in the last of the 6th off Ports reliever Mike Benacka. With one out, Travis Witherspoon, Jean Segura and Kole Calhoun hit three straight doubles that resulted in a pair of runs to put the 66ers on top 2-1. Those were the only two runs allowed by Benacka in his lone inning of work.

In the top o the 7th, Ryan Lipkin led off the inning with a solo homer to left, his second home run of the series and sixth of the season to tie the game at 2-2.

Lipkin's home run was the last run allowed by Flores, who went a season-high eight innings and earned the win, allowing two runs on seven hits while striking out five.

The 66ers pulled ahead in the 8th off Scott Deal (6-3). With one out, Witherspoon and Segura each reached on infield singles and Calhoun drove in the go-ahead run with an RBI double to left to give the 66ers a 3-2 advantage.

Deal would take the loss, allowing the one run in his lone inning of work.

Kevin Nabors (SV, 2) pitched the 9th for Inland Empire and, despite walking two batters to put the tying run in scoring position, got Gil to hit into a fielder's choice to third to end the ballgame. Nabors earned his second save of the season.

The Ports finish the 2011 campaign 10 games over .500 at 75-65, while the 66ers finish their regular season 69-71.

Following an off-day on Tuesday, the Ports begin their quest for a 12th California League title when they host the Modesto Nuts in Game 1 of a best-of-three mini-series at Banner Island Ballpark. A.J. Griffin (5-3, 3.57 ERA) gets the nod in the series opener for Stockton, opposed by Modesto left-hander Edwar Cabrera (4-1, 3.56 ERA). First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

### **Kernels Take Regular Season Finale**

By Jon Versteeg, Burlington Bees

BURLINGTON, IA - The Cedar Rapids Kernels (29-40) held the Burlington Bees (31-37) to just three hits in a 2-0 win on Monday afternoon. The Bees finish the regular season with a 76-62 record and look ahead to the first round of the Midwest League playoffs that begin Wednesday night in Geneva, IL against the Kane County Cougars.

The Kernels scored a run in the third inning. RF Andy Workman (2-3) hit a one-out single and stole second base. He moved to third base on a wild pitch and scored on a single by SS Rolando Gomez (1-4) for a 1-0 lead.

Cedar Rapids scored another run in the eighth inning on an RBI double from 1B Brandon Decker (3-4) to move to a 2-0 advantage.

RHP Jose Macias (8-4) started the game and pitched three innings, allowing one run on three hits to suffer the loss.

BEES BUZZINGS: IF/OF Josh Whitaker finished second in the Midwest League with a .328 batting average in the 2011 season.

The Bees open up the Midwest League Playoffs with a best out-of-three series against the Midwest League 2nd Half Western Division Champion, the Kane County Cougars. RHP Blake Hasebrock (7-8, 2.64) gets the start for Burlington against RHP Greg Billo (9-5, 1.93) for Kane County. Pre-game coverage starts at 5:40 on Wednesday night on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at gobees.com.

2011 Bees playoff tickets are on sale now. To purchase tickets for game two of the first round of the Midwest League playoffs on September 8, please give the Bees a call at (319) 754-5705 (319) 754-5705 , go online to [www.gobees.com](http://www.gobees.com), or stop by the box office at Community Field during normal business hours.