

Josh Willingham drives in four runs as Oakland A's knock off Los Angeles Angels 6-3

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Left fielder Josh Willingham and first baseman Brandon Allen both could factor heavily into the A's fortunes next season.

One continued raking Monday night and the other continued struggling, and both were noteworthy developments in the A's 6-3 victory over the visiting Los Angeles Angels.

Willingham drove in four runs, mashing a three-run homer in the first inning that got Oakland started on the right foot.

Allen went 0 for 3 (with a walk) and is mired in a 0 for 21 slump, the longest hitless streak of his still-brief major league career.

A's manager Bob Melvin will welcome all the offense he can get from Willingham, who is capping quite the impressive season as he prepares to enter free agency for the first time this winter.

Willingham's 25 homers are one off his career high set in 2006 with the Florida Marlins. At 88 RBIs, he's one shy of his career best from 2007. With 15 games to go, he has a legitimate chance to post the A's first 100-RBI season since Frank Thomas knocked in 114 in 2006.

Willingham entered Monday tied for fifth in the American League in homers since the All-Star break (13), but he shrugged off the strong finish he's enjoying.

"I feel good," Willingham said. "We signed up for 162 of them, so you've gotta play them all."

The A's will have exclusive negotiating rights with Willingham, 32, for five days after the conclusion of the World Series before other teams get a crack at him.

General manager Billy Beane has stated he won't decide on whether to re-sign any of his free agents until after the season ends.

How Allen finishes the season is also key for the A's. He hit .354 over his first 13 games with Oakland after being promoted from Triple-A Sacramento on Aug. 13.

Since then he's hitting .105 (6 for 57) in his past 15 games.

Melvin said Allen, 25, can learn a lot about himself as he fights through his first slump in green and gold.

"He's just struggling a little bit, which young guys will typically go through," Melvin said before the game. "He's going to have to fight his way through it, which he will. You make some adjustments, the league starts pitching you a little differently, and then it's your time to make (more) adjustments."

Allen, who has a shot to begin next season as Oakland's starting first baseman, said he's trying not make too big a deal out of his recent struggles. He's struck out 10 times in his past 14 at-bats.

"I got into chase mode," he said. "I got away from my plan, my approach at the plate. I need to be patient, let my hands work."

The A's provided plenty of offense to make a winner of left-hander Gio Gonzalez (13-12), who allowed two runs over 6²/₃ innings and scattered seven hits with six strikeouts and one walk.

It was a strong start to the A's final homestand of the season, a 10-gamer in which they can play the spoiler role in the American League West. Eight of their next 12 games are against the Angels or the Texas Rangers, who are fighting it out for the division crown.

Attendance was announced at 12,858, although it appeared less than half that number of fans showed up to Q.co Coliseum.

Oakland A's update: Closer Andrew Bailey hit by line drive during batting practice

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Closer Andrew Bailey was unavailable Monday against the Angels after being struck in the left temple by a line drive during batting practice.

Bailey was standing in left field and fell to the ground immediately after being hit by the liner off the bat of Kurt Suzuki.

A large group of teammates and coaches gathered around Bailey, and after a few minutes on the ground, he left the field under his own power accompanied by head trainer Nick Paparesta.

Bailey said everything "went black for a second," but it could have been much worse. The sunglasses he was wearing absorbed some of the impact.

"I'd be on a stretcher if it wasn't for those Oakley sunglasses," Bailey said.

He was set to undergo a concussion test, though he said an initial doctor's exam indicated no concussion. The two-time All-Star sported a red mark on the side of his face and said he had a headache and sore jaw, but he was hopeful of being available Tuesday night.

Suzuki went over and gave Bailey a hug as he walked off the field after the incident.

"Just rake tonight," a smiling Bailey told him.

Suzuki proceeded to single and double twice in his first three at-bats.

Center fielder Coco Crisp remained out and was scheduled for an MRI on his sore right ankle.

Crisp has started just two of the past eight games since fouling a ball off his foot Sept. 3 against Seattle. Crisp hasn't addressed his injury with reporters, but manager Bob Melvin said the pain is now centered more in Crisp's ankle.

Melvin is hopeful of getting Crisp back some time over the final 15 games but added:

"We don't want to push a guy, especially at this point in the season when you could potentially really hurt something."

Crisp entered Monday with 40 stolen bases, three behind A.L. leader Brett Gardner of the New York Yankees.

A's director of player development Keith Lieppman said he's pleased with how top prospect Grant Green is adjusting from shortstop to center field.

"Mentally he just has to learn the position," Lieppman said. "There's so much he's tried to cram. There's not a CliffsNotes on how to be a center fielder."

Green spent the majority of the season with Double-A Midland but was called up to Triple-A Sacramento for the River Cats' playoff run.

Chin Music: A's closer Andrew Bailey struck by liner in batting practice, not available tonight

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 9/12/2011 6:33pm

The A's had a scary moment during batting practice when closer Andrew Bailey was hit in the left temple by a line drive off the bat of Kurt Suzuki and fell to the ground. A huge group of teammates and coaches gathered around Bailey, but after a few moments, he left the field under his own power with a trainer. He'll be held out of tonight's game and undergo a concussion test, though an initial doctor's exam indicated no concussion. Bailey said he just has a slight headache, and he's sporting a red spot where he got hit. "Thank God I was wearing my Oakley sunglasses," Bailey said afterward.

Suzuki wasn't available to reporters in the clubhouse before media access was over. But he walked over to Bailey as Bailey was leaving the field and gave his teammate a hug. Bailey smiled at him. "Just rake tonight," Bailey told him.

Long story short, a scary scene that could have turned out much worse ...

–Center fielder Coco Crisp is out of the lineup again and was scheduled for an MRI today on his right ankle. This injury stems from Crisp fouling a ball off his foot in a Sept. 3 game. The pain is more located in his ankle now, A's manager Bob Melvin said. Melvin is hopeful of getting Crisp back before season's end, but I'd think that will depend on what the MRI shows. Unless the injury turns out to be incredibly minor, I wouldn't be surprised if Crisp is shut down. There's no use subjecting the guy to greater injury with just 16 games left and no shot at the playoffs. Would Crisp want to get back in to try to win the AL stolen base title? He trailed the Yankees' Brett Gardner by three steals entering today. It's a good question. Crisp hasn't addressed his injury with beat writers yet.

This increases the chances of Michael Taylor and/or Jai Miller getting more outfield time. But Melvin said there's a delicate balance to strike with the A's playing so many games against teams fighting for playoff spots — he feels a degree of obligation to put a credible lineup on the field, as opposed to just loading his batting order with prospects.

Tonight's lineups:

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

Angels — Izturis 3B, Bourjos CF, Kendrick 2B, Hunter RF, Trumbo 1B, Wells DH, Trout LF, Aybar SS, Mathis C; Pineiro RHP.

A's coast over contending Angels, 6-3

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Oakland's most tension-filled moment Monday came when two-time All-Star Andrew Bailey was nailed in the head by a line drive during batting practice. Bailey, the A's closer, crumpled to the ground, but he later walked off the field under his own power, smiling and laughing, much to the team's relief.

Bailey was held out of the game as a precaution, but the A's were just fine without him, sailing to a 6-3 victory over the Angels, who are trying to stay in the division race. They dropped to three games behind Texas, which had the day off, with 15 to play.

Gio Gonzalez allowed two runs in 6 2/3 innings at the Coliseum, and Josh Willingham hit his 25th homer of the season, a three-run shot in the first off Joel Piñeiro.

Bailey said his Oakley sunglasses probably saved him from greater harm when Kurt Suzuki's liner hit his left temple, but even as it was, "It kind of went black for a second," Bailey said.

Batting practice had just gotten under way and the pitchers, standing in left field, did not realize that hitting had started. After Bailey went down, reliever Michael Wuertz advised him to keep still until the training staff got there. As Bailey walked off the field, Suzuki ran over to check on him, gave him a hug and apologized.

"I said, 'It was an accident, just go out and get a couple of hits tonight,' " Bailey said.

Suzuki went 3-for-4 with two doubles.

An hour after getting hit, Bailey said he had a little bit of a headache and a stiff jaw, but team physician Dr. Allan Pont had done an exam and did not believe he had a concussion. Bailey was scheduled for more tests later in the evening and an X-ray this morning, but he said he is hopeful he'll be able to pitch tonight.

The more serious injury is Coco Crisp's sore right foot and ankle. Crisp missed his third consecutive game and sixth in eight games, and he was scheduled for an MRI exam, according to manager Bob Melvin, who said before the game that he thought Crisp would be able to play again this season. Crisp is second in the league in steals, with 40.

Melvin didn't have additional information after the game, but Crisp wore a walking boot as he left the clubhouse. Asked about the foot, Crisp, who doesn't like to discuss injuries, said only, "Bye-bye."

Gonzalez earned his team-high 13th victory, Willingham finished with three hits and four RBIs, the team played solidly on defense and the bullpen pitched well.

Brian Fuentes replaced Gonzalez in the seventh with two on and two outs and struck out Peter Bourjos to end the inning. Grant Balfour pitched the ninth and gave up a solo homer to Vernon Wells on an 0-2 pitch. Balfour then struck out the final three hitters.

"A good game for us all the way around," Melvin said.

The announced crowd of 12,858, representing tickets sold, appeared to be much smaller, perhaps even less than half that figure.

Briefly: Jemile Weeks returned to the lineup after coming out of Saturday's game with dehydration-related cramps and then sitting out Sunday's game as a precaution. ... Brandon Allen (0-for-3) extended his career-high hitless streak to 21 at-bats. An American League scout said that teams appear to be having success pitching Allen up in the zone and also busting him inside. ... According to Keith Lieppman, the director of player development, first-base prospect Sean Doolittle, who has been sidelined by knee and wrist injuries most of the past three seasons, will go to the instructional league as a pitcher. ... Lieppman said that the team is hopeful that Michael Ynoa, given a then-record \$4.25 million signing bonus in 2008, will pitch in the Dominican instructional league this fall. Ynoa had Tommy John surgery last year.

Drumbeat: A's Andrew Bailey out tonight after being hit by line drive

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 9/12/2011 6:05pm

Andrew Bailey was hit in the left temple by a line drive off Kurt Suzuki's bat during batting practice this afternoon, and he's been ruled out of tonight's game against the Angels. The A's closer said he had already been seen by a doctor, who said he does not have a concussion, but he does have a bit of a headache, and, Bailey said that when he was hit, "It kind of went black for a second." He also incurred one concussion in high school.

So he's going to be put through the whole concussion test - answering questions, etc. - to be on the safe side, which seems extremely sensible.

Suzuki hugged Bailey afterward and kept trying to apologize to Bailey, but Bailey said there was nothing to apologize for - he told Suzuki just to go out and pick up a couple of hits tonight.

Bailey said the the impact was lessened by his Oakley sunglasses; things might have been much worse if he hadn't had them on, but the liner hit them first, leaving a small red line on Bailey's temple.

Coco Crisp remains out with that continued right foot-ankle soreness and manager Bob Melvin said he was getting an MRI today. X-rays had not shown a break, but the fact that pain persists prompted the additional test. Melvin said that all signs so far point to the A's having Crisp back before the end of the season.

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

Melvin said he's trying to juggle getting some younger players such as Michael Taylor, Jai Miller and Anthony Recker playing time vs. putting a more experienced team on the field while playing contenders such as Texas and the Angels. He remembers being on the other side in such situations and, of course, wanting rivals' opponents to put the best team possible on the field down the stretch. It's one of those sort of unwritten rules - you don't stick all your kids in the lineup if your opponent still has something to play for. So he'll try to work the young guys in sort of one at a time - though my guess is that last series at Seattle will be youngster-heavy.

Willingham, Gio help A's spoil Angels' plans

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A handful of A's prospects sat on the bench Monday, staring down an eventual 6-3 Oakland victory over an Angels team that's flirting with playoff hopes.

A's manager Bob Melvin, at the helm of a club resting more than 10 games below .500, could have easily inserted any or all of them into the lineup.

Let the kids play, some say. It's September, after all.

But Melvin isn't so quick to throw down the white flag. He's intent on showcasing respectable play against clubs geared for more once Oakland's season ends Sept. 28, and in order to do that, the regulars will continue to take the field more often than not.

That plan paved the way for Monday's victory, one that again proved the A's will have some sort of impact on the postseason picture -- even though it may not be in the fashion they envisioned at the start of the season.

The win, which followed a 1-2 showing in Texas over the weekend, upped the A's season record over the Halos to 9-5, which includes a 6-1 ledger in Oakland.

"We knew when we were in Texas that we would have an impact on their playoff run, whether it would be good or bad," Josh Willingham said. "Same with these guys. They're right there in the hunt trying to make the playoffs, and we're going to play them five more times."

"Certain places, certain times, you struggle with over the course of a season," said Vernon Wells, who homered and tripled in the Angels' losing effort. "Obviously, this isn't the time we want to be struggling -- here or anywhere."

Their most recent woes against the A's were displayed in front of an announced crowd of 12,858. It's likely that only the last three numbers of that figure were actually present, but the few bodies that were definitely were heard.

A three-run homer off the bat of Willingham, his team-leading 25th of the season, gave them plenty to cheer about in the first, and it also gave lefty Gio Gonzalez plenty of wiggle room. The southpaw didn't necessarily need it, though, as he surrendered just two runs over 6 2/3 innings, allowing seven hits with one walk and six strikeouts.

"That's definitely a tone-setter, giving me those three runs right off the bat," Gonzalez said. "It takes some weight off your shoulders."

Willingham's long ball punished Los Angeles righty Joel Pineiro for his early command struggles. The hurler walked Jemile Weeks and Hideki Matsui before offering up the first-inning homer and never found a groove, departing with runners on second and third in the fourth.

It was in that frame the A's added a pair of runs to the scoreboard, as Ryan Sweeney and Kurt Suzuki led off with back-to-back hits and scored on RBI hits from Scott Sizemore and Cliff Pennington.

Suzuki tallied three hits -- two of them doubles -- on the night, and is batting .359 (23-for-64) over his last 19 games, which has boosted his season average to .246.

"Great game behind the plate, great game at the plate," Melvin said of his backstop. "He's really starting to play a lot better, and it's good to see."

Gonzalez, meanwhile, allowed an RBI triple to Wells in the second but avoided further trouble -- stranding runners on second and third with no outs in the fourth -- until the seventh, when he surrendered a two-out homer to Erick Aybar.

The A's lefty improved to 6-2 with a 2.72 ERA in nine career starts against the Angels. Three of those wins have come this season, and he'll have the opportunity to make it four next week when the club heads south to play in Angel Stadium.

Angels manager Mike Scioscia is expecting better performances from his team between now and then.

"These guys know where they are," he said. "They know they have to keep playing good baseball. I don't know if it's a freak season [against the A's]. We've been outplayed by that team. They've pitched better and executed better. They've beaten us in the season series. I don't put a lot of stock in where we play. They've executed very well, and we need to tighten stuff up."

"That's a good team, a really good team," Melvin said. "We're lucky to have the success we have against them to this point, and we'll just leave it at that."

Willingham's seventh-inning RBI single capped the A's scoring, while Wells' 21st homer of the season -- a solo shot against reliever Grant Balfour in the ninth -- narrowed Oakland's lead, but not enough.

"Good game for us all the way around," Melvin said. "It was a game we hit on all cylinders."

And one he'd like to see on repeat.

"We're playing against teams that are in it," he said. "You play 162 games for a reason, and there shouldn't be a letdown at all. You see a game played as well as we played tonight, we're going to continue to play every day the way we've been."

Angels send rejuvenated Williams vs. A's

By Nick Kosmider / MLB.com

When he broke into the Major Leagues with the Giants, Jerome Williams had a simple mindset on the mound -- throw the ball hard.

As his career has waged on, though, Williams, who will make his fourth start of the season for the Angels opposite A's right-hander Guillermo Moscoso on Tuesday, has watched his approach evolve.

"I'm more of a pitcher now," Williams said. "I trust my stuff. My cutter and sinker, keeping the ball down in good spots, that has been the big key for me. And my changeup has been moving a lot. I'm learning how to trust myself, trust my fastball. I'm using the cutter more. I still want to improve on it."

Williams is 3-0 with a 2.45 ERA in his three starts this season. He threw an eight-inning one-hitter against Seattle his last time out, with Trayvon Robinson's sixth-inning homer breaking up a no-hit bid.

"He has a presence about him of confidence, knowing he can do this," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "Part of it came from being in the big leagues a while, knowing he belongs here. He pitches with purpose. He's a talented guy. Maybe not where he was when he was drafted, but his stuff is good. He understands it better. That experience has been an influence."

Moscoso has been solid for the A's, particularly this month. He is 2-0 in September with a 0.57 ERA, and he has allowed two or fewer earned runs in five of his last six starts. Moscoso's first start of the season came on May 24 against the Halos, and he held them scoreless on three hits over six innings.

Moscoso is coming of a dominating performance against the Royals on Wednesday, when he took a no-hitter into the eighth inning before Kansas City's Salvador Perez hit a two-out single. He ended the night throwing 8 2/3 scoreless innings.

"You always want to go deep in the games," he said. "You have to make quality pitches and work hard to try to go deep in the game."

Angels: Scioscia will maximize Weaver

As the Angels desperately try to catch the Rangers in the American League West race, they are likely to rely on their ace to pitch on short rest.

Jered Weaver, who will pitch on his typical four days' rest on Wednesday, will pitch on three days' rest at some point during the final two-plus weeks of the season.

"He will definitely come back on three days at some point," Scioscia said, adding that Dan Haren and Ervin Santana also will be "under consideration" for working on shorter rest.

A's: Bailey hurt in BP mishap

A's closer Andrew Bailey was hit in the head by a line drive during the team's batting practice prior to Monday's game against the Angels.

The ball off the bat of Kurt Suzuki struck Bailey in the left temple, and he was accompanied off the field by a trainer. A visit to the team doctor indicated there was no concussion suffered, but Bailey was held out of Monday's game as a precaution.

Worth noting

- The Angels are 5-9 against the A's this season.
- Torii Hunter is the eighth Angels player to hit at least 20 home runs in four consecutive seasons.
- The A's 117 errors this season are the team's most since committing 125 errors in 2001.

MRI results will dictate Crisp's status

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Coco Crisp remained out of the A's lineup on Monday night because of continued soreness in his right foot and ankle, and his status for the remainder of the season was to be determined by the results of an MRI exam he underwent in the afternoon.

Crisp, who missed three straight games last week after taking a foul ball to his foot twice in as many days, played in Friday's game in Texas but was taken out after the eighth inning and sidelined the rest of the weekend as pain persisted.

"It started settling in a different place and started bothering him again," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "It's not like he was 100 percent when he went out there for the game, so the next day it was much more sore, so we took some precautions. He had an X-ray that didn't show anything, but based on how he was feeling, we felt like we should have an MRI and really check everything out."

Melvin is confident that the A's will welcome Crisp back before the end of the season but also admitted that the MRI "will give us a much better idea about that."

Crisp has 40 stolen bases on the season, which ranks second in the American League to New York's Brett Gardner (43). Though he's within reach of a stolen-base title, Melvin said that wouldn't be a factor when making a decision.

"It will be about his health more than anything," he said. "We don't want to push a guy, especially at this point in the season, when you could potentially really hurt something. He's pretty aware of his body and knows how to play with injuries."

With Crisp out of the mix, Melvin ran out Ryan Sweeney in center field for Monday's series opener against the Angels. Michael Taylor and Jai Miller also serve as options.

Bailey struck in head with BP line drive

OAKLAND -- The A's received a scare just a couple of minutes into batting practice on Monday afternoon, when Andrew Bailey was hit in the left temple by a line drive off the bat of Kurt Suzuki.

The A's closer, who was surrounded by teammates and coaches before exiting the field accompanied by a trainer, was held out of the night's game as precaution and was set to undergo a series of concussion tests to be on the safe side. An earlier visit with the team doctor, however, indicated no concussion.

Bailey said he had a headache but nothing more, and for that he was sure to lend some free advertising support to what he essentially deemed his lifesaver.

"Thank God I was wearing my Oakley sunglasses," he said, smiling. "I'd be on a stretcher if it wasn't for them."

Bailey was seen embracing Suzuki upon his departure, and though the A's catcher offered endless apologies, Bailey simply told him, "Just make sure you go out and get a couple of hits."

Melvin walking fine line with A's lineup

OAKLAND -- A's manager Bob Melvin is facing difficult decisions in the club's final weeks of play, as there's a delicate balance of running out a lineup dominated by prospects with so many games being played against contending teams.

Including Monday's contest against the Angels, 13 of Oakland's 16 final games are against clubs fighting for playoff spots, and Melvin feels somewhat obligated to write out a credible lineup for such contests, rather than just continually playing his September callups.

"The Catch 22 here is the teams that we're playing," he said. "We'll try to do the best we can on an everyday basis. We're going to try to mix and match, whether it's a guy or two on a particular day, but not the whole group of younger guys, because of the fact we are playing teams that are in playoff contention."

Melvin said he certainly recalls managing from the other side in similar situations and wanting opponents to field the best team possible, no matter their standing. With that in mind, he'll gradually work in prospects like Michael Taylor and Jai Miller, who are expected to receive some playing time in center field while Coco Crisp (ankle) remains sidelined.

Anthony Recker will also continue to garner some looks behind the plate when Kurt Suzuki gets a day off, and Melvin even said he'd play him at first base -- over Landon Powell -- when Brandon Allen is rested.

Worth noting

- Melvin said he's likely to leave his rotation of five as is through the rest of the season, meaning lefty Josh Outman -- who made a spot start Sunday -- will remain in the bullpen.
- David DeJesus entered Monday with a .340 career average (85-for-250) against the Angels, which represents the highest mark with a minimum of 200 plate appearances vs. the Halos all time.
- Oakland Raiders defensive lineman Richard Seymour is set to throw out the ceremonial first pitch before the start of Tuesday's game against the Angels. Seymour, along with second baseman Jemile Weeks, will speak to the A's Green Stampede Homework Club about leadership prior to the game.

A's tee off on Pineiro, win 6-3

ANTONIO GONZALEZ, ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Maybe it's the sparse crowd. Maybe it's the cool Bay Area weather. Or maybe there's something about the spacious confines at the Coliseum.

Joel Pineiro's struggles in Oakland simply have him stumped.

"It's just the curse of the elephant I guess," Pineiro said, referring to Oakland's mascot, Stomper.

Josh Willingham hit his 25th homer and drove in four runs to help the Athletics chase Pineiro early again in a 6-3 victory over the Los Angeles Angels on Monday night.

Willingham's three-run shot in the first inning off Pineiro (6-7) started a second straight brief outing for the Angels right-hander at the Coliseum. Los Angeles fell three games behind first-place Texas in the AL West.

Pineiro allowed four runs on five hits in three-plus innings. His short start still lasted longer than his previous performance in Oakland on July 17, when he gave up eight runs in one-third of an inning.

"It was déjà vu," he said.

Gio Gonzalez (13-12) struck out six and gave up two runs in 6 2-3 innings.

Erick Aybar and Vernon Wells each hit solo home runs late for the Angels, who had won six of their last eight games to climb back into the playoff race. With only 15 games remaining, time is running out to catch the Rangers.

"All is not lost," Angels right fielder Torii Hunter said. "We can still win the series, and that's all you can ask for."

Angels manager Mike Scioscia had hoped that Pineiro's struggles were over. He had a six-start winless streak until his last outing — allowing one run in seven innings in a 4-1 victory over Minnesota — and seemingly fixed the mechanics in his release point that were at the root of his problems.

All that washed away quickly.

Pineiro walked two of the first three batters and pitching coach Mike Butcher visited the mound for a chat before Willingham came to the plate. Willingham sent a 1-1 pitch soaring into left-center field, skipping off the top of the wall for a home run to put the A's ahead 3-0 in the first inning.

"We signed up for 162 of them. You have to play them all," Willingham said. "In Texas, we were aware we were going to have an impact on the playoffs, whether it was good or bad. It's the same with these guys."

After Hunter singled leading off the second, Wells hit line drive that ricocheted off the wall just below the foul pole in right. The ball skipped back over the outstretched arms of David DeJesus, giving Wells a triple and allowing Hunter to score to bring the Angels within 3-1.

Ryan Sweeney singled and Kurt Suzuki hit one his two doubles to start the bottom of the fourth. That was enough for Scioscia to pull Pineiro for Tyler Chatwood after a start that was reminiscent of Pineiro's last visit to Oakland, a 9-1 loss that was the shortest appearance by an Angels starter — not counting an injury or ejection — since Aug. 28, 2007.

The A's kept piling it on with a rare display of pop.

Scott Sizemore hit a run-scoring single and Cliff Pennington knocked a two-out RBI single later in the inning to put Oakland ahead 5-1. After Aybar hit his 8th home run of the season in the seventh, Willingham answered with an RBI single in the bottom of the inning to give the A's a 6-2 lead.

Wells homered for the 21st time this season in the ninth off Grant Balfour. Oakland has won 10 of the last 12 home games against the Angels.

"I don't know if it's a freak season," Scioscia said, "but we've been outplayed by that team this season."

The A's held out closer Andrew Bailey as a precaution after he was hit just above his left ear by a foul ball from teammate Kurt Suzuki during batting practice. He passed an initial concussion test. Bailey said his vision momentarily went black but joked that his sunglasses saved him and he'll be fine. ... Scioscia said ace Jered Weaver, who is scheduled to start Wednesday in Oakland, could pitch on three days' rest Sunday at Baltimore. That would allow the right-hander to get an extra start in the season finale at Texas on normal rest. ... Oakland CF Coco Crisp was scheduled to have a precautionary

MRI exam on his right foot, which he injured taking two foul balls off last week. Manager Bob Melvin said he was hopeful Crisp could return this season. ... The Angels will send RHP Jerome Williams (3-0, 3.51 ERA) to the mound Tuesday against A's RHP Guillermo Moscoso, who didn't allow a hit until the eighth inning in his last start against Kansas City.

Brad Pitt Hunts for Baseball Bargains in 'Moneyball' at Toronto

Bloomberg 9/13/2011

Brad Pitt smiled when asked if baseball executive Billy Beane's strategy of signing undervalued talent to cheap contracts could work in Hollywood.

"Not if they hired me," the highly paid star told reporters at the Toronto International Film Festival.

Pitt was in town to promote "Moneyball," based on Michael Lewis's best-seller about the tradition-shattering system Beane pioneered with the Oakland Athletics.

Pitt stars as Beane, a highly touted prospect who had a short, disappointing major-league career. He became a much more successful general manager, assembling competitive teams with one of baseball's smallest payrolls.

"This is a guy whose life didn't turn out the way it was supposed to," director Bennett Miller ("Capote") said at the press conference, where he shared a table with Pitt and cast members Philip Seymour Hoffman, Jonah Hill and Chris Pratt.

"He was supposed to be a superstar ... but it took him more than a decade toiling in failure before he accepted that it wasn't going to happen. So it ends up being much more than a sports story."

Winning Streak

Beane and his assistant, an Ivy League numbers whiz played by Hill, analyzed players using offbeat statistics instead of the judgments of baseball scouts.

The approach gained a lot of attention in 2002, when the Athletics won an American League-record 20 straight games and the AL West title, one of four they captured during a seven-year period under Beane.

Even though Oakland has never reached the World Series during Beane's tenure as GM, other teams have copied his methods.

"It's about questioning things we accept every day," said Pitt, sporting a salt-and-pepper beard and long hair parted in the middle.

"Just because we've been doing something the same way for so long doesn't mean that it's right for today. If we were inventing the automobile now, do you think it would run on a finite resource that we have to go to war for?"

"Moneyball," which comes out Sept. 23 in the U.S., is as much about Beane's quest for redemption as it is about baseball. It's a hard film to categorize, which might make it a tough sell at the box office. While it's thoughtful and well-acted, the deliberate baseball-like pace leads to some dull spots.

Journeyman Player

The film almost didn't get made. Several directors, including Steven Soderbergh, left the project before Miller came aboard and the script went through many revisions.

"It's complicated material," Pitt said. "It's not your conventional story with a conventional character arc, so it took a lot of shots at it and a lot of people getting their fingertips on it."

Hoffman plays Athletics manager Art Howe, an old-school baseball man who resisted Beane's newfangled theories. Pratt portrays Scott Hatteberg, a journeyman player who became a key contributor on the 2002 team.

"He was a working-class baseball player, and that's who I am as an actor," said Pratt, who has appeared in TV's "Everwood," "The O.C." and "Parks and Recreation." "Most people don't know who I am and I don't get paid a load of money."

Realistic Action

Some baseball movies, including "Pride of the Yankees" and "Fear Strikes Out," have been marred by awkward, unrealistic action on the field. "Moneyball" hits a home run with authentic baseball scenes, mixing real footage and re-enactments by former players.

"Every baseball player in the movie, apart from myself, played in the pros on the minor or major-league level," Pratt said. "I would take this baseball team against any other baseball team from any other baseball movie."

Asked to name some of his favorite sports movies, Pitt mentioned "The Bad News Bears" and "North Dallas Forty."

"I think 'North Dallas Forty' was the first R-rated movie I snuck into," Pitt said. "It has a special place in my heart."

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Griffin's Gem Pulls Ports Within One

Stockton Ports

Just one day after the Giants pitchers shut down the Ports offense, Stockton pitchers returned the favor, shutting out San Jose 7-0 on Monday evening. The Ports racked up 14 hits against Giants pitchers to pull within one way of clinching the North Division Championship.

Ports starter AJ Griffin (1-0) threw one of his best outings all season, pitching 7.0 scoreless innings which included a season-high 11 strikeouts. Griffin gave up just four hits in the appearance, all of them coming with two outs.

The Ports got on the board in the first, getting to Giants starter Kelvin Marte (0-1) early. Conner Crumbliss, who finished the game 2-for-3 with two walks, hit a single with one out. Michael Choice, who also had an impressive night going 5-for-5, laced a double to center field, advancing Crumbliss to third. Crumbliss scored on a Ryan Lipkin groundout.

The Ports added two more runs in the second. Josh Whitaker, who was making his debut with the Stockton Ports after being called up from the Burlington Bees for the series, made a strong first impression, singling through the hole at second base. Leonardo Gil walked, and both men advanced on a wild pitch to Michael Gilmartin. Gilmartin then grounded out, scoring Whitaker. Rashun Dixon singled to drive in the second run of the inning.

The Ports tacked on their fourth run of the game in the fifth. Crumbliss led off the inning with a walk, followed by a Choice single. Lipkin got his second RBI of the night with a double.

The Ports got two more runs in the seventh inning, extending their lead to 6-0. Crumbliss once again led off the inning with a walk, followed by a Choice single. A Dusty Coleman single scored Crumbliss and a Gil single drove in Choice.

Connor Hoehn came in to relieve Griffin in the eighth. Hoehn continued to keep Giants hitters off balance. Hoehn gave up just one walk, while getting two hitters to ground out and inducing a pop out to keep the shut out intact.

The Ports added their final run in the eighth. Dixon led off with a walk, before Myrio Richard singled. Crumbliss then grounded into a force out, resulting in runners at the corner and Choice up to bat. Choice once again singled to score Dixon.

Mike Benacka came in to pitch the top of the ninth and made quick work of the final three Giants batters. The Ports are now just one win away from advancing to the California League Finals. Game four is scheduled for 7:05 p.m. in Stockton with RHP Dan Straily facing off against RHP Andy Reichard.