

**Oakland A's delay Detroit Tigers' title party**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The Detroit Tigers arrived in town Thursday with a 12-game winning streak and a healthy dose of motivation for the A's.

By game time the Tigers needed only a victory to clinch the American League Central title. Instead the A's turned them back 6-1, halting a winning streak that tied for the majors' longest this season and postponing the Tigers' celebration.

Detroit's magic number is one, meaning the next Tigers victory or loss by the Cleveland Indians hands Detroit its first division title since 1987.

But the A's would like to delay the Tigers' party.

"We don't want them to mess up Mike's room over there," right fielder David DeJesus said in reference to Mike Thalblum, the A's visiting clubhouse manager.

Oakland knows all about opposing teams celebrating on its home field.

The Rangers clinched the A.L. West last season in Oakland with a Sept. 25 victory.

"We didn't like it last year, and we wouldn't like it this year," A's shortstop Cliff Pennington said. "If you can, beat them and (delay) it and make them celebrate after a loss."

The A's welcomed Coco Crisp back to the lineup after the switch-hitting center fielder missed eight of the previous 10 games with a sore right ankle.

Crisp hit leadoff in place of injured Jemile Weeks and went 3 for 5 with an RBI and stolen base.

But the A's won because of a season high-tying three home runs. DeJesus cranked a three-run homer off Max Scherzer (14-9) in the first, Kurt Suzuki knocked a solo shot in the second, and Pennington went deep to right-center in the fifth for a 5-1 lead.

Unusual for a team that entered with a .371 slugging percentage, which would finish as the second-lowest mark by an Oakland team over the past 29 years (the 2008 squad finished at .369).

The beneficiary was right-hander Brandon McCarthy (9-8), who ran up his pitch count early but went seven innings, limiting the Tigers to one run on five hits.

After going 1-5 with a 3.54 ERA before the All-Star break, McCarthy is 8-3 with a 3.18 ERA since.

The Tigers' 12-game winning streak was their longest since the 1934 club won 14 in a row. The Tigers also had won 24 of their previous 34 on the road.

But McCarthy said the A's shouldn't need to draw inspiration by playing Detroit.

"Just getting wins and playing well as a team" is important, McCarthy said. "If we happen to spoil (it for other teams) on the way there, that's great. But we need something for us, not to spite other people."

Crisp lit a fire for the A's. He singled in his first two at-bats and stole his 41st base in the second. Then he doubled to left-center in the eighth to score Brandon Allen.

The A's face an interesting decision on whether to try to re-sign Crisp, who will be a free agent.

"When we play good games, he always seems to be right in the middle of it," manager Bob Melvin said.

Allen, hitting .231 in 31 games as the A's first baseman, went 1 for 4 with two strikeouts. He has 33 strikeouts in his past 18 games.

## **Oakland A's update: Injured Jemile Weeks held out one more day as precaution**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Second baseman Jemile Weeks showed up to the ballpark Thursday expecting to be in the A's lineup.

Instead, he was held out for a second straight day as a precaution by manager Bob Melvin. Weeks is still feeling the effects from cramping he suffered in his left leg Saturday in Texas.

The soreness is in his hamstring.

"It's just precautions, so I don't have to play a day, take one off," Weeks said before the series opener against Detroit. "Certain movements I'm just not as quick as I want to be. I came in today ready to play, but you don't want to play halfway, 60 or 70 percent."

Melvin said he's erring on the side of caution with his rookie second baseman, who averaged just 59 games over three minor league seasons (2008-10) because of injuries relating mainly to his left hip.

Weeks has started 84 of the A's 89 games since he was promoted from Triple-A Sacramento for his big league debut on June 7.

"I know he wants to get back out there and play, but he's probably better served to give it one more extra day," Melvin said. "He's been playing awfully hard and aggressive, probably more so than he has in his career, which is a credit to him. But we don't want to take this thing too far."

- Actor Jonah Hill, who plays former A's executive Paul DePodesta in the film "Moneyball," will throw out the first pitch Sunday. Catching will be former

A's first baseman Scott Hatteberg, who is portrayed in the movie by Chris Pratt. Hill also threw out the first pitch Thursday night before the Rangers-Cleveland Indians game in Arlington, Texas.

Promotion for the film has kicked into high gear at the Coliseum, with previews running on the JumboTron several times a game.

Melvin expects many of his players to attend Monday's red-carpet premiere at the Paramount Theatre in Oakland.

Melvin said he read the book "Moneyball" as soon as it was published in 2003. But his favorite baseball movie of all time?

"Major League," he responded.

- Center fielder Coco Crisp returned to the lineup after missing the past five games with a sore right ankle. He singled in his first two at-bats, notching his 41st stolen base in the second.

It remains unclear if outfielder Ryan Sweeney (strained right quad) will return this season.

## **Chin Music: Weeks sits again as a precaution**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune 9/15/2011 7:05pm

My apologies for dropping this on you a little late, but here's the pregame scoop.

—A larger Detroit media contingent is on hand than normal, as the Tigers' magic number to clinch the AL Central is two as I write this. If Cleveland loses at Texas tonight (they're down 6-0 in the sixth), Detroit can celebrate by winning tonight behind right-hander Max Scherzer. Brandon McCarthy is on the hill for the A's. He's 1-3 with a 4.36 ERA in 14 appearances (seven starts) against Detroit.

—Second baseman Jemile Weeks is out of the lineup again, the after-effects of some left leg cramping he suffered last weekend in Texas. Neither he nor manager Bob Melvin is that worried, and Melvin said it's more precautionary than anything, citing Weeks' previous injuries in the minors (which were mainly hip-related). Weeks said the soreness he feels now is centered in his hamstring. "Certain movements are just not as quick as I want to be."

—No further word on outfielder Ryan Sweeney's quad strain. He didn't do any baseball work today, and it remains unknown if he'll play again this season. But Coco Crisp returns to the lineup after missing five games with a sore right ankle.

—A little while back I posted a review of the Oakland Coliseum by Paul Swaney of stadiumjourney.com. Here's a [review he did of Banner Island Ballpark](#), home of the Single-A Stockton Ports. The Ports begin a playoff series tonight against Lake Elsinore, and they host games Saturday and Sunday.

If you've been to both Banner Island Ballpark and Raley Field, home of Triple-A Sacramento, which do you prefer?

Tonight's lineups:

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

Tigers — Jackson CF, Ordonez RF, Young LF, Cabrera 1B, Martinez DH, Avila C, Peralta SS, Betemit 3B, Santiago 2B; Scherzer RHP.

### **SF Giants' shakeup won't affect A's stadium fight**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

The shakeup in [the Giants'](#) ownership doesn't change much about the [A's](#) quest for a new stadium, although the Oakland higher-ups would welcome anything that might help get the ball rolling at the Major League Baseball level.

"I hope this is an opportunity for baseball to move forward," A's owner Lew Wolff said.

It's 2.6 years and counting since Major League Baseball appointed a blue-ribbon panel to look at all aspects of the A's stadium issue. The A's ownership group would like the right to build a stadium in San Jose, but the Giants were granted the rights to Santa Clara County for their own failed ballot measure there in 1993. Previously, no rights had been assigned, and none are assigned in baseball's other two-team markets.

Larry Baer, who is becoming CEO when Bill Neukom retires at the end of the year, said Thursday that the Giants' stance on territorial rights in the Bay Area is fixed.

"There is no change on that position," Baer told reporters Thursday. "It's a position Bill's had, a position our board has had, a position I have."

Wolff said he would have no comment about Neukom's pending departure. There has been a perception around baseball that Neukom is a fierce litigator who might be difficult to oppose if the rights were contested in court at some point, but the A's have said throughout the process that the decision is Major League Baseball's to make.

There is no doubt the long wait has started to frustrate team officials, and many have tried to guess what the delay might signal.

"If I were the Giants, I'd feel more confident the longer it takes," Wolff said. "I don't think they'd be right."

What does he think overall? "I have no idea," he said.

The A's are in the national spotlight right now with the "Moneyball" movie premiering nationally in Oakland on Monday and opening nationwide in a week. Wolff saw a slightly longer cut than the final one recently, and he was thrilled with it.

"I loved it," he said. "I'm excited about it. Brad Pitt is wonderful, of course, and his portrayal of Billy Beane comes through well and is very positive. It was delightful to see, great fun to be at."

Even in a month when the A's are getting small actual crowds, as opposed to the number of tickets sold, there will be plenty of eyes on the team - in the theater.

"It's good for the franchise," Wolff said, "and it's good for baseball."

## **A'S LEADING OFF**

**Avert your eyes:** The A's and only three other teams have not recorded a winning record over the past five years: Baltimore, Kansas City and Pittsburgh, with Washington (70-77) a good bet to join them. Oakland is on pace for its worst finish since 1997.

### **A's end Tigers' 12-game win streak, delay clinch**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Less than a year ago, the A's watched the Rangers utilize the Coliseum as a celebration grounds after clinching the American League West.

A repeat performance could be had by the Tigers this weekend.

In fact, it's likely inevitable, considering Detroit's magic number is one. And while the Tigers will be commemorating an American League Central crown -- not for the A's to wear, anyway -- such a scene isn't exactly a welcomed one.

So, for at least one night, the A's avoided it.

Buoyed by just its third three-home run game of the season -- with long balls coming from David DeJesus, Kurt Suzuki and Cliff Pennington off Max Scherzer -- and yet another tremendous performance from righty Brandon McCarthy, Oakland claimed a 6-1 victory over the surging Tigers, who watched their 12-game winning streak come to an end.

Adding to the recipe was Coco Crisp, who after missing the last five games and eight of the previous 10 because of right ankle soreness, went 3-for-5 with an RBI and a stolen base.

"All these teams that we're playing, all these games mean something for them, so if we can do something to mess some playoff situations up, that's what we want to do," DeJesus said.

The long ball was the first since Aug. 10 for DeJesus, whose three-run shot off Scherzer in the first inning set the tone for the remainder of the night, allowing McCarthy to play around with a potent Tigers lineup that stranded six on base while he was on the mound.

"Right before I hit the homer, I just missed two fastballs straight back," DeJesus said. "I felt good on my swings, and he threw a changeup, and my thought process was going the other way, and I was able to stay through the ball and get it over the wall. It was a big inning to kind of get it going in the right direction early on. You want to put them in a hole."

"That was awesome," McCarthy said. "They went out and did a great job getting me runs and hitting the ball really well, which helped keep me going. When guys pick you up like that, it's a good feeling. It makes it feel like a team game all the way to the end."

The A's right-hander was all the more appreciative given his early command struggles. But McCarthy, who has allowed two earned runs or fewer in 10 of his 24 starts, wiggled his way out of several jams, ending three consecutive potentially dangerous innings with strikeouts before settling down and compiling three 1-2-3 frames out of his last four.

McCarthy has been the club's most consistent arm in the second half, and on this night he allowed just five hits while walking two and striking out eight in a seven-inning effort, with his lone miscue coming in the third by way of a Delmon Young home run.

"McCarthy pitched really well," Tigers manager Jim Leyland said. "I saw him as a young kid with the White Sox. He's learned the art of pitching. He pitched. He threw some balls out of the strike zone with late life. He used both sides of the plate. He pitched very, very well. And Max just didn't keep the ball in the ballpark."

Young's blast marked Detroit's 154th home run of the season, while Oakland boasts just 104 -- third fewest in the AL -- even after Thursday's showing.

Suzuki's homer, his 14th of the season, came in the second, while Pennington's came in the form of a leadoff shot in the fifth. That was the last inning for Scherzer, who was responsible for five runs, along with seven hits and one walk. He struck out eight.

The Tigers' righty has offered up 29 long balls on the year, which is second most in the AL to the 33 by the Rangers' Colby Lewis.

Meanwhile, the Oakland bullpen duo of Grant Balfour and Andrew Bailey gave the A's two shutout innings to secure the victory, which was capped by Crisp's RBI double in the eighth.

"When we play good games he always seems to be right in the middle of it," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "It was nice to have him back today. I think everybody felt that. He brings a lot to the table for us."

Crisp and Co. will be back for more Friday, when the Tigers will look to take the champagne off ice. Detroit doesn't even need a win to guarantee such happenings. Rather, an Indians loss in Minnesota earlier in the evening would do the trick.

The A's, though, will continue to focus on securing victories, no matter their magnitude.

"You never want to see people celebrate on your own field, but for us it's about getting wins and playing well as a team," McCarthy said. "If we happen to spoil something along the way there, it's great, but we need something for us, not to spite other people."

### **Magic number at one for Tigers in Oakland**

By Jesse Sanchez / MLB.com

The Tigers have been playing so well lately that they have found a way to walk away feeling victorious even after a defeat.

On Thursday, the A's topped the Tigers, 6-1, to snap Detroit's 12-game winning streak. However, thanks to the Rangers' 7-4 victory over the Indians, Detroit clinched at least a share of the American League Central title and reduced its magic number to one.

Detroit can win the division on Friday with either a win over the A's or an Indians loss at Minnesota.

That's how good the Tigers have been lately. That's also where Detroit starter Doug Fister steps in. Not only has Fister gone 5-1 since joining Detroit from Seattle in a July 30 trade, he has allowed just three earned runs on 22 hits over 36 2/3 innings in his past five starts.

Fister will look to continue his winning ways Friday. The A's will counter with Trevor Cahill.

"[Fister] was a guy that we targeted that we really thought would help our club," Tigers manager Jim Leyland said. "And so far, knock on wood, we've been right."

Call Leyland a master of the understatement. Fister has 41 strikeouts in 51 1/3 innings with the Tigers, which is noteworthy when considering he struck out just 89 hitters in 146 innings this season while with the Mariners.

"It's a world of emotions this year. Gone through a lot of ups and downs," Fister said. "Really just trying to stay as consistent as possible and enjoy it. Take it one thing at a time and really just focus in on the task at hand today.

"That's been my focus is, 'Hey, let's do the job we need to do right now and worry about whatever comes up later.'"

As for Cahill, the right-hander has won two straight, but he has just one quality start in his last six tries.

Cahill was spectacular in his only other start against Detroit this season, allowing just one run on four hits with nine strikeouts and no walks in eight innings.

### **Tigers: V-Mart swinging hot stick in September**

Victor Martinez went 0-for-4 on Thursday, but the veteran backstop is nonetheless in the midst of a September to remember. V-Mart is hitting .321 with four doubles, three homers and 17 RBIs in 13 games this month.

- Jose Valverde's 44 consecutive saves to start the season is the longest such streak in club history.
- The Tigers have won 22 of their last 27 games dating back to Aug. 19.

### **A's: Defensive lapses proving costly**

The A's have committed nine errors in their last eight games, and 119 errors for the season. The errors are the most by an A's team since 2001, when the club had 125 miscues.

- Oakland is 29-29 since the All-Star break after going 39-53 before the break.

### **Worth noting**

- The Tigers have won 24 of their last 34 games on the road, dating back to July 6.
- The A's are 18-24 in one-run games this season. They have not finished with a losing record in one-run games in the last 12 years.
- Oakland leads the all-time series against Detroit, 344-310. The A's lead the season series, 4-3.

- Detroit's 12-game winning streak was its longest since 1934, when the club matched a team record with 14 consecutive victories.

## **Melvin playing it safe with Weeks**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Jemile Weeks walked into the A's clubhouse on Thursday expecting to find his name in the lineup, but the rookie second baseman was instead given an extra day to rest his left leg.

Weeks is still experiencing leftover effects of cramps that surfaced on Saturday in Texas, and combined with his past injury history, manager Bob Melvin thought it best to take the cautious route.

"He probably could play, but he's a guy that uses his legs, and it's a big part of his game," the A's skipper said. "I know he wants to get back out there and play, but he's probably better served to give it one extra day. He's been playing awfully hard and awfully aggressive, and probably more so than he has in his career, which is a credit to him, but we don't want to take this thing too far."

The 24-year-old Weeks has started 84 of the A's 89 games at second base since he was selected from Triple-A Sacramento on June 7, making for a grind that's been eased by his manager.

"Everybody feels nicks and knacks at this point of the season, but for the most part my body feels pretty good," Weeks said. "Bob kind of pulled that extra desire to be ready every day out of me, even more than it was before, and I appreciate him for that. That's helped me tremendously."

"There are obviously days out there when things haven't been going great, but you want to go out there and work through those bad days and try to fix them, not by taking that day off."

Eric Sogard made his second straight start at second base in Weeks' stead for the club's series opener against the Tigers on Thursday.

Weeks is expected to be back in the lineup Friday.

## **DeJesus weathering rare down season**

OAKLAND -- David DeJesus is never without a smile, even while treading uncharted territory through the worst offensive campaign of his nine-year Major League career.

"You see him every day, and you wouldn't know that he's struggling," manager Bob Melvin said. "He's got such a positive outlook."

While that might make the woes slightly easier to work through, it doesn't make them disappear. In fact, DeJesus called this year "the toughest mentally."

"For sure," he said. "I'd say in my life, really. It's never been like this. It's one of those things you never know how you truly are until you go through something tough. This was a tough year, but I feel, mentally, I've been able to deal with it really well, and now it's just going out there and performing to my known abilities next year."

With just 12 games remaining following Thursday's contest against the Tigers, there's only so much DeJesus can do this year to boost his .232 average, which ranked sixth lowest in the American League entering the day.

Though he realizes time isn't on his side, DeJesus plans on using what's left of it to produce a strong finish, which would bode well for the free agent-to-be. He took a big step toward that end on Thursday, cracking a three-run homer in the first inning off Detroit's Max Scherzer.

"There's a whole bunch of stuff I'm going through right now," DeJesus said. "It's been a process all year long. Right now I feel like I'm working on the right things, and I'm just going to keep holding to them."

There are several theories circulating around DeJesus, who hit below .281 just once in eight seasons with the Royals. Perhaps he's best suited in the No. 2 spot, where he's batting .361 with a .425 on-base percentage in just 10 games this year. But he was pegged as the A's No. 3 hitter at the start of the season, posting a dismal .193 average there.

That slow start, Melvin believes, could still be affecting the veteran, who has since been mainly utilized in the fifth or sixth spot, as Jemile Weeks' midseason presence at the top of the lineup paved the way for a domino effect below him.

"For the most part, when guys have bad years, guys get off to a bad start and it's tough to get going," Melvin said. "And the deeper hole you dig for yourself, the tougher it is to get out of it."

Around DeJesus, fellow pending free agent Josh Willingham has offered Oakland what DeJesus says is "just the type of player they wanted from him." Willingham entered Thursday with a team-leading 26 home runs and 91 RBIs. And Coco Crisp, who will also be a free agent, is tied for second in the AL with 40 stolen bases.

Of the three, DeJesus appears the least likely to return, though A's general manager Billy Beane has made it clear those decisions will wait until the season has concluded.

### **Quad keeping Sweeney out for time being**

OAKLAND -- A day after suffering a Grade 1 strain to his upper left quad, Ryan Sweeney was simply deemed day to day Thursday by manager Bob Melvin, who left open the possibility of his return by season's end.

"We're always hopeful for that," Melvin said. "It usually takes a couple of days to figure out where you are with something like that, but I know he's hopeful to try to get back, as well."

In the meantime, Sweeney was expected to stay off the field Thursday and remain in the trainer's room to receive treatment in an effort to further the rehab process.

It's already been a frustrating season for the outfielder, who was relegated to a bench role this season after spending each of the past two years as an everyday player.

Sweeney initially departed Wednesday's game after grounding out in the sixth inning. He was replaced by September callup Jai Miller, who served as a bench player for Thursday's contest, with Coco Crisp making his way back into the lineup after missing eight of the last 10 games with right ankle soreness.

### **Tigers' 12-game winning streak snapped by A's**

Associated Press

David DeJesus hit a three-run homer in the first, Brandon McCarthy pitched seven strong innings and the Oakland Athletics snapped Detroit's 12-game winning streak with a 6-1 victory on Thursday night, delaying the Tigers chance to clinch the AL Central Division title.

Delmon Young hit a home run for the Tigers, who still say their magic number drop to one when the Cleveland Indians fell to the Texas Rangers 7-4 earlier in the evening. The Tigers need any combination of a win or a Cleveland loss over the final 12 games to clinch the division.

Kurt Suzuki and Cliff Pennington each hit a solo home run for the A's, who won for the second time in five games. Coco Crisp added three hits and drove in a run.

McCarthy (9-8) allowed one run on five hits to improve to 3-2 with a 2.15 ERA over his last five starts. He walked two and struck out eight.

Max Scherzer (14-9) lasted five innings, giving up five runs on seven hits. He walked one and struck out eight.

Tigers manager Jim Leyland will get a new change of underwear when his team goes for their first outright title since 1987 on Friday night. He said before the game that he had not changed (nor washed) his underwear during the 12-game winning streak.



The Tigers have not finished first since taking the AL East nearly a quarter-century ago. They only playoff appearance since then came in 2006, when they won the wild card.

DeJesus ended a 79 at-bat homerless streak with his three-run shot with two outs in the first. Coco Crisp, who returned to the lineup after missing several games with an ankle injury, singled to lead off. He was forced at second by Pennington. After Hideki Matsui fouled out, Scherzer walked Josh Willingham ahead of DeJesus.

Suzuki led off the second with a home run and Pennington led off the fifth with a homer. Crisp doubled home a run in the eighth.

Young's home run made it 4-1 in the third.

Magglio Ordonez extended his hitting streak to 13 games with a first-inning single but Ramon Santiago went 0-for-3, ending his nine-game streak.

The A's (22-20) and Tigers (22-19) had similar records following game action on May 17. The teams have gone in notably different directions since.

Detroit was eight games behind the Cleveland Indians and four games under .500 on May 3. The Tigers have played .625 ball since and is one the verge of becoming the sixth team since 2000 to win a division title after being behind by at least eight games at some point in the season.

Notes: The last time the A's played a team on a 12-game hitting streak was at Baltimore in 1999. ... RHP Trevor Cahill (11-13, 4.32) goes for the A's on Friday night. The former All-Star is 3-6 with a 6.86 ERA in 11 starts since the All-Star Break. He beat the Tigers on April 17, allowing one run in eight innings. ... Scherzer recorded his career high 14 strikeouts in 5 2-3 innings against the A's in May. ... Doug Fister (8-13, 3.06) makes the start for the Tigers on Friday night. He has been outstanding since joining the Tigers, going 5-1 with a 2.28 ERA. He is 4-0 with a 0.74 ERA in his last five starts. ... A's IF Jemile Weeks (leg cramps) was out of the starting lineup for the second straight day ads a precautionary measure.

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **Sacramento looks for more Raley Field magic**

Sacramento River Cats

Weekends like this don't come around often.

Three-day weekends especially.

For professional athletes, this is as good as it gets. A chance to battle back. A chance to make history. A chance to extend a legacy. That's the opportunity that lies before the River Cats this Friday, Saturday and Sunday, when the five-time consecutive South Division champions face a 2-games-to-0 series deficit to the Omaha Storm Chasers heading into a three-day, must-win-or-go-home stretch.

Back-to-the-wall deficits are nothing new to a team that won its division by a Pacific Coast League modern-era-record 17.0 games (not since 1970, when the PCL had conferences but no divisions, has a team advanced by that margin of victory).

Sacramento also lost Game 1 and Game 2 at an electric Aces Ballpark in Reno. When the series shifted back to Sacramento, more than 25,000 River Cats fans packed Raley Field over the weekend to watch the River Cats simply overmatch the Aces.

"We outplayed them," River Cats manager Darren Bush told The Sacramento Bee. "... we fell behind 2-0, and we just outplayed them three straight days."

Can it be done twice?

The answer begins in Game 3, when Travis Banwart takes the mound for the River Cats. The right-hander won his last three decisions of the regular season and helped Sacramento claim its Game 3 win over Reno with an impressive start (two runs and five hits over 6.0 innings). He will face Kansas City Royals pitching prospect Mike Montgomery (5-11, 5.32).

Around 9,000 Rally Towels will be handed out to fans over the next two games, as Raley Field hopes to drum up the same magic that lifted this franchise to four PCL championships (2003, 2004, 2007, 2008) in a six-year stretch.

### **Storm Shut Down Ports 6-0 In Game 1**

Stockton Ports

**LAKE ELSINORE, Calif.** - After shocking the San Jose Giants to win the North Division Championship Series in four games, the Stockton Ports came out a bit flat in Game 1 of the California League Championship Series on Thursday night. The Lake Elsinore Storm, with stellar pitching and timely hitting, shut out the Ports by a final of 6-0 to take a 1-0 lead in the best-of-five series.

Lake Elsinore wasted no time in getting on the board. In the bottom of the 1st, with runners at second and third and one out, Nate Freiman hit a two-run single to center to give the Storm a 2-0 lead.

The Storm added to their lead in the 3rd, and again it was Freiman doing the damage. After a one-out double from Tommy Medica, Freiman singled to left to drive in his third run of the game and make it a 3-0 Storm advantage.

In the 5th, after a one-out single from Freiman, Eddy Rodriguez hit a two-run homer to right-center to make it a 5-0 ballgame.

The first five Storm runs came off Ports starter Murphy Smith (1-1), who took the loss after going five innings and allowing five runs on eight hits while striking out three and walking three.

Stockton's offense couldn't get anything started against Storm starter Jose DePaula (2-0). DePaula escaped a bases-loaded, two-out jam in the 3rd with a strikeout of Ryan Lipkin, which proved to be his biggest jam of the night.

DePaula earned the win after six shutout innings, allowing five hits while striking out five and walking two.

Dustin Pease took over in the 7th and pitched around a leadoff double from Anthony Aliotti to keep the Ports off the board. Jeremy McBryde tossed a perfect 8th and 9th to close out the game for the Storm.

After Ports reliever James Simmons pitched two scoreless innings, Mike Hart came on to start the 8th and gave up a leadoff home run to Jake Blackwood. It was the only run and hit allowed by Hart in his lone inning of work.

Stockton and Lake Elsinore will play Game 2 of their best-of-five championship series on Friday night at The Diamond. Rob Gilliam (12-7, 5.04 ERA) will head to the mound for the Ports, opposed by right-hander Jerry Sullivan (6-9, 5.95 ERA) for the Storm. First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.