

**Oakland A's update: Brandon McCarthy denied victory over Texas Rangers**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's were in line for quite the gratifying victory Wednesday night.

That was before Ian Kinsler and Josh Hamilton connected for eighth-inning homers off setup man Grant Balfour, wiping out Oakland's one-run lead and sending the Texas Rangers to a 3-2 victory in front of 19,589 fans at O.co Coliseum.

On a day the A's signed interim manager Bob Melvin to a three-year contract, they dropped to 69-86. It's their first time being as low as 17 games under .500 since Sept. 4, 2009, when they were 59-76.

They've dropped 12 of their past 13 to the Rangers, who trimmed their magic number to three to clinch the American League West.

Balfour (4-2) was disappointed to blow victory No. 10 for A's starter Brandon McCarthy, and the reliever acknowledged a season's worth of frustration against Texas.

"I don't know if we're going to make up everything with one game tonight," Balfour said. "It's been a frustrating year. We've had opportunities to beat them. McCarthy pitched great. I take full responsibility for the loss."

The A's trailed 1-0 before they rallied for two runs in the fifth off Rangers lefty C.J. Wilson, who drew attention in August for ripping the A's, the Coliseum mound and stating he would never sign with Oakland as a free agent.

The rally was aided by three rookies. Brandon Allen delivered a two-out, game-tying single, Michael Taylor drew a walk to move Allen into scoring position, and Jemile Weeks scored Allen with a go-ahead single to make it 2-1.

Kinsler's leadoff homer in the eighth tied the game. Two batters later, Hamilton turned on a 1-0 fastball and drilled a homer to right.

McCarthy threw seven innings of six-hit ball, allowing just a second-inning run.

The A's 25 one-run losses are their most since they dropped 27 in 1987.

Melvin's three-year deal may increase the chance of Phil Garner joining next year's coaching staff. Garner joined the A's as a special adviser in August, and Melvin considers Garner a mentor.

"To be determined," Melvin said when asked about Garner's potential addition. "Phil's a great resource for me, and I know for (G.M.) Billy (Beane) as well."

**Mark Purdy: San Francisco Giants ownership change gives Oakland A's leverage on territorial rights**

Mark Purdy. San Jose Mercury News

The Giants' ownership reboot, which was confirmed last week with the "retirement" of managing general partner Bill Neukom, could have many ramifications.

The biggest one? It gives the A's leverage to force action on the long-running territorial rights dispute regarding the team's proposed move to San Jose.

The question is whether A's managing partner Lew Wolff should sharpen his elbows and utilize that leverage.

I vote yes. So does Chuck Reed, the mayor of San Jose.

"Sometimes in government and in the private sector, you do have leverage and have to decide how to use it," Reed said. "Whether or not Lew would do so in this case, I'm not certain."

No one is. Wolff is keeping his next move to himself. But the Giants' situation provides a big opportunity for him and the A's.

Here's why:

Under Major League Baseball rules, any ownership change that involves a transfer of control -- in this case, from Neukom to presumptive new CEO Larry Baer -- must be approved by a 75 percent vote of the 30 owners.

If that number sounds familiar, it should. It would take a 75 percent vote of owners for the A's to move, a fact the Giants use as a hammer every time the territorial rights issue comes up. The Giants know all they need is seven other owners to side with them. With seven votes, plus their own, the Giants can make 75 percent impossible for the A's.

But now, suddenly, the leverage is flipped. Wolff could lobby seven other owners to side with him on the issue of Giants ownership. With seven votes, plus their own, the A's can make 75 percent impossible for the Giants.

So what might Wolff want in exchange for his vote?

Wolff should not request the Giants' total surrender on territorial rights. That would be too heavy-handed, especially for someone as collegial as Wolff. And for all of San Jose's eagerness to land the A's -- which would require a citizens' referendum -- it would be healthy to have a full and complete discussion of the move's ramifications.

Many A's fans in the East Bay are upset at Wolff for his interest in San Jose. But the blunt truth is this: Wolff tried for years to work with Oakland and hit roadblock after roadblock. The same thing happened when he pursued a Fremont site. If the San Jose proposal doesn't fly, it is likely that Wolff would sell the team -- probably to an outside buyer who would move the franchise elsewhere. So it would behoove all A's fans to root for Wolff's success.

And this is where he could start: In exchange for his thumbs up on the Giants' ownership shuffle, Wolff could demand that the so-called "Blue Ribbon Committee" be forced to release its report on the Bay Area baseball situation. Bud Selig, the MLB commissioner, formed the committee more than two years ago to gather information on the A's plight and decide whether a shift to the South Bay was a good idea. We've been waiting -- and waiting and waiting and waiting -- for the results.

Time to end the nonsense. Once the "Blue Ribbon" information is released, the 30 owners -- who, remember, paid for the report -- could examine the facts and the expert analysis. Subsequently, the owners could decide if the Giants have a real case or if they are being stubborn for no good reason.

And then, at long last, the owners could choose whether to vote on the Giants' territorial rights claim.

In other words, Wolff would be asking only for data and details, not a decision. Sounds reasonable, yes? Which means it has almost zero chance of happening.

The problem, you see, is MLB's current way of doing business. It is a de facto unilateral operation under the benign rule of Selig. He has increased the sport's revenue greatly, making the owners richer and earning their absolute fidelity. They fall in line to such an extent that if Selig opposes Wolff, he might find it impossible to assemble those seven owners in a voting bloc.

As for an alternate plan ... well, some people believe that with Neukom out of the picture, the Giants' stance on territorial rights might soften and provide an opening for negotiations. Erase that thought. Baer has been just as strident as Neukom was on the territorial rights issue. Baer reiterated that position last week at a media event. The Giants don't want to talk about getting a payoff from the A's for the South Bay rights. The Giants refuse to talk or negotiate, period.

Reed, however, still thinks that the Baer era might lead to a thaw in the territorial rights deep freeze.

"Mr. Neukom was a big obstacle to resolving the territorial rights issue," Reed said. "At the very least, I hope there are new discussions about Major League Baseball saving \$30 million annually on the revenue sharing money it now gives the A's. Why shouldn't the Giants get out of the way if it could help all the other teams?"

It's funny. At the beginning of this saga, it was assumed that Wolff's longtime relationship with Selig -- they were college fraternity brothers -- would help grease the machinery for a possible A's move to San Jose.

Instead, the exact opposite has been true. Wolff's desire to never anger his old friend has allowed Selig to delay and putter around to no decisive effect and no noisy public outrage from Wolff.

I would like to see otherwise. I would like to see Wolff make noise about pushing the South Bay's congressional delegation to hold hearings about baseball's antitrust exemption. I would like to see him publicly blast the Giants for their intractability. I would like to see him obnoxiously insist on a territorial rights vote at the next owners' meeting in November.

In a telephone conversation Wednesday, Wolff declined to comment about any of that. He stuck with his far-too-gentlemanly diplomatic stance.

"As of November 1, it will be 2.63 years since I've waited for the committee's report," Wolff said. "I'm hoping we'll get some answers soon."

I can think of one way to speed the process -- for A's fans from every part of the Bay.

### **A's announce hiring of Bob Melvin as their full-time manager**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's officially announced a three-year contract agreement Wednesday with Bob Melvin to be their full-time manager.

A news conference is set for 4 p.m. at O.co Coliseum with Melvin and A's general manager Billy Beane in attendance.

Melvin is 42-49 since taking over as interim manager from Bob Geren, who the A's dismissed June 9. Despite that lackluster record, it was expected that Melvin would be hired on a permanent basis based on the strong support he's received in comments from Beane and players.

Melvin, 49, previously went 156-168 as the Seattle Mariners manager from 2003-04 and led the Arizona Diamondbacks to a 337-340 mark from 2005-09, including the National League West title in 2007.

As news of Melvin's impending full-time hiring spread Tuesday, the decision received an emphatic thumbs-up throughout the A's clubhouse.

"He's been a big influence, especially on the younger players," designated hitter Hideki Matsui said through interpreter Roger Kahlon. "He's really guided them in many ways. I think he's been an important presence."

The three-year deal, which runs through the 2014 season, shows a solid commitment to Melvin, but such security for a manager isn't unique under Beane. Ken Macha received a three-year contract when he was promoted from bench coach to replace Art Howe as A's manager before the 2003 season.

Macha was given another three-year deal after the 2005 campaign, though he was fired with two years left.

Geren received a two-year deal with a club option for a third season when he was originally hired before the 2007 season.

### **'Moneyball' and the Oakland A's: Separating fact from Hollywood**

By Daniel Brown, San Jose Mercury News

There's a scene in "Moneyball" in which outfielder David Justice, freshly arrived from the stately New York Yankees, pounds a locker room vending machine in frustration. Miguel Tejada walks by and tells Justice he needs to insert a dollar. "Welcome to Oakland," he says sarcastically.

Justice -- the real Justice -- saw that scene in the trailer and chuckled.

"Never happened," he said. "That's Hollywood."

In another scene, the actor playing A's bench coach Ron Washington recoils at the idea of teaching catcher Scott Hatteberg how to play first base: "It's incredibly hard," Washington says.

That one is closer to the mark. "Hatteberg and I did have that conversation," said Washington, now the manager of the Texas Rangers. "I told him that if he's willing to work, he can get it done. But it's not going to be easy."

Such is the nature of turning a best-selling book into a blockbuster biopic. Even if the events are true -- even if they're mostly true -- things will be pulled, twisted and tweaked so that they fit nicely into a cinematographer's frame.

The good news about "Moneyball," which opens Friday, is that it's mostly on the money. Brad Pitt embodies Billy Beane's blend of arrogance and charm, his incisiveness and playfulness, and the picture captures the essence of the A's creative friction during the early 2000s.

Beane, the A's general manager, really did transform one of the poorest teams in Major League Baseball into a contender by challenging the game's sacred tenets. He really did have a laptop-wielding Ivy League assistant by his side as he steamrolled over longtime scouts and cajoled manager Art Howe into abandoning traditional strategy. (Side note: Howe really wasn't selfish and sinister, but apparently every movie needs a villain.)

"I know how Hollywood can fictionalize everything. But for the most part, it was pretty true," said A's equipment manager Steve Vucinich, who ought to know. He has been with the organization since 1968. "They gussied it up some. But that's Hollywood, and that's OK."

Something else the movie nailed: Beane really is a handsome devil.

"Brad Pitt playing him is dead-on," said former A's pitcher Barry Zito, now with the Giants. "Actually, Billy is better looking."

So what's fact and what's fiction? We broke out our score card during a recent screening to track all the hits and errors:

True: Beane did hire a former Cleveland Indians employee who had graduated cum laude with an economics degree from Harvard. In reality, he was Paul DePodesta, a self-assured former college athlete.

False: In the movie, DePodesta is re-imagined (for legal reasons) as Peter Brand, played by Jonah Hill as a jittery misfit with an economics degree from Yale. DePodesta joined the A's in 1999; Brand starts in 2002.

True: Beane was heavily influenced by baseball writer Bill James, whose evocative analysis helped fans see baseball in a whole new light, despite being met with resistance by the baseball establishment.

False: DePodesta did not introduce Beane to James' work in '02, as the movie suggests. Former A's general manager Sandy Alderson encouraged Beane to read James' revolutionary "Abstracts" as early as 1995.

True: Scouting director Grady Fuson clashed with Beane over the A's increasing reliance on spreadsheets and soon found himself working in another organization.

False: He wasn't fired by Beane after a fit of rage. Fuson left in 2002 for a more prominent position with the Texas Rangers (and since has returned to the A's).

True: Jeremy Giambi was the team's discount leadoff hitter at the start of the 2002 season and had a reputation for wild nightlife.

False: While the movie suggests he was a new acquisition to replace his brother, Jason, Jeremy Giambi already was with the team. The A's got him from the Royals on Feb. 18, 2000.

True: The A's were so eager to make a run at Hatteberg -- a castoff catcher whose career was at a crossroads -- that they pestered his agent on Christmas Day.

False: Beane and Washington did not show up unannounced on his doorstep to make their pitch. It was all done by phone. "That scene captured what it felt like, though," Hatteberg said.

True: First baseman Carlos Pena was indeed jettisoned from the roster as part of a shake-up designed in part to force Howe to play Hatteberg at first.

False: The movie jumbles the timeline and shows Pena being traded within minutes of Jeremy Giambi in late May. In truth, Pena was sent to the minors at that point and not traded to the Tigers until early July.

True: The A's won their 20th consecutive game against the Kansas City Royals on Sept. 4, 2002, when Hatteberg, pinch-hitting for Eric Byrnes, hit a homer on a 1-0 pitch from Jason Grimsley in the bottom of the ninth.

False: We couldn't spot a "false" anywhere in this game's re-creation. Everything in this scene matches up with the box score. Even the out-of-town scores in the outfield show Tampa Bay beating the Angels 4-2, just as it happened that day.

True: Beane really did spurn a lucrative offer to become the Red Sox G.M., largely because he wanted to stay closer to his young daughter, Casey, who was living in San Diego.

False: There's nothing really false about this sweet note, but it's worth remembering that Casey is now in college in Ohio. Rumblings are building that the Chicago Cubs will try to lure Beane away this offseason.

## **Billy Beane and Moneyball: How it went wrong on the field**

By Daniel Brown, San Jose Mercury News

The cinematic release of "Moneyball" this week captures Billy Beane at the peak of his creative powers, with the the A's basking in a fourth consecutive playoff appearance while averaging 98 wins a year. Everything Beane touched turned to gold.

Crowds flocked to the Coliseum. Opposing GMs trembled at the sound of his voice. Heck, even Brad Pitt wanted to be Billy Beane.

Alas, a sequel looks unlikely. The movie hits theaters Friday with the current A's looking suspiciously like any other small-payroll outfit, tumbling toward their worst record under Beane's stewardship and without a winning record since 2006.

That's not exactly a happy ending.

"The bigger teams are getting richer. For every step forward a smaller team like ours makes, the bigger teams take many steps forward," Beane said. "The escalation of payroll will tell you that. We have more revenues now than 10 years ago, but there are bigger teams that have a lot more."

Beane's detractors -- and "Moneyball" created many -- are happy to celebrate the A's freefall, gleefully watching the uber-confident GM come crashing back to earth.

"The book didn't get my money and the movie won't get my money either," said one scout, still miffed at how his profession is portrayed. Pointing to where a championship ring would go, the scout added: "If they get one of these, I might start paying more attention."

Beane's devotees -- and his success created many -- suggest that the A's aren't struggling now because Beane was wrong. They're struggling because he was so spot-on right that other teams seized upon his ideas, leaving the A's in search of another secret weapon, one they can still afford.

"(Beane) expanded the minds of other general managers," said David Justice, who spent the last of his 14 major-league seasons with the A's in 2002. "They started looking to see how much validity there was to what Billy was doing, and it created kind of an awareness."

When the movie opens Friday, the great "Moneyball" fires will be stoked again, re-igniting debates about scouts and statistics, tradition and rebellion, and over whether Beane's legacy is really worth all this Hollywood fuss.

Here's a number: Entering this season, only five general managers since 1950 had a higher winning percentage than Beane. (Minimum 10 seasons, 1,000 wins).

Of the five men ahead of his .538, the only active GM is Brian Cashman, who has the luxury of wielding the New York Yankees' tanker-sized checkbook.

Beane did it with one of the lowest payrolls in the league.

"I just think they had a great understanding about the way certain markets have to do it," Orioles manager Buck Showalter said. "I'm very respectful of the things that they do and always intrigued by the way Billy and their group approaches certain things because they're not afraid to think out of the box."

In the wake of Beane's sustained success, other big-league teams began to re-think their approach. It was no longer taboo to value on-base percentage, which is why one scene from the "Moneyball" book seems so antiquated: first baseman Scott Hatteberg being by scolded by Boston hitting coach Jim Rice for being too patient at the plate.

The game even sounds different: Announcers regularly praise hitters for grinding out a prolonged plate appearance, even if the end result is a grounder to short. "Great at-bat," they'll say.

"Back then, there were only a few teams in the American League that would work the count," recalled Barry Zito, who pitched for the A's from 2000-2006. "Now a lot of teams do it. The big strength of a lot of players now is getting the walk."

So widespread was the change that Kevin Goldstein, a writer for the statistically savvy Baseball Prospectus, joked that his job description has changed dramatically. "Moneyball's impact," he said, "is that there are a lot fewer stupid teams to make fun of."

Making fun of "stupid teams" is how "Moneyball" managed to make so many enemies for Beane in the first place. In one memorable chapter, one that didn't make the movie, Beane and assistant Paul DePodesta cheer throughout the 2002 draft while celebrating the apparent ignorance of their fellow general managers.

Pick by pick, they mock other teams, especially those that roll the dice on risky high school players. "The selections made are, from the A's point of view, delightfully mad," author Michael Lewis wrote in the book.

The A's wound up with a solid draft, among the best in the majors that year, with an early-round bounty that included future All-Star outfielder Nick Swisher as well as pitcher Joe Blanton and infielder Mark Teahan.

But the A's giddy self-congratulations that day did not age well. The other GMs do not look so "delightfully mad" in retrospect.

Prince Fielder, dismissed in the book as "too fat even for the Oakland A's," grew up to be major offensive force and is currently an MVP candidate for the playoff-bound Brewers. The A's evaluation of Blanton and Benjamin Fritz as "two of the three best right-handers in the draft" means they failed to recognize the risk-reward potential of high school prospects Zack Greinke (a future Cy Young winner) and Matt Cain (taken one spot after Blanton).

Beane says in the book that prospect John McCurdy might be then next Jeff Kent (McCurdy topped out at Double-A) while DePodesta says Brant Colamarino might be the "best hitter in the country" (Colamarino lasted six minor league seasons).

Knocking a team's draft in years later is unfair, considering the crapshoot nature. But that's precisely what irritated so many scouts: Beane and DePodesta, as depicted in the book, act as if they have cracked the code and chuckle at the folly of old-time scouts.

"Nick Swisher? Nick Swisher was a first-rounder on every team's list. He just happened to fall to the A's turn and he was on the board," one scout for an AL team said.

"I think the guys who were true 'Moneyball' players never amounted to anything. The Jeremy Browns and the others? Look how that turned out."

Justice, though a Beane fan, pointed to his original organization, the Atlanta Braves, as the model for identifying young talent.

"If you think walks are important, go ahead and look at a guy with a lot of walks, but you can't judge a player just based on his stats," Justice said. "I would want to see him. I would want to know: How does he interact with the team? Is he a leader? Does he hustle? Does he do the little things?"

Justice begins rattling off names: Tom Glavine. Ryan Klesko. Chipper Jones. Andruw Jones. Rafael Furcal. Brian McCann. Freddie Freeman. "You want me to keep going?" he says. "I can go for days."

Beane, typical of his willingness to adapt, has altered his thinking in the draft room. Last year, the team re-hired Grady Fuson -- the longtime scouting director who is fired in a fit of rage in the "Moneyball" movie. (Their philosophical clash was real, but not the firing.)

Fuson told the San Francisco Chronicle last year that he and Beane had reached a happy medium.

"My last year here, I think they were using numbers for maybe 80 percent of the opinions they formed," Fuson said at the start of spring training in 2010. "I'd like to think now that it's 60-40, with scouting being the 60."

Ron Washington, the A's bench coach during the "Moneyball" era, guided Texas to the World Series last year by going against the grain of the strategic principles touted in Oakland.

For one thing, he bunted. The 2010 Rangers trailed only the Tampa Bay Rays in sacrifice hits. For another, they stole bases.

But Washington said he embraces the concepts of Moneyball every day he's on the job. To him, Moneyball means making the most of your resources.

"When I was here (in Oakland), we just didn't like guys making outs on the basepaths," he said. "We had such a great pitching staff -- they always had us in the ballgame -- and you never knew when a guy was going to bop one."

"And when they bopped one with people on the bags, that was the difference between us winning and losing a ballgame."

Washington's reference to the great pitching staff — Zito, Tim Hudson and Mark Mulder — is part of what rankles "Moneyball" critics. Neither the book nor the movie dwells too much on that dazzling rotation, nor does it spent too much time with MVP shortstop Miguel Tejada or star third baseman Eric Chavez.

Justice said the big names deserved more credit. "You're not going to do anything if you don't have the athletes and they had Zito, Hudson, Mulder -- three of the top pitchers in the game," he said.

But Zito doesn't mind the slight. He said he was just happy to be part of Beane's laboratory.

"We didn't know what was going on at the time, with Billy and Paul and the remarkable ways they could adapt," he said. "We just knew that we had great teams -- and not a big payroll."

Beane's teams never made it to the World Series, let alone won a title, leaving "Moneyball" producers with a hurdle for the final scene. Without an A's championship to celebrate, they co-opt one, glomming onto the Boston Red Sox, who ended the Curse of the Bambino by adopting from Beane's template.

It's the cinematic equivalent of "Rocky" losing in a preliminary bout but getting credit when the next fighter borrows his gloves to become heavyweight champion.

Meanwhile, the A's are trying to get up off the canvas. As his critics revel in Beane's struggles, his supporters say his legacy isn't in OBP or OPS or any other metric: It's his willingness to shake things up, to think outside the batter's box.

As the manager of a perennial sub-.500 team put it:

"I hear the snide comments people say about Billy. But at least he's willing to try different things. It's better than what we're doing, which is sitting around getting our brains beat in."

### **Chin Music: Lineups on a busy day of A's news**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 9/21/2011 6:45pm

Greetings from the Coliseum ... Here's [a brief story on the three-year contract extension that Bob Melvin signed as A's manager.](#)

A bigger story with quotes will be posted later tonight.

Here are the lineups as the A's try to break their bad mojo against the Rangers.

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

Rangers — Kinsler 2B, Andrus SS, Hamilton LF, Young 1B, Beltre 3B, Napoli C, Murphy RF, Cruz DH, Chavez CF; Wilson LHP.

### **Review: Grand slam for 'Moneyball'**

By Randy Myers, Contra Costa Times

Right now we could use a winning season.

Joblessness cripples the nation, once-venerable institutions are crumbling, and hopes for our collective future are fading like those of a minor-leaguer with a bum leg and no prospects.

Enter, as it so suitably does, a story about baseball. In "Moneyball," America's pastime again serves as a metaphor for the times as it depicts how Oakland A's General Manager Billy Beane boldly changed the game and went on a winning streak.

Based on Berkeley author Michael Lewis' taut, lively best-seller of the same name, "Moneyball" scores as one of the sharpest, most entertaining films of the year by telling the story of how Beane confronted a depressing, seemingly no-win situation -- the loss of key players and a bare-bones budget with which to pluck new talent.

As Bay Area baseball fans already know, Beane thinks outside the batter's box. Some time ago he began to rely on computer stats and other criteria to select lower-paid players, a method he used to fill out his on-the-cheap 2002 roster.

Brad Pitt stars as the intense and enigmatic Beane, a former player who failed to live up to his own promise. It's a dynamite role and performance, and Pitt -- filmed often in tight close-ups revealing facial tics and tobacco-chomping -- hits it out of the park. He's funny, sexy and you can't take your eyes off him.

Jonah Hill ("Get Him to the Greek") is equally well-cast as Peter Brand, a fictional character based partially on former A's executive Paul Podesta. Brand is a Yale-educated math whiz who becomes Beane's second-in-command in an "Odd Couple" pairing that works. Oscar-winner Philip Seymour Hoffman makes every second of his limited screen time count as Art Howe, the A's manager who harbors serious doubts about Beane's plan, while Chris Pratt (of TV's "Parks and Recreation") is a charmer as confidence-lacking first baseman Scott Hatteberg, Beane's seemingly out-of-nowhere pick to replace departed superstar Jason Giambi.

In addition to being insightful and beautifully acted, "Moneyball" is written with quick, sophisticated flair by Steven Zaillian and Aaron Sorkin, imbued with evocative photography by cinematographer Wally Pfister, and directed with ingenuity by Bennett Miller ("Capote"), who pays painstaking attention to details.

In one of my favorite moments, the camera -- in a long tracking shot -- follows Pitt while he strides from the Oakland Coliseum clubhouse (a stage set) through the locker room and into the weight room. The scene isn't a director merely showing off; it reveals what it's like not only to be inside the Coliseum but what it's like to be inside the head of Beane, a buffed-up presence who owns every room he enters.

Although a great love for baseball shines through -- especially in footage of real A's games -- this is an inside-baseball story, one in which roster machinations and fast-paced talk about trades dominate the screen. Anyone expecting an emotional "Field of Dreams" or mythical "The Natural" might be disappointed not to find anything that lodges a lump in the throat. Stripped down to the essentials, though, this is still the classic underdog setup, pitting the underdog A's against high-salaried teams.

If baseball fans miss the lack of heart-tugging, they'll appreciate how Miller makes "Moneyball" ring with in-the-dugout authenticity. He captures this realism in part by casting some real players (such as former Giant Royce Clayton as A's shortstop Miguel Tejada) and talent scouts. But even the scenes between Beane and his daughter (Kerris Dorsey) feel authentic and unforced, adding an emotional subtext that surprises with its depth. It also offers a rare gift from Hollywood: a tender but honest portrait of a father-and-daughter relationship.

Equally refreshing is to see Oakland basking in Hollywood's spotlight, from a game filmed at the Coliseum to quick takes with Pitt driving on East Bay roadways. (Most scenes featuring the A's playing in 2002 were shot at the Coliseum; other ballparks were used as well.)

But those are just the perks in a film that's a lot more than just baseball. "Moneyball" astutely depicts money as the hot-button dividing line in our culture, and reflects the value that true success comes not from wealth, but from having the vision to try something new, and the confidence to pursue it.

Even if it doesn't take you to the World Series.

### **A's bullpen yields two homers in loss to Texas**

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

-- **Brandon McCarthy's** bid for his 10th win evaporated during an eighth-inning blur, during which reliever **Grant Balfour** yielded solo home runs to **Ian Kinsler** and **Josh Hamilton**, the difference in Oakland's 3-2 loss to the Rangers.

"Rough night," Balfour said. "We've had 70 or 80 of those this year. It's been a frustrating year, no doubt. McCarthy had a great game. I expect better of myself. I take full responsibility for the loss tonight. It was a rough game for me. I'll be back out there."

McCarthy scattered six hits in seven innings, and the only run he allowed came on a second-inning double play. The A's scored twice in the fifth off All-Star **C.J. Wilson** on RBI singles by rookies **Brandon Allen** and **Jemile Weeks**.



"You have all the confidence in the world in those guys," McCarthy said of the A's relievers, "and sometimes it just doesn't work out, especially against a team like that."

The A's dipped to 17 games below .500, their lowest mark since Sept. 4, 2009. They've lost 12 of their past 13 to Texas.

**Hiring process:** Under Major League Baseball's guidelines, teams are mandated to interview at least one minority candidate before hiring a manager. The A's didn't but still "complied with the minority hiring guideline," according to **Rob Manfred**, MLB's executive vice president of labor relations and human resources.

Manfred said general manager **Billy Beane** and managing general partner **Lew Wolff** had "extensive conversations" with him and Commissioner **Bud Selig** about possible minority candidates throughout baseball. In the end, MLB was convinced the A's were sold on Melvin and deemed it unnecessary, if not unfair, for them to interview a minority just for procedural reasons.

Beane said the A's "honored the process (MLB) set forth. They were satisfied we had. ... In the end, after going through that process, Bob for us was the perfect guy."

### **Leading off**

**Recall:** Bob Melvin (out of Menlo-Atherton High and Cal) said he rooted for all Bay Area teams as a kid: "It was a lot easier being an A's fan than a Giants fan. When I was coming to postseason games, it was always here. It was not on the other side."

### **Bob Melvin will be staying on with A's**

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Bob Melvin saw the not-so-upbeat portrayal of former A's manager Art Howe by Oscar winner Phillip Seymour Hoffman, and he playfully was asked if he still wants to work for Billy Beane.

"I do," said Melvin, who recalled a scene in Monday's "Moneyball" premiere indicating a tense relationship between Beane and Howe. "I did see that chair come flying out of the manager's office."

Hired June 9 as the A's interim manager, Melvin will stick around longer term after agreeing to a three-year contract that will be announced this week, according to the Associated Press.

It's no surprise. Based on recent interviews, players have been impressed with Melvin from the day he replaced fired Bob Geren amid a 10-game losing streak, immediately setting a different tone by opening up lines of communication and identifying roles.

The A's were 27-36 under Geren, and with Tuesday's 7-2 loss to Texas, are 42-49 under Melvin. The team has played better since the All-Star break (30-32), but while the offense has been more alive, the pitching hasn't been as consistent.

Melvin's contract would run through 2014.

"He brings a winning attitude and positive atmosphere to the clubhouse," said catcher Kurt Suzuki, the longest-tenured A's player who has been pushing for Melvin to return next year. "We respect him. The guy prepares for a game. He's ready for every situation. It's a good feeling we've got in here.

"He's what this clubhouse needs. We have young guys establishing themselves, and he's really good communicating and teaching."

Suzuki wouldn't compare Melvin with Geren, but called Geren a "great person who did the best he could. As players, we take full responsibility. It's not Bob's fault. It's our fault we weren't as good as we should've been. He prepared himself every day, and as players we didn't do the job."

Melvin, who has made no secret he wants to remain with the A's, went to Menlo-Atherton High School and Cal, played for the Giants and has keen knowledge of Bay Area sports history. He was tickled to receive uniform No. 6, because that was Sal Bando's.

"He's a players' manager. He lets you go out there and play," reliever Grant Balfour said. "He doesn't seem to get in the way of the guys. He lets them go out there and do their thing. It was tough for Bob Geren. We had a lot of injuries. We weren't playing that well, either."

Left fielder Josh Willingham, Oakland's leader in homers (27) and RBIs (92), said he appreciates how Melvin used him coming off an Achilles tendon injury, giving him time as a designated hitter. "He's been a great influence on me in every positive way imaginable," Willingham said.

Under Geren, Hideki Matsui - like Willingham a free agent to be - had inconsistent playing time, but Melvin made him an everyday player again. Matsui is hitting .309 since the break.

Asked to compare Melvin with his previous managers Joe Torre, Joe Girardi and Mike Scioscia, Matsui said through his translator, "The one thing that stands out with Bob is, he's really a great human being. There's this willingness to always understand. He has a humble attitude. That really sticks out. He came here in a very difficult situation and has done a great job."

### **Drumbeat: Beane and Melvin on A's manager's new deal**

Mark Smoyer, San Francisco Chronicle, 9/21/2011 5:42pm

Billy Beane handed Bob Melvin a contract he never gave to predecessor Bob Geren – a three-year deal.

The last three-year contract went to Ken Macha. Two of them, actually, including his deal entering the 2006 season. Macha served one year, got the A's to the ALCS and was fired.

Beane addressed why Melvin got three years, saying he proved himself since being hired June 9 as the interim manager.

"When you talk about an interview process and you're sitting down with somebody for an hour or two hours, making a decision long-term, you really don't know completely how people are going to react or actually do their job," Beane said.

"The benefit we all had, and Bob had it from his end as well, we really had a long time to get to know each other and really feel comfortable. . . . I think the interim time that we had here really contributed to that.

"If Bob made any mistake, it's that we probably get along so well that he's going to have me lounging on his couch more often than he probably wants. This interim process has really been very, very helpful."

Melvin's take on three years:

"A three-year deal means it's three years in contract, yet nothing's promised to you the next day, so this is going to make me work even harder and be more committed to a situation that, already to me, is the perfect situation. It's a huge day for me and my family."

By the way, Melvin tried to set the record straight about his allegiances when asked if he grew up a Giants fan.

"You know what, I was a front-runner is what I was. I grew up a 49er, Raider, Giants, A's. I'll tell you what, when I was a kid, it was a lot easier being an A's fan than to be a Giants fan. When I was coming to postseason games, it was always here. It was not on the other side."

### **Drumbeat: It's official: A's Melvin staying put**

Mark Smoyer, SF Chronicle, 9/21/2011 11:25am

News got around last night that manager Bob Melvin would be staying with the A's. The A's news release came out just now. But before we get to it, let's note some of the positive reaction from A's players yesterday:

Kurt Suzuki: "He's what this clubhouse needs. We have young guys establishing themselves, and he's really good communicating and teaching."

Grant Balfour: "He's a players' manager. He lets you go out there and play."

Josh Willingham: "He's been a great influence on me in every positive way imaginable."

Hideki Matsui: "The one thing that stands out with Bob is, he's really a great human being."

That's a whole lotta love.

Here are some press release "highlights":

OAKLAND, Calif. – The Oakland Athletics announced today the club has agreed to terms with Manager Bob Melvin on a new three-year contract through the 2014 season.

Melvin, 49, was named the A's interim manager in midseason, replacing Bob Geren on June 9. He inherited a last-place team (27-36) and has directed them to a 42-49 mark in elevating Oakland into third place. ...

Melvin, a native of Palo Alto, Calif., has compiled an overall record of 535-557 in eight seasons as a Major League manager. ... (He) was 337-340 with Arizona from 2005-09 in becoming the Diamondbacks' all-time winningest manager. ...

Melvin graduated from Menlo-Atherton High School in Menlo Park, Calif. in 1979 and later attended and played baseball at the University of California in Berkeley. ...

Melvin is the 29th manager in A's franchise history and 18th in Oakland annals.

### **Homers off Balfour spoil effort from McCarthy**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- It was just a little more than a month ago when C.J. Wilson followed up his anti-Oakland comments with a dominating win over the A's on the mound he publicly claimed to despise.

Brandon McCarthy was the losing pitcher that day but on Wednesday earned the chance to even things out with his former teammate, who entered the matchup riding a three-game win streak against the A's.

Per usual, Wilson dealt. But McCarthy was better and seemingly appeared to exit as the victor.

"McCarthy was awesome," Wilson said. "He looked really good. That's the best he's thrown against us this year."

By night's end, though, neither were factors in a 3-2 A's loss, as the normally untouchable right-handed bullpen arm of Grant Balfour surrendered two decisive eighth-inning home runs to Ian Kinsler and Josh Hamilton, putting a damper on a day that earlier had celebrated A's manager Bob Melvin's three-year contract extension.

The deal will keep Melvin in Oakland through at least the 2014 season, bringing stability to an A's club that has lost six of its last eight games to fall a season-low 17 games under .500. The latest loss marked the A's 12th in 13 against the Rangers, who have become something of an annoyance.

"It's not fun going through this year with them, with them just continually beating us and finding different ways to do it," McCarthy said. "It's something we should know going into the offseason that we have to take it to their level. It should be good for us in terms of motivation and know what it is we have to look up to, but over the course of the season it's starting to get a little old."

More bad than good has obviously come out of Oakland this year, but McCarthy and Balfour have taken up residence in the latter category. Wednesday's happenings, at least for Balfour, were of the rare sort, as the righty was previously perfect against the Rangers this season in seven innings.

Moreover, he entered the day with a 3-0 record and 1.84 ERA in 24 career outings against Texas, with just two Rangers going deep off him during that span. One happened to be Kinsler, who is now 2-for-9 with two home runs in his career against the hard-throwing Australian.

"He's going to throw his fastball," Melvin said. "He's proud of his fastball, and he'll throw it to anybody."

So that's exactly what he did.

"Both fastballs," Balfour said. "A 3-2 pitch to Kinsler, up and out over the plate. I need to make a better pitch there. The one to Hamilton, I thought it was actually a pretty good pitch. I was trying to go in on him and got it in there, and just a good piece of hitting. Guy's a good hitter. I was kind of surprised he hit that pitch out. Thought I made a good pitch, guess it wasn't good enough."

Said Kinsler: "He's got a good fastball. That's his strength and he went with his strength. He's got me out with it a handful of times. I didn't think it was going out. Balls weren't going out tonight, but fortunately I had enough strength to get it over the wall."

The Texas infielder's blast -- a leadoff shot to left field -- erased a 2-1 Oakland lead, while Hamilton's -- a one-out homer to right field -- pushed the Rangers ahead for good, slimming their magic number to three and taking away from yet another stellar performance for McCarthy.

The A's right-hander, who in his last two starts against Texas gave up a combined eight earned runs in 9 1/3 innings, surrendered just one through seven innings on Wednesday, giving up six hits with one strikeout while throwing 60 of his 79 pitches for strikes.

"I think I got away with a couple things, a few pitches I wasn't really thrilled with that they fortunately hit to somebody," McCarthy said. "But as a whole I felt like I was able to work a good pace, throw a lot of strikes and stay ahead of guys. Generally that's a good recipe for success."

Wilson, meanwhile, was nearly flawless through the first three innings, allowing just one baserunner via a free pass, before allowing the first A's hit in the fourth on Jemile Weeks' leadoff single.

Weeks was responsible for helping the A's erase a 1-0 deficit by posting a two-spot in the fifth, when he and fellow rookie Brandon Allen collected RBI hits off Wilson, who lasted six innings and walked three while fanning eight.

"It was nice to be able to get some runs off him because we've seen him really good this year and, early in the game, I don't know if we've seen him better," Melvin said. "He was using both sides of the plate, backdoor cutter right on the black and pitching in to open the plate, and then we were able to get some great at-bats and get a lead off him."

It was one that proved too close for comfort, though.

"Tonight I take the loss for the team," Balfour said. "McCarthy had a great outing, and you knew it was going to be a tight game with two pitchers like that on the mound. I expect better of myself, and I just didn't perform.

"I'll be back out there, though. Life of a reliever, right?"

### **Melvin signs three-year deal to stay with A's**

#### **Bay Area native embraces opportunity to return home**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The A's managerial job perhaps isn't the most admired, or the most desired, given its place in a desolate stadium that houses a small-market team that hasn't reached the playoffs since 2006.

But amid those very imperfections, Bob Melvin has found in fewer than four months that the role suits him rather perfectly, so much so that he's agreed to uphold it through the 2014 season -- a promise solidified by way of a three-year contract the A's awarded their manager on Wednesday.

For it was always and only ever about the relationships, the traditions and the history for Melvin, whose journey back to Oakland -- first initiated on June 9 in an interim role when Bob Geren was dismissed -- represents something of a full-circle transition. He's a Bay Area native who went to the University of California and cheered on the A's and Giants -- "I was a front-runner is what I was," Melvin playfully joked -- before ultimately donning a Giants uniform for a short while in his 10 big league seasons.

"I always hoped it would come full circle back here," said Melvin, with his daughter, Alexi, sitting in the front row of the news conference. "It's something you think about as a kid. The opportunity to do this, in a transient business to begin with, to be able to come home and do it in this fashion, it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

Melvin's presence does not mark a new beginning, but rather a continuation of what he's employed since arriving. Mired in a nine-game losing streak at the time, the A's went on to win seven of their next 10 games and are 42-50 under Melvin, including a 30-33 record after the All-Star break.

"Oakland deserves a manager like this," pitcher Gio Gonzalez said. "He's brought some good vibes, some great coaching with him. This is something we definitely wanted. He helped change things around in the second half. We looked like a different ballclub. We're showing signs of improvement every time we go out there, and I think he leads us to where we want to go."

Melvin isn't so much interested in looking at the future as he is about focusing on the here and now, promptly noting the next item on his to-do list is "winning the remaining games that we have right now." General manager Billy Beane, though, made it clear that his new manager will be involved in every decision-making process the organization decides to undertake this offseason, which will include several free-agent decisions.

"I talk to him more times in a day than I talk to my wife," Beane joked. "It's really a real stimulating relationship. Bob's got a lot to offer, and one of the things that I really appreciate is he's got great ideas. I've been really amazed at how seamless not only our professional relationship, but our personal relationship, has grown as well. We agree on a lot of things and I think we have an idea of what it takes to put together a good club going forward, so Bob's a part of every discussion we have."

Oakland is Melvin's third big league managerial job and second in the American League West. He led Seattle to a 156-168 record from 2003-04 before spending four seasons in Arizona, where he earned National League Manager of the Year honors in 2007 after guiding the D-backs to an NL West title.

Those experiences, his players maintain, only add to the respect they've garnered for him in the past few months. Moreover, they say he's a fierce competitor regardless of record and his preparation is unmatched -- "No one beats him to the ballpark," Andrew Bailey said -- and his coaching style very much likable.

"He'll let you go out there and compete," Gonzalez said. "If he sees signs of weakness, he's not going to pull you off the hill. He's going to constantly make you work and give you the chance to show your ability."

"When you talk to opposing players that have had him, you hear he's a great guy and you're gonna love him," Josh Willingham said. "And I think, having experienced over half a season with him, you know he's behind you 100 percent, and he puts his players in a position to succeed."

Such a notion is exemplified through several players, including Jemile Weeks and Brandon Allen. Melvin has yet to let up on the rookies, whom he insists on playing through struggles in an effort to showcase true grit and character. Even the veterans have benefited greatly, as Melvin insisted from his first day that Hideki Matsui would be the club's everyday designated hitter. That wasn't the case when his predecessor was running the show, as Geren handed Matsui just nine starts against left-handed hurlers.

Essentially, Melvin is a stabilizer, a trait desperately needed back in June during what Beane at different points on Wednesday called "a very challenging situation" and a "chaotic time." Though the A's never turned out to be the contending club it was etched out to be in the winter -- mostly because of injuries and underachieving performances -- Melvin at the very least has steadied a lineup and bullpen once victims of a lack of communication and undefined roles that before weren't so distinct.

"Bob's a great fit," catcher Kurt Suzuki said. "I think he brings a winning attitude, a lot of energy to the team, and being a young ballclub, you need that. He's a great communicator, a great teacher, and a great motivator, and I think when you combine that with our youthfulness, you have a good combination."

"He brings a great sense of confidence to us, and I think he's able to get everyone to play at their highest potential," Bailey said. "With a full offseason of him getting to know the organization better and with Spring Training, I'm excited to see what he has to offer."

Melvin's permanent title lends him a dose of relief, knowing he can move forward without having to qualify himself with each question related to the future, as he was having to do prior to Wednesday -- and it just so happens to be one he's hoped for since departing his last managerial job, even if he didn't know it at the time.

"I went through a number of interviews and from what I understand came in second a few times," he said. "I had several last year and the year before so I always remained optimistic. You don't want to fall into the trap of if you don't make it through an interview then you're headed in the wrong direction."

"The New York interview, the Mets one was the last one I had, and I was really looking forward to the potential, having had a place in New York and living part of the year there. But then this came open it was like, 'Oh, this is why all that didn't go as well and why I didn't come out on top in New York or wherever it was.' I felt like this happened for a reason."

### **Melvin's reputation could help in free agency**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The notion that manager Bob Melvin, awarded a three-year contract on Wednesday, will bring about a long line of free agents outside the Oakland Coliseum's doors this winter is wishful thinking.

But it's not so crazy to think that his presence might help in the matter. The A's have long been the outcasts of such a market because of the club's dreary stadium situation, but perhaps Melvin could entice players who would normally not even consider donning the green and gold.

"Absolutely," A's general manager Billy Beane said. "First and foremost, I think there are other issues that have come up, but I do think that could be the case. When it comes to Bob, he has a great reputation not only with his club already but throughout the league. And so I would agree he certainly would be helpful in that sense."

Still, Beane would likely have to overpay for these players. But he's tried to do so in the past, anyway, unsuccessfully reeling in free agents such as Adrian Beltre and Lance Berkman despite hefty offers. That part of the process won't change, but maybe Melvin could represent another factor.

"When you talk to players, and they hear Bob's name, you don't hear one negative thing come out of their mouth, and it's not like he's only been in one place," A's outfielder Josh Willingham said. "I think it could definitely only help getting some guys over to Oakland."

Perhaps it might play into the free agent-to-be Willingham's decision, too?

"Absolutely," he said. "I've got a lot of respect for Bob and what he does and what he's been able to do. That's big for this team, to go ahead and sign him to a three-year deal, and for sure that will be something I consider."

Willingham is enjoying perhaps the most productive season of his eight-year career, entering Wednesday with a team-leading 27 home runs and 92 RBIs, which also represent career highs. The outfielder has yet to discuss a contract extension with Oakland and is set to file for free agency at season's end.

That doesn't rule out his return, though. And Melvin, now on board through 2014, is perhaps his biggest fan.

"Everyone always says that, being a small-market club, you have a lot of turnover," catcher Kurt Suzuki said. "To have that continuity with Melvin here, I think will be great. I think things are only going to get better with him here. I think a lot of guys here respect him a lot. First and foremost, that's what you need from your manager. Bob's done everything right."

### **Rangers seek sweep to draw closer to title**

By Jesse Sanchez / MLB.com

It's hard to blame the Rangers for feeling optimistic these days.

They've won four games in a row, their magic number to clinch the American League West has dwindled to three and Colby Lewis' confidence is growing with each outing.

After Wednesday's 3-2 victory against the A's in Oakland, the Rangers still lead the Angels by five games in the AL West standings.

As for Lewis, he has won his past two starts and is now 5-3 with a 4.56 ERA in 12 starts since the All-Star break. What's more, he is 4-0 with a 2.83 in five starts against the A's this year, and when takes the hill in Oakland on Thursday, he will attempt to be the first Rangers pitcher with five wins against Oakland since Ferguson Jenkins did it 1974.

The A's will counter with Trevor Cahill in their final home game of the season.

Lewis is already one of four pitchers to have beaten the A's four times in a season since the three-division realignment in 1994. The others were Joe Saunders (2009), Felix Hernandez (2007) and Kenny Rogers (2005).

"There is no method to the madness," Lewis said. "No reason why. You know me, I just go out and do my thing no matter who is out there."

Only Jenkins, who went 5-0 for the Rangers against the A's in 1974, has beaten the Athletics five times in a season since they moved to Oakland in 1968. Jenkins also had five wins against Twins in 1974.

Despite an inconsistent season, particularly in the second half, Cahill has consistently been good against the potent Rangers lineup, collecting a 3-2 record and 2.91 ERA in five starts.

In his last outing, Cahill gave up three runs on nine hits in 6 2/3 innings in a loss against the Tigers. He struck out four and walked four in the start.

"I put myself in tough situations in a couple innings and was able to get out of them, make pitches when I had to," said Cahill, who dropped to 3-7 with a 6.58 ERA since the break. "That's one positive thing I guess you can take out of it."

### **Rangers: Beltre swinging hot bat**

- Adrian Beltre went 2-for-4 Wednesday and has hit safely in 17 of his last 18 games. He's hitting at .365 with eight home runs and 21 RBIs since being activated from 15-day disabled list on Sept. 1.

- Michael Young went 2-for-4 on Wednesday. On Tuesday, he eclipsed the 200-hit mark for the sixth time in his career.

Young is just the 16th player in Major League history to produce at least 200 hits at least six times. Ichiro Suzuki, who accomplished the feat 10 times, and Derek Jeter, who has seven seasons with at least 200 hits, are the only other active players to accomplish the feat.

- There are approximately 10,000 tickets remaining for each of the three weekend games with Seattle in Arlington.

### **Athletics: Melvin on board with new deal**

- The A's agreed to a three-year deal with manager Bob Melvin on Wednesday.

"Oakland deserves a manager like this," pitcher Gio Gonzalez said. "He's brought some good vibes, some great coaching with him. This is something we definitely wanted. He helped change things around in the second half."

- Andrew Bailey has 20 saves this season. He joins Kazuhiro Sasaki and Billy Koch as the only relievers in Major League Baseball history with at least 20 saves in each of their first three seasons.

- The A's are 8-10 since Sept. 2.

### **Worth noting**

- The Rangers have consecutive 90-win seasons for the first time in franchise history.

- Texas shortstop Elvis Andrus went 0-for-4 on Wednesday to snap a 13-game hitting streak.

- The A's are 3-6 on the final homestand of the season with one to play.

- Texas slugger Mike Napoli has hit safely in his last eight games, batting .552 (16-for-29) during that stretch. He's also hit safely in 12 of last 13 games.

- The Rangers are 13-5 against the A's this season.

### **Mariners, A's might open 2012 in Japan**

By Greg Johns / MLB.com

MINNEAPOLIS -- Mariners players and coaches gathered in a pregame meeting Wednesday to discuss the possibility of traveling to Japan to open next season against the A's, an initial step in what could be the club's first road trip outside North America.

Though it's only in the discussion stage at this point, the Mariners could begin 2012 with a two-game series against Oakland in Tokyo if details can be worked out by Major League Baseball.

Randy Adamack, the Mariners vice president of communications, confirmed on Tuesday that the club has been contacted by MLB about the potential of the international series.



"We have been approached by MLB about participating in a season-opening trip to Japan in 2012," Adamack said. "We have been advised that if this all comes together, we would play two regular-season games and a couple of exhibition games in Japan. Any other updates and information will come from MLB."

Chris Gimenez, the Mariners' assistant player representative, said the MLB Players Association asked him to raise the issue with the team to get some feedback.

"There's nothing set in stone," Gimenez said. "The Players Association is having a meeting on it [Wednesday night] and they asked me to get the guys and coaching staff together and see if anybody has any questions, and say it could happen and get guys opinions. So until further, there's not a ton of news, other than it could happen."

The Mariners and A's had a similar series scheduled for 2003 in Tokyo, but the trip was canceled by Commissioner Bud Selig at the last minute due to concerns over travel safety when the U.S. began an invasion of Iraq the day before their planned departure.

There are still numerous hurdles to be cleared before a 2012 series could occur, including working out agreements with the MLB Players Association, Japanese Baseball and potential sponsors. But the Mariners and A's appear open to the possibility, which could also include exhibition games against the Japanese national team and one of the country's professional teams.

The A's played the Red Sox in the Tokyo Dome in March of 2008, juggling the schedule so that games in Japan were played after a shortened Spring Training. The two clubs then came back and played exhibition games in the U.S. before resuming their regular-season schedules.

In the tentative 2012 schedule released last week by MLB, the Mariners and A's are slated to open the season in Oakland with a three-game series starting April 6.

If the teams meet in Tokyo prior to that, the two regular-season games would be taken away from the A's home schedule, but not necessarily from that April 6-8 series. The Mariners are also scheduled to play in Oakland on July 5-8, just prior to the All-Star break, as well as Sept. 28-30.

The Mariners are a natural fit for an appearance in Japan, something MLB has done three times before. The Cubs and Mets played in Tokyo in 2000, the Yankees and Rays faced off in '04 and the A's and Red Sox met in '08.

Nintendo founder Hiroshi Yamauchi of Kyoto, Japan, helped keep the Mariners in Seattle by becoming majority owner of the club in 1992. Nintendo remains the majority owner and Yamauchi, 83, has never seen the team play in person.

Additionally, 10-time Mariners All-Star right fielder Ichiro Suzuki will be entering the final year of his five-year contract next season and remains extremely popular in Japan.

Hideki Matsui currently plays for the A's. The Japanese slugger is on a one-year contract and becomes a free agent after this season, but there is a possibility he could re-sign with Oakland.

### **Kinsler, Hamilton power Rangers past A's**

#### ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Ian Kinsler hit a tying home run leading off the eighth and Josh Hamilton followed with another homer two batters later, lifting Texas to a 3-2 win over the A's on Wednesday night and reducing the Rangers' magic number to clinch the AL West to three.

Michael Young, Adrian Beltre and Mike Napoli added two hits apiece for Texas, which won its 90th game to match its win total of 2010.

The Rangers maintained their five-game leading over the Angels in the West with seven to go. They can clinch their second straight division title as early as Friday in Arlington when they host Seattle in the beginning of a three-game series.

Texas squandered numerous scoring opportunities and trailed 2-1 going in to the eighth before Kinsler and Hamilton powered the Rangers back.

Kinsler snapped the drought with his 30th home run of the season on a full-count pitch leading off the eighth against A's reliever Grant Balfour (4-2). Kinsler became the first second baseman in American League history to have 30 home runs, 30 doubles, 100 runs scored and 80 walks in the same season.

Balfour retired Elvis Andrus on flyball before Hamilton connected for his 24th home run to right field. The ball landed halfway up the stairs at the Oakland Coliseum then bounced the rest of the way up.

Koji Uehara (2-3) pitched a scoreless seventh for the win, his first with the Rangers since being acquired from the Baltimore Orioles on July 30. Mike Adams worked the eighth and closer Neftali Feliz handled the ninth for his 29th save in 35 chances.

Jemile Weeks had two hits for the A's, who announced the signing of manager Bob Melvin to a three-year contract before the game. Oakland has lost three straight to fall a season-low 17 games under .500 for the first time since Sept. 4, 2009.

One of Melvin's priorities next season will be trying to get the A's to shake out of their funk against the first-place Rangers.

Texas has won 12 of the last 13 games against Oakland and is 13-4 against the A's this season. The 13 wins matches the club's season record for most victories against one team.

At least this time it was close.

The A's managed to get the tying run on base in the ninth when closer Neftali Feliz walked Josh Willingham, but he retired the next three batters to end it.

Young singled and scored on a double-play grounder in the second inning to give the Rangers a 1-0 lead.

Oakland, held hitless through the first three innings, tied it when Cliff Pennington doubled off starter C.J. Wilson in the fifth and scored on Brandon Allen's two-out RBI single. Allen's hit ended an 11-for-79 rut for the A's first baseman.

After Michael Taylor walked, Weeks hit a sharp grounder just under the glove of diving Rangers third baseman Beltre to drive in Allen and put Oakland in front 2-1.

The Rangers struggled to get much else going against A's starter Brandon McCarthy, stranding a runner at second in the fifth and at third in the sixth. Texas also put the two runners on with one out in the seventh before breaking through against Balfour in the next inning.

Neither starter factored in the decision in this one.

Wilson allowed five hits over six innings and became the first Texas left-hander to have 200 or more strikeouts in a single season. He fanned eight, walked three and has given up two earned runs or fewer in nine of his last 10 starts.

McCarthy, the A's best pitcher over the last month, scattered six hits over seven innings and left with a 2-1 lead. He pitched out of jams with runners in scoring position three consecutive innings before Balfour relieved him and allowed two home runs to the first three batters he faced.

Andrus went hitless in four at-bats, ending his modest 13-game hitting streak.

NOTES: Oakland is 4-5 on its final homestand with Thursday's series-finale against Texas remaining. The A's fell to 18-25 in one-run games this season. ... The last Rangers pitcher to reach 200 strikeouts in one season was Nolan Ryan, who had 203 in 1991. ... Rangers INF Esteban German, who returned to the Dominican Republic following the passing of his mother, is expected to rejoin the Rangers this weekend. ... A's RHP Trevor Cahill (11-14), who has the second-highest ERA in the majors since the All-Star break, pitches for Oakland on Thursday and will go for his fourth win against Texas this year. ... RHP Colby Lewis (13-10), who spent 2007 with the A's, chases his third straight win for the Rangers.