

A's News Clips, Sunday, September 25, 2011

Guillermo Moscoso, Oakland A's fall to Los Angeles Angels

By Art Thompson III, Oakland Tribune

This season has long been over for the A's, as far as the postseason is concerned.

But when it comes to planning for 2012, manager Bob Melvin is not scheduling any special auditions as this dreadful season grinds to a close. That was apparent Saturday night when the A's lost 4-2 to the Los Angeles Angels.

The Angels, who were eliminated from the American League West race by the A's on Friday, remain alive in the wild-card race. They trail the Boston Red Sox, who lost on Saturday, by 2 1/2 games. They are a game behind Tampa Bay.

As for the A's, Melvin intends to keep using the players he has gone with since June 9, when he replaced Bob Geren as the A's manager. In other words, there will not be any rookie-laden lineups for the team's final four games, including a three-game series that begins against the Mariners in Seattle on Monday to conclude the season.

"Even if you ran all rookies out there for the next five games, I don't know if you could get a great evaluation of where you're going to be," Melvin said before Saturday night's defeat, which was the A's 87th. "Part of the process next spring will be about evaluating (players) in spring training."

Nevertheless, some individuals have made strong impressions on Melvin. That includes starting pitcher Guillermo Moscoso, who had a solid outing against the Angels despite seeing his record slip to 8-10. Moscoso allowed five hits in seven innings, and only three of the four runs he allowed were earned.

"Talking about the mix for next year, he definitely put himself in there," Melvin said.

A's rookie Jemile Weeks drove in both runs with singles in the fifth and ninth innings. Weeks, who had three hits in all while lifting his batting average to .306, now leads the A's this season with 35 multi-hit games. He also swiped his 22nd base.

"He's a tough out," Melvin said. "He's become a force at the top of the lineup."

Meanwhile, Scott Sizemore could have the best shot at the everyday job at third base next season.

"Scottie certainly has a leg up," Melvin said. "You never know who becomes available, whether it's free agency or trades. But he's worked really hard. You can see the progress that he's made."

A's center fielder Coco Crisp improved to 19 for 19 in stolen base attempts since the All-Star break when he stole second in the first inning. It was his 45th steal of the year.

Melvin said it was possible that Ryan Sweeney would take batting practice before Saturday's game, but was not seen around the batting cage, and it's likely the outfielder is done for the season. Sweeney has been out since Sept. 14 when he suffered a strained right quad muscle while running out a grounder.

Shortstop Cliff Pennington was a late scratch because of tightness in his oblique muscle. Pennington likely will miss Sunday's game, as well.

Chin Music: Update: Cliff Pennington scratched; A's odds and ends

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Anaheim 9/24/2011 5:00pm

UPDATE: *Shortstop Cliff Pennington was scratched just before game time, with no announcement yet about the cause. Eric Sogard is now playing shortstop and batting ninth; just slide Pennington out of the middle of the batting order below and stick Sogard at the bottom.*

UPDATE II: *Pennington was held out as a precaution with left oblique tightness.*

Manager Bob Melvin said that Ryan Sweeney (right quad strain) might take batting practice today and he might get a pinch-hit appearance at Seattle. I'm trying to keep an eye on the cage while typing to see if Sweeney jumps in, but not so far.

When I saw Jemile Weeks earlier this afternoon, I said, "Three in a row?" "Why not?" he said. Weeks has homered in each of the past two games after not homering in his first 90 big-league games.

Melvin doesn't want Weeks swinging for the fences, because that's not his game – he's about getting on base and speed, finding gaps. He doesn't feel as if he has much to worry about; Weeks didn't appear to be trying to gear up to go deep or anything on either homer. He ran into some good pitches to hit out, and he's strong enough to do so when that happens. I doubt he'll be striking out three times a game now trying to be a power guy, but I do think he has enough power to hit eight-10 a year, and even more if he fills out a bit more. He's never going to be as big as his brother Rickie, but Jemile Weeks is very slight and he's likely to add some bulk as he ages.

Here's the lineup, with Guillermo Moscoso on the mound: Weeks 2b, Crisp cf, Matsui lf, Willingham dh, DeJesus rf, Pennington ss, Suzuki c, Allen 1b, Sizemore 3b.

Moscoso's ability to dominate for several innings or longer has made him fun to watch, especially lately: He's allowed five earned runs, total, in his past four starts.

Stadium problem could preclude signing Willingham

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Oakland's shot at retaining Josh Willingham is slipping away, quite possibly for good.

Willingham's agent, Matt Sosnick, told The Chronicle on Saturday that he approached the team last week with various possibilities for a multiyear deal for their top offensive player, and general manager Billy Beane told Sosnick that spending decisions are on hold until a decision comes down about the A's stadium situation.

"We gave the A's an idea of where we were, and we were told they have interest in bringing Josh back, but before they did anything, they want to see what happens with the stadium," Sosnick said. "Josh and I both made it clear he'd like to stay, but at this point, I'm pretty sure he'll test the free-agent market.

"We talked about a time frame, given that Billy would like Josh back, but it seems like Billy is sort of hamstrung right now."

Beane, who was unavailable for comment Saturday, mentioned in interviews last week that the team expects a stadium decision will be made soon. There are no signals coming out of Major League Baseball to indicate that, but speculation began after the Giants shuffled their ownership structure that the changes might facilitate some sort of sit-down with the A's over territorial rights. Plus, baseball owners must vote to approve the Giants' new configuration, and that's seen as a potential opportunity for the A's to press their case.

The A's have been waiting for a stadium decision more than 2 1/2 years, and this is the first time that club officials have expressed a belief that the process will be resolved shortly.

Unless the team gets an answer quite soon, the only way Willingham is likely to return to Oakland is on a one-year arbitration deal; the A's must offer him arbitration in order to ensure a Type-A draft pick if he signs elsewhere. Willingham, who has hit 27 homers and driven in the most runs (93) for Oakland since Frank Thomas in 2006, probably would get some sizable three-year offers on the open market, probably in the \$36 million range.

Sosnick was not specific about the numbers that he presented to the A's, but he said the salary figure was under Willingham's expected market value.

"Josh does feel loyalty to Oakland and to the front office," Sosnick said. "He absolutely loves the manager, he loves the team. But Billy said they weren't even in a position to talk about it, and I take that at face value because Billy is so honest - if I've had 25 interactions with him, he's been totally forthright 25 times.

"It seems to me like Willingham is the one guy on the team who would be the most difficult to replace, so I've got to imagine it's a pretty serious situation. Guys aren't beating down doors to hit in Oakland, and we said let's do something fair, but they really are in wait-and-see-mode."

According to one person familiar with the team's thinking, the A's would be likely to cut back on spending should they get the OK to go to San Jose, rather than increasing payroll. Were San Jose approved, the club would go into all-out rebuilding mode to put together a potential up-and-coming contender.

If the A's do not get the all-clear for San Jose, they'd be more likely to spend money in the short term to try to increase the gate - and, possibly, to make the club more attractive for potential buyers.

A's Brandon Allen headed to winter league

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Brandon Allen might not be finishing the season quite the way he wanted - he's batting .132 with 42 strikeouts in his past 25 games, including three Saturday - but he's going to continue playing in the offseason.

Before Oakland's 4-2 loss to the Angels on Saturday, Allen told The Chronicle that he plans to play in the Dominican Republic for a month this winter. He has signed with Estrellas Orientales in his first-ever appearance in winter ball.

"I'm going for the experience," Allen said. "I'm already excited."

Manager **Bob Melvin** said that he is all in favor of players going to winter ball, because the leagues are highly competitive.

"If you're not playing well, there are ramifications," Melvin said. "They're playing for a championship."

Melvin said there are some specific things the team will request Allen to work on at the plate, but he hasn't spoken to him about them yet.

Moscoso's night: Guillermo Moscoso allowed four runs, three earned, against an Angels team fighting to stay in the wild-card race. **Torii Hunter** drove in three runs, two on a homer off Moscoso in the sixth.

Moscoso, called up as a fill-in when the A's lost three starters in May, has had a strong rookie season. He finished with a 3.38 ERA, second best among rookies with at least 100 innings pitched, and in his nine losses as a starter, he received a grand total of nine runs of support while in the games.

"He's really impressed us," Melvin said. "You talk about the mix for next year, he's pitched himself into that."

The A's first run came on an RBI single by **Jemile Weeks** in the fifth, and their second on an RBI single by Weeks in the ninth.

The rookie had three hits in all to raise his team-leading batting average to .306.

Leading off

Pennington scratched: Shortstop Cliff Pennington came out of the lineup not long before the national anthem for precautionary reasons. Manager Bob Melvin said Pennington also will miss today's game with left oblique tightness. Eric Sogard replaced him.

'Moneyball' movie plays games with the truth

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Baseball fans who remember the 2002 season and business-book aficionados who loved Michael Lewis' "Moneyball" immediately will spot some of the "artistic license," to use Brad Pitt's words, that the movie version takes.

For those less familiar with the A's of nine seasons ago, and with the movie that opened Friday, here is a quick primer on where "Moneyball" departs from reality or exaggerates for dramatic effect:

Location changes

In the movie, A's general manager Billy Beane travels to Cleveland before the season to discuss a deal for reliever Ricardo Rincon. In reality, general managers rarely meet face-to-face to talk trade except at the winter meetings.

Likewise, they don't go to players' houses to sign them. In the film, Beane and infield coach Ron Washington go to Scott Hatteberg's home to express their interest in having him play first base for the A's. They call him from the curb.

The movie portrays Beane being whirled around Fenway Park by Red Sox owner John Henry. In reality, Henry brought Beane to Florida to discuss Boston's GM position.

Transaction liberties

In the film, much is made of the A's plans to acquire Jeremy Giambi and Chad Bradford before the 2002 season. Both were already on the team - perhaps you'll recall Giambi's little incident in the 2001 Division Series against the Yankees.

The movie portrays Carlos Peña being traded to Detroit at the same time Giambi is traded to Philadelphia. Peña was sent down when Giambi was traded; Peña went to Detroit later that summer as part of a three-team trade.

One major scene depicts Beane meeting his soon-to-be assistant general manager ("Peter Brand") in Cleveland before the 2002 season and then "buying" him from the Indians. Former A's assistant GM Paul DePodesta, who is the basis

for Jonah Hill's character, was hired by Oakland in 1999 - and front-office officials sign contracts, they aren't bought by other teams.

Another significant difference: The movie shows Beane firing scouting director Grady Fuson. Fuson, in fact, had left the A's before the 2002 season for a more prominent role with Texas.

Personality shifts

Art Howe, the A's manager in 2002, might have butted heads with Beane on occasion, but he was in no way the surly villain portrayed by Philip Seymour Hoffman. The movie needs a foil for Beane, and though Howe might have been just that during his time in Oakland, he was generally seen to be kind and friendly.

Hatteberg might have been apprehensive about moving from catcher to first base, but his demeanor was never less than self-assured, unlike the uncertain and hesitant Hatteberg depicted in the film. The real Hatteberg is self-deprecating but confident; the cinematic one is kind of a mess, a better fit with the story line.

David Justice, however, is captured just about perfectly by Stephen Bishop - and it would be appropriate for Pitt to get an Academy Award nomination for playing Beane. Pitt nails Beane's gestures, mannerisms, speech patterns and his hair and wardrobe idiosyncrasies. He even has posters of the Clash and Joe Strummer on his office wall.

Minor quibbles

Those at Opening Night 2002 will recall that it was at night, not a day game. And Game 5 of the 2002 ALDS was a day game, not a night game.

Local sports radio never has spent even a fraction of the time discussing the A's that the movie suggests, and Bay Area media did not call for Beane's firing after the 2001 season or during the first half of the 2002 season. His job was not in jeopardy at any point. He was signed through the 2005 season at that point.

In Howe's first appearance in the film, he complains he's not signed beyond the 2002 season. In fact, the A's had a club option for 2003 - which isn't guaranteed job security, but it's at least an indication of the organization's support, which is what he believes he is lacking in the movie.

And the A's players did not have to pay for soda in the clubhouse.

KNBR conversation with A's manager Bob Melvin

Sunday, September 25, 2011

The following is an edited excerpt from an interview with A's manager Bob Melvin by Tom Tolbert on KNBR. On Wednesday, the A's announced a three-year deal to keep Melvin as manager. He had replaced Bob Geren on an interim basis in June.

Q: When you're making (game) decisions, are you going with numbers (as in "Moneyball"), or are you going with what your eyes are seeing? Or is it a combination?

A: It's a combination. When people say they're going with their gut, it's not just you're pulling something out of the air. It's all your experiences in baseball - everything you've watched, everything you've digested, everything you've looked at as far as numbers and application out on the field.

Q: It's always watching and trying to be two steps ahead of the game, isn't it? You never want to be caught in a moment where you need to react to something and you haven't thought about it.

A: No, and I look at numbers extensively before the game, whether it's matchups against our starting pitcher, I always have that down on my card. I have the matchups for my bench players and my relief pitchers and so forth, so I always have that to look at when I'm bringing a guy into the game.

Q: How would you characterize the effect on the game of having all these stats now as opposed to 50 or 60 years ago when nobody had them?

A: I think in any business now, the technology is there to make it better for you. If you're not looking at that, you're not covering your bases. Nowadays, you have so much video to go on - you get a player that's maybe got three, five, 10 at-bats in the big leagues, and you go look at all those at-bats, and right away you know what their holes are. ... Everybody does it, so if you're the one person not doing it, you're left out, and that's just the way it is - not only in baseball but in every sport and every business.

Q: What have you learned from this A's squad since you've been here?

A: I learned that we have a nucleus of some pretty good players here, and some younger players as far as the position players go, and we're pretty deep in pitching. ... Certainly the defensive end has been an issue, and that will be a priority next spring because we do have the horses to play better defense.

Q: How would you characterize your managerial style?

A: I like to take a little combination of (all the managers I played for). I know Phil Garner had the biggest effect on me, and Phil was talking about on-base percentage a long time before it really became prevalent and people started talking about it in the fashion that they are nowadays. ... Really, I get a lot of what I do and what my philosophies and beliefs are as a manager from Phil Garner. You try to be a players' manager, you certainly have to hold everybody accountable and you want to be honest with guys. They respect that.

The KNBR Conversation is a weekly Q&A culled from interviews conducted on KNBR 680/1050 AM.

SCOTT OSTLER: SUNDAY PUNCH

For A's, 'Moneyball' missing a happy ending

If the makers of "Moneyball" had been true to the core concept of the book, they would have told **Brad Pitt** to go spit in his hat. They would have hired "undervalued" actors.

Farley R. Smoot would play **Billy Beane**, and A's clubhouse manager **Steve Vucinich** would play himself. Signature moment: "Voos, there's a finger in my chili! Say, what's with the bandage?"

Instead, they went with Pitt — "Pitty," as baseball players now call him— who helps get the movie the attention it

deserves, which should goose A's attendance next year, after management announces that all fans will be part of crowd scenes in the sequel, "TitanicBall."

"Moneyball" is a celebration of an idea, a reminder that the book helped pimp-slap the rest of baseball out of the information/ analysis Stone Age. Sadly, the movie is also the obit of a baseball club.

The cover of the current Sports Illustrated is Pitt in an A's cap. Inside is a long story on how the Red Sox have borrowed the "Moneyball" concept and pumped it up with a steroid known as money.

Writes **Tom Verducci**: "As 'Moneyball' ... hits screens this week, Beane and the Athletics have been trampled by their own revolution. ... Oakland is unable to compete with clubs that caught up to it intellectually and blow it away financially."

Beane once outsmarted baseball, but that rocket ship has blasted off. Luckily, the A's and their fans have a tarp to huddle under.

Baseball to Billy: "Thanks, dude! By the way, nice cardboard sign."

Regardless of whatever success Brad Pitt — above at the premiere and below on Sports Illustrated — has with "Moneyball," it's not going to help the A's much anymore.

Deep thoughts, cheap shots & bon mots ...

Scott Ostler, San Francisco Chronicle

So far, the problem with the 49ers' bell cow is that he's running like one.

Today's weather report for the visitors' bench area at the Raiders-Jets game: 100 percent chance of hot-dog showers.

Great move by **Billy Beane**, signing **Bob Melvin** for three years. Melvin is solid and smart.

Makes you wonder why he'd want to manage here. It's like the scene in the book "Moneyball" in which author **Michael Lewis**, knowing Beane stocks his team with factory rejects, sees a new A's relief pitcher and asks someone, "What's wrong with him?" Dead-serious answer: "Club foot."

If **Jerry Jones** and Cowboys fans truly are fed up with the **Tony Romo** glamour drama, they might be ready for this trade: Romo for steady **Alex Smith**. Imagine Romo in **Jim Harbaugh's** hands.

Scary Quote Dept.: Radio guys **Murph** and **Mac** asked new Giants CEO **Larry Baer** what was behind the departure of **Bill Neukom**.

Baer: "It's not something that I am privy to completely." Ouch. I got a flashback to all the criminal Enron- type CEOs who were strangely out of the loop. Better answer would have been: "I hear **Posey** is already playing catch!"

If Raiders wideout **Derek Hagan** hasn't earned a full role by now, especially considering injuries to others, you can stamp "TSFA" on his folder — too slow for AI.

About time: **Brandon Belt** has backed off the plate just a tad, so those inside-corner breaking balls don't bust him on the knuckles.

Hey, **Sabey-Sabes**: I took an imaginary poll and here's the starting lineup that Giants fans want to see next April 1: C — **Buster Posey**, 1B — **Brett Pill**, 2B — **Freddy Sanchez** (if he promises not to get injured), 3B — **Pablo Sandoval** (with a weight clause in his contract), SS — **Brandon Crawford**, LF — **Brandon Belt**, CF — **Gary Brown**, RF— The Free Agent Slugger You're Going to Sign So **Lincecum** and **Cain** Don't Flee the Country.

In my poll, one imaginary fan said, "I know there's no chance of seeing Brown in center next year, but I always ask Santa for a Maserati.

The problem with **Hue Jackson's** gag order prohibiting any player from whining about an anti-Raiders conspiracy or publicly calling out a teammate: That's exactly the kind of stuff **Al Davis** adores in his players. Has Jackson hijacked the team?

The 49ers will chill this week in Youngstown, Ohio. The mayor says he hopes the team will open practices to the public. Sorry, Bucko. If the 49ers did that, the spying/ prying media would disguise themselves as the public and

sneak in.

Trivia: The Sports Illustrated story has a pic of Beane in his office, with Boston general manager **Theo Epstein**. Oops, that's actually **Steve Vucnich's** office. Seriously.

If I'm **Floyd Mayweather Jr.**'s manager, this is my guy's strategy: Agree to fight **Manny Pacquiao** with no drug testing. ... Pump mega-steroids while training. ... During the pre-fight ring instructions, sucker-punch Pacquiao to the moon.

If you're annoyed by the NFL's new "enhanced" pat-down at the turnstiles, just tell yourself you'd have to pay \$10 extra for that at the Mitchell Brothers O'Farrell Theatre.

Moscoso a positive despite loss to Halos

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- Despite a rough sixth inning in the A's 4-2 loss to the Angels on Saturday, Guillermo Moscoso -- and those who have witnessed his tremendous season -- will be able to look back on his 2011 campaign fondly.

The A's right-hander, once an afterthought on Oakland's depth chart, was brought aboard in May and is 8-10 with a 3.38 ERA since that time.

"He's been a bulldog," second baseman Jemile Weeks said. "He's come out there every start and gone after hitters. He's been real professional with his approach on the mound, and it's been like that from Day 1 since I've known him. The sky's the limit for people that are that diligent in their work, and that's how he's successful."

Moscoso has quietly been one of the rotation's best, particularly in a September that saw him allow a combined eight earned runs through five starts -- numbers that only further solidified his place in camp next spring.

"He's really impressed us here," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "You talk about the mix for next year, and he's certainly pitched himself right into that. I know he feels good about his season and feels good about what he accomplished here, and his teammates feel good about it. When he takes the mound, we know we have a good chance to win the game."

"I made a lot of progress this year," Moscoso said. "I think I did a pretty good job. I just gotta get ready, keep working hard and do what I'm doing now."

For as good as he's been, though, Moscoso hasn't exactly been rewarded by way of run support. In fact, he's garnered just nine runs from the offense in his nine losses -- making Saturday's storyline an all too familiar one.

Moscoso, who twice this year flirted with a no-hitter, allowed just one hit through his first five frames. Still, the Angels held a 1-0 advantage, thanks to a first-inning fielding error by Hideki Matsui in left that led to a run.

Weeks' RBI single off Halos right-hander Jerome Williams in the fifth tied the game, but the Halos regained the lead shortly after posting a three-spot in the sixth.

Moscoso surrendered a one-out base hit to Erick Aybar before notching out No. 2 on a comebacker to his hip that he successfully fielded before bending over in pain, forcing Melvin and a trainer out of the dugout.

The right-hander stayed in the game but appeared shaken from the hit, as he proceeded to allow back-to-back RBI hits to Bobby Abreu and Torii Hunter -- the latter a two-run monster shot to left field, extending Los Angeles' lead to three.

"He's a pretty tough guy, and he showed it tonight, really gave him an extra inning because of it," said Melvin, who sent Moscoso out for the seventh. "Really, the only bad pitch of the night was the one he gave up for the home run. You gotta give Hunter credit for going the other way. I actually think, overall, he pitched really well."

"I did what I could, did my best, went deep in the game, made quality pitches and got a lot of ground balls today," Moscoso said. "I'm very happy about it. It's something that's made me confident. I got the loss, but I did my job. Just one mistake."

It proved too much to overcome, though, as the A's collected just one more run in the ninth on Weeks' third hit of the night, marking his 35th multi-hit game of the season and 14th with at least three. Both marks lead the A's, despite Weeks spending the first two months of the season in Triple-A.

"He's a tough little out," Melvin said.

Melvin's squad has just four games remaining with the A's set to close out play in Anaheim on Sunday before embarking on a three-game set in Seattle.

Pennington scratched with tight oblique

Sogard starts at shortstop, bats ninth against Halos

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- A's shortstop Cliff Pennington was scratched just five minutes before the start of Saturday's game because of tightness in his left oblique.

The precautionary move gave Eric Sogard a start at shortstop, his sixth of the season. Sogard batted ninth and went 2-for-4 with a pair of singles in the A's 4-2 loss to the Angels.

Pennington, who has started 143 games this year, has just 14 hits in his last 66 at-bats. Overall, Pennington is batting .303 with five home runs and 35 RBIs since the All-Star break.

Angels chasing playoffs, series win over A's

By Jesse Sanchez / MLB.com

No one has to tell Angels manager Mike Scioscia how important the last four games of the season are to his club.

You don't have to remind Torii Hunter, either.

Following Saturday's 4-2 victory against the A's, the Angels trail the Red Sox by 2 1/2 games in the American League Wild Card race. The Rays sit 1 1/2 games behind Boston.

"All we can control is how we're playing the game," Scioscia said. "We need to win, we're gonna have to get out there [Sunday], face another tough pitcher, pitch well, and hopefully just keep picking up momentum."

It will be up to Joel Pineiro to deliver for the Angels on Sunday. The veteran appears to have finally found his sinker and is determined to show that he can still perform under pressure. The Halos can't afford another poor outing from the right-hander.

"There's a whole new division that forms at the end of every season," Scioscia said. "It's the Wild Card division, and it's Tampa, it's us and it's Boston. It is what it is right now."

The A's counter with Rich Harden, who has endured a rough stretch late in the season, allowing 22 earned runs in 23 2/3 innings over his last five starts. Sunday will be his final outing of the season and third against the Angels, who he is 0-1 against with a 4.38 ERA in two starts.

Harden was charged with five runs on seven hits in three innings in a short outing against Texas in his last start.

Hunter will be ready for him.

"We still smell it," the Angels outfielder said. "We still have a chance to get in the playoffs through the Wild Card. You want to win a division, but that's not possible right now. You've got to find other ways and that's getting in through the Wild Card. ... I've been to the playoffs so many times and I've failed. I just want to get there and win. That's all that matters to me, man. Getting that World Series. I'm tired of seeing guys jump up and down on that field and I haven't done it once."

Athletics: Pennington has oblique issue

A's shortstop Cliff Pennington was scratched minutes before the start of Saturday's game because of tightness in his left oblique.

- The club's 123 errors this season are the most since the 2001 A's had 125 errors.

Angels: Trumbo powerful in rookie season

Mark Trumbo leads the team with 29 home runs and 87 RBIs. The last rookies to lead their respective teams in homers and RBIs are Jody Gerut in Cleveland in 2003 and St. Louis slugger Albert Pujols in '01.

Trumbo is also one home run from becoming the seventh rookie in the last 25 years with at least 30 homers in a season.

- Trumbo and Jordan Walden, who has 32 saves, could become the first rookie tandem in Major League history with 30 home runs and 30 saves, respectively. Walden notched his 32nd save on Saturday.

Worth noting

- The A's are 10-8 against the Angels this season.
- The Angels' 354 wins on the road are the most in the big leagues since 2004.

A's waste good effort by Moscoso in loss to Angels

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ANAHEIM — For the second straight outing, Guillermo Moscoso pitched well enough to win and didn't because his teammates couldn't supply much offense.

The Oakland Athletics lost 4-2 to journeyman Jerome Williams and the desperate Los Angeles Angels on Saturday night after Moscoso allowed just one hit over the first five innings. Last Sunday, the 27-year-old right-hander held Detroit to just one hit over six innings — a solo homer by Austin Jackson in a 3-0 loss at Oakland.

"It's definitely frustrating because you want to help out your pitcher, especially when he's throwing that well," A's third baseman Scott Sizemore said. "He's doing everything he needs to do, but we just haven't been able to back him up. We don't have a chance to make the playoffs, but you still have to go out there and try your best to win every ballgame."

Moscoso (8-10) was charged with four runs — three earned — and five hits in seven innings. Torii Hunter's RBI single in the first was the Angels' only hit until the sixth, when Erick Aybar bunted his way on with one out and got to second after Howie Kendrick hit a liner off Moscoso's right hip and was thrown out by the pitcher.

Bobby Abreu followed with a seeing-eye ground single into right field that snapped a 1-all tie, and Hunter made it 4-1 two pitches later with his 23rd homer and second in two nights.

Hideki Matsui, who has spent the majority of the season as Oakland's designated hitter, made his 26th start in left field and committed a two-base error that enabled his former club take a 1-0 lead in the first inning.

Aybar led off with a pop fly down the line, and Matsui overran the ball into foul territory while trying to avoid a collision with shortstop Erik Sogard. The ball landed just inside the chalk beyond Matsui's outstretched left arm, and Aybar ended up at second. The error was Matsui's first since May 8, 2008, when he misplayed a single by Detroit's Ryan Raburn that allowed him to take an extra base in a game against the Yankees at Comerica Park.

The A's scored their first run when Williams gave up singles to his first three batters in the fifth, including an opposite-field hit to left by Weeks that drove in Sizemore.

Hunter capitalized on the miscue with an opposite-field RBI single. It was the 11th unearned run charged to Moscoso and the 82nd against the Athletics' staff, the most since they gave up 83 in 2000. As a team, the A's have an AL-worst 124 errors — their highest total since 2001 (125). The last time they led the league in that department was 1998 with 141.

Matsui hit what should have been an inning-ending double-play grounder to second base in the fifth, but first base umpire Ron Kulpa got the call wrong after the relay throw from shortstop Aybar beat the runner. TV replays confirmed that Matsui was out, but the Angels survived the bad break as Josh Willingham flied out with a runner at third.

Williams (4-0) allowed a run and five hits in 6 1-3 innings, struck out two and walked two. It's the first time the 29-year-old right-hander has won four consecutive decisions since a 5-0 stretch in 2003 as a rookie with the San Francisco Giants, who selected him in the first round of the 1999 draft.

Williams did not pitch in the majors the previous three seasons after going 0-5 with a 7.20 ERA in six starts with Washington in 2007. This was his sixth start with the Angels.

"He's got pretty good command with everything he tries to do," Sizemore said. "He doesn't give in to hitters and always tries to make a quality pitch. And if you're not really focused, you're going to swing and get yourself out. He does a really good job of making you hit his pitch."

Rookie Jordan Walden followed Hisanori Takahashi and Scott Downs out of the bullpen, and finished up for his 32nd save after giving up Jemile Weeks' second RBI single of the game.

The Angels, who were eliminated from the AL West race on Friday night with Jered Weaver's 3-1 loss to Gio Gonzalez, are 2 1/2 games behind Boston and one behind Tampa Bay for the wild card with four games remaining. The Red Sox lost 9-1 at New York and Tampa Bay beat Toronto 6-2.

The Angels finish the season with three games at home against the Rangers. Boston will be at Baltimore for three after concluding their series at New York with a day-night doubleheader, and Tampa Bay finishes up with a three-game set against the Yankees at home.

"We need some help. But the bottom line is, we need to win games," manager Mike Scioscia said. "We want that help to come, but we need to be in a position where we can take advantage of it. All we can control is how we play the game, and then we'll see where we are on Wednesday."

NOTES: Oakland SS Cliff Pennington was a late scratch for precautionary reasons after experiencing some tightness in his left oblique muscle. ... A ceremonial first pitch was thrown by Joe Rudi, who played four seasons for the Angels and helped them win their first division title in 1979 after spending his first 10 big league seasons with the Athletics — including their final year in Kansas City. ... When Moscoso fanned Kendrick in the first inning, it was the 1,125th strikeout by the A's staff and broke the previous modern-day (since 1901) franchise record that was set in 2009.

Billy Beane of 'Moneyball' Has Given Up on His Own Hollywood Ending

By ADAM STERNBERGH, New York Times Magazine

Billy Beane has a wonderful story. At 18 he was a strapping young baseball prospect, raised in San Diego by a Naval-officer dad and drafted fresh out of high school in the first round by the New York Mets. He was a sure star — until he suddenly wasn't, his playing career faltering for reasons few could understand, least of all him. Then, at 27, a journeyman outfielder with a lifetime average of .219 who'd bounced from the Mets to the Twins to the Tigers to the A's, he walked out of the dugout and into the team's front office, looking for a job. He became a scout, and eight years later, he was promoted to general manager of a losing team. Under his watch, the A's, a small-market underdog with a minuscule payroll, made the playoffs five times in the next eight seasons.

Let's call that Chapter 1.

Then in 2003, "Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game" was published. The book, by Michael Lewis, dissected Beane's success and lionized him as an innovative visionary in a field clogged with myopic traditionalists. It explained how he boldly discarded conventional wisdom and embraced the advanced statistical analysis preached by a small band of radical baseball outsiders, inspired by the self-educated statistician Bill James. The book was a monumental best seller. And now, in what seems like the crowning chapter to this saga, "Moneyball" has just been released as a movie. The starring role of Billy Beane is played by Brad Pitt.

Let's call that Chapter 2.

If you were going to pitch this story as a movie, you would pitch it as David and Goliath meets "The Bad News Bears" meets "The Tipping Point" — a perfect confluence of sports-underdog drama and the allure of contrarian thinking. In fact, the only thing lacking in this Hollywood tale is a classic Hollywood ending. Because, as it turned out, those miraculous A's never did manage to topple the bloated Goliaths of the league — their sling always came up one stone short. And when, after the 2002 season, Beane was courted to take over the storied Boston Red Sox (if you can't beat 'em, etc.), he accepted — then abruptly declined. The jilted Sox instead promoted Theo Epstein, a 28-year-old wunderkind in the Beane mold. The Sox have since won the World Series twice.

The A's, meanwhile, have tumbled back to mediocrity: the team is on its way to a losing season this year, after compiling a record of 231 wins and 254 losses over the previous three seasons. Most of the innovations introduced or popularized by Beane have been freely adopted by other organizations, thus eliminating whatever stealth advantages he once enjoyed. The Moneyball philosophy ultimately triumphed, but Billy Beane never quite did.

"Moneyball," the movie, struggles with this inconvenient reality; certainly it's odd to watch a sports movie that doesn't — that can't — end with that rousing ninth-inning game-winner, with Roy Hobbs launching his pennant-winning shot into the lights. (Of course, in the Bernard Malamud novel that "The Natural" was based on — spoiler alert — the aged Roy Hobbs strikes out.) As Pitt-as-Beane says in "Moneyball," it ultimately doesn't matter how many games you win if you lose the last game of the season. The film ends with a black title card, announcing elegiacally and somewhat euphemistically that Beane is still waiting to win that last game.

Back in real-life Oakland, the real-life Beane is still playing an unfair game, but he's no longer winning. He's also spending a lot of time thinking about what exactly should happen in Chapter 3.

The home field of the A's was originally called Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum, then was renamed Network Associates Coliseum, then McAfee Coliseum, then Overstock.com Coliseum, and is now called, simply and awkwardly, O.co Coliseum, though the temporary signage on the brutal concrete structure suggests that this name, too, is provisional. The team's marketing motto this year, announced on large banners and billboards all over Oakland, is "Green Collar Baseball," which is presumably meant to evoke the gritty nature of a team largely free of big-name stars but which also unfortunately conjures the vision of a really unreliable Laundromat. The cover of the team's media guide features a quartet of promising, if baby-faced, starting pitchers, not one of whom you will have heard of unless you are a fantasy-baseball fanatic or the mother of one of the pitchers. Or Billy Beane.

The team's administrative offices are located in nearby Oracle Arena, the home of the Golden State Warriors basketball team. With their pale wood doors and cluttered quarters, the offices feel something like the administrative wing of an underfinanced suburban high school. This would make Beane the beleaguered but affable principal. His desk is piled high with papers, stacks of CDs (he's waiting to get around to the new Beastie Boys album), pictures of his daughters (he has three, from two marriages) and an army of Oakland A's bobblehead dolls. Beane, on this morning in late August at least, seemed laid back and even slightly goofy — more a West Coast dude than the fidgety tobacco-chomping operator portrayed by Pitt. He's 6-foot-4 and nearly 50, and he sat slightly slumped in his leather chair, wearing a white polo shirt. ESPN played on a large flat-screen just overhead, drawing his habitual glances.

His cellphone buzzed. He held up his hand to pause the conversation and answered.

A crusty beat reporter, sniffing out a scoop? A rival G.M., looking to horse-trade? Would I now be seeing the legendary Billy Beane in action?

"Sorry," he said, covering the receiver. "I'm at war with insects in my yard."

Billy Beane has beetle troubles.

"Well, you know, I've got a large tree. I've got fruit trees," he said, after hanging up. "I've got this great pear tree, and the leaves are dying. I've got this service that comes out to check on stuff, and he leaves me this dire note. He says the trees are covered with 'shot-hole-boring insects.' "

Neither of us knew what this meant, but we agreed: "Shot-hole-boring" sounded ominous.

"Anyway, he's on the case," Beane said.

It was a Thursday; the evening promised a game against Toronto, another team, like Oakland, long out of the playoff hunt. The previous night, the A's beat the Orioles — another also-ran — to bring its record to 55 wins and 68 losses. The team was in third place in its division and going nowhere; 123 games down, 39 to go.

Still, the season wasn't entirely over. There were a few meaningful games left on the schedule, to be played against the Yankees and Red Sox — meaningful to the Yankees and Red Sox, at least. Both teams were positioned to once again make the playoffs and were battling for first place in their division. "Next week we roll into New York and Boston," Beane said. "You go into a place like that in August, and they're fighting each other out, and you become sort of — it can be a little bit overwhelming." The A's had become an afterthought, a speed bump on someone else's road to glory.

So I asked him about the movie. He saw a rough cut, and he liked it — it made him feel a bit nostalgic. "I'd see a scene in the locker room with a player's name on a jersey and think, Oh, yeah, I forgot he was on that team," he said. "You know, it was almost 10 years ago, which is a long time in sports." In the movie, Pitt portrays Beane as an obsessed firebrand, smashing chairs and spinning doughnuts with his truck in the parking lot. I asked him if he has mellowed out since those days.

"Well, naturally age is going to do that to anybody," he said, and laughed. "As you get old, you get a bit more perspective, you get more experience and you've seen things play out. Probably the simple word for that is 'mellowed out.' "

As for that ultimate personal vindication — a championship — he shrugged and said, "It's not quite — I'm not some Javert, you know, pursuing the loaf of bread that was stolen."

He still likes Oakland. He likes the small-town feel. He likes the loyal band of associates he has assembled, including the assistant G.M., David Forst, a Harvard grad and Beane's presumed successor. And it's not as if he doesn't have anything to look forward to. "If I can just get through the next few months," he said, "then I can go fly-fishing."

This year, the Yankees, who have the highest payroll in baseball, will make the playoffs for the 16th time in the last 17 seasons. The A's, by contrast, have not made the playoffs since 2006; in fact, the team has made the playoffs 15 times since it became the Oakland A's in 1968.

A five-year dry spell actually places the A's among the more fortunate have-not franchises in baseball. The Toronto Blue Jays have not made the playoffs since 1993. The Pittsburgh Pirates have not made the playoffs since 1992. The Kansas City Royals have not made the playoffs since 1985.

Each year, a small-market team with a midrange payroll, like the Milwaukee Brewers or the Tampa Bay Rays, does make the playoffs, usually thanks to a few canny personnel moves, the judicious allocation of limited funds and, most crucially, a stockpile of young talent, collected through high draft picks that are a result of years and years of being absolutely terrible. Such a team has a few seasons to compete with the big boys — the Yankees, Red Sox and Phillies, primarily — before its young talent matures and bolts for big money, offered up by the Yankees, Red Sox and Phillies, primarily.

These occasional breakthroughs by midmarket teams allow those who defend the inherent competitive imbalance in baseball to point and say: "See? It's not *impossible*." Conversely, when a free-spending team like the Los Angeles Angels does not make the playoffs, those same people can say: "See? Money doesn't *guarantee* wins." (These people are, more often than not, Yankees fans.)

Ironically, no team did more to perpetuate this perception than Billy Beane's Oakland A's of the early aughts. Those teams made the playoffs five times despite having payrolls that were in the bottom third of major-league teams. They did this, in part, by finding overlooked players who excelled in undervalued facets of the game, like drawing walks. Beane didn't invent — and has never taken credit for — the advanced statistical analysis he utilized; in fact, he didn't even introduce it to the Oakland A's. (That was his predecessor, Sandy Alderson, to whom Beane was a protégé.) Still, Beane's success with the A's presaged a leaguewide revolution in player evaluation. It also temporarily changed the story line of baseball. The entire premise of "Moneyball" was that a smart operator could thwart the system. In the book, Beane is repeatedly compared to a card-counter at a casino, outsmarting the odds.

The book arrived in 2003, a few years after Malcolm Gladwell's "Tipping Point," another book that valorizes unorthodox thinkers and offers the titillating prospect of new and radical ways to understand the inner workings of the world. Despite their disparate subjects, both books became unlikely bibles to the business world and sacred texts in a growing canon: the Library of Contrarian Wisdom. The world says, "Zig"; you say, "Zag." The world says, "Think long and hard before making decisions"; you say, "Blink!" The world says, "A team can't compete with the Yankees while spending one-third the money on players"; you say, "Have you heard of a statistic called O.P.S.?" As a result, Beane (like Gladwell before him) took on a messianic stature outside his field. Within baseball, many old-timers scoffed at his theories and criticized him for arrogance. Outside baseball, he was viewed as a kind of maverick wizard.

"How do you routinely trump competitors that have twice the budget you do? Billy Beane can show you how," promised the promotional blurb for Beane on the Web site for the agency that, until recently, handled his corporate

speaking engagements. “Beane uses the powerful metaphor of baseball, but his genius lies in his ability to draw striking parallels to almost any industry (health care, insurance, finance, etc.).” In 2008, Beane shared a byline with Newt Gingrich and John Kerry on an [Op-Ed article about health care reform in The Times](#). The argued approach was, essentially, Health-Care-Ball: the application of smarter statistical analysis in order to lower health care costs. “America’s health care system behaves like a hidebound, tradition-based ballclub,” the article said. “The best way to start improving quality and lowering costs is to study the stats.”

Back on the diamond, though, Beane is having less success. He told me baseball is moving “back to an efficient market — albeit one with some random events that don’t offer perfect efficiency — where whatever you spend, that’s where you’re going to finish.” In short, the Yankees spend a lot and make the playoffs pretty much every year. The Pirates don’t, and they don’t. There are aberrations to this pattern, but the pattern itself is unmistakable.

But the more efficient baseball becomes as a market, I asked him, the worse it is for you, right?

“Oh, yeah!” he said, and laughed. He imagines a future for baseball, perhaps not too far off, when the haves — the Yankees, Red Sox, maybe the Dodgers — could split off into their own division, becoming “superfranchises, similar to what you have in soccer,” he said. In European professional soccer, which Beane has become increasingly obsessed with, you have the Champions League, which is loaded with superpowers like Barcelona, Manchester United and Real Madrid, who slug it out in a kind of tournament of the gods. “I think in baseball we’re headed that way,” he said. “Where you have superfranchises that are just getting huge. Where that leaves a lot of the other teams, we’ll see.” It goes without saying, though, that the A’s wouldn’t be asked to join that league of superteams.

After he agreed to stay with the A’s rather than depart to Boston, Beane signed a series of contract extensions that granted him a small ownership stake in the team. His current contract is up in 2014. “I’ve always been somewhat intellectually curious about other things,” he told me, speaking of his future in, or out of, baseball. “Do I have a lot of interests? Yeah. Do I have an idea of what I want to do? Yeah. Am I going to say it right now? No.”

But is it safe to say these will be nonbaseball-related activities?

“Some yes, some no,” he said.

He has no regrets, he said, about turning down the Red Sox job, even though it’s easy to think, in hindsight, that by combining his insights with that team’s resources, he might have been the one to make history there. “I have a wife and kids and parents who all live out here,” he said. “If it was strictly driven by the desire to just win games, and if that was the end-all for me, then yes. But this is the type of environment I like and enjoy.” Or, as Bennett Miller, the director of “Moneyball,” put it: “He would have died in Boston. It wouldn’t have been his show. He likes to be the guerrilla in the mountains in combat fatigues.”

There has also been recent talk of moving the A’s to nearby San Jose or Fremont, which would theoretically boost revenues and payroll. But by then Beane might be done with baseball altogether. He long ago turned his eye to other interests: soccer, for example, another hidebound sport that seems ripe for radical rethinking. He persuaded the A’s ownership to buy a Major League Soccer team, the San Jose Earthquakes, in 2007. He consults informally for Liverpool, the English soccer club that is now owned by the principal owner of the Red Sox. Michael Lewis, who has stayed friendly with Beane, says: “If I had to guess the fantasy for Billy, my guess is the A’s move to San Jose and double the payroll. He hands the team to David Forst, and then they acquire a European soccer team that he could start running.”

But why should Beane limit himself to sports? He also sits on several corporate boards, including that of the software company [NetSuite](#). It’s not hard — in fact, it is exceedingly easy — to imagine him simply walking away from baseball to start, say, a free-ranging consultancy. Billy Beane Associates. The powerful metaphor of baseball. Better results from limited resources.

In that case, there would be no tightfisted owners to haggle with; no sportswriters questioning your allegiance to a philosophy that you introduced them to; no old-timers claiming you're a huckster fraud. There would be no Yankees to try to topple and no calcified system that keeps them propped up. In that case, you would be the Yankees.

"There are two avenues of escape, once you recognize the predicament that you're basically doomed if you're Oakland," Lewis says. "One is to become the San Jose A's — to try and go from a small-market team to a big-market team. The second avenue of escape is to find another industry where those kind of inefficiencies still exist."

For now, though, for Beane, there is this small office in Oakland next to a concrete coliseum. On the wall, there is a whiteboard, covered in cryptic scribbles that he can't quite bring himself to erase. Part of it holds a chart, drawn up during a recent visit by Beane's pal who works for Liverpool, to sketch out the statistical advantages of acquiring soccer players at different ages. Lower down on the board, though, are remnants of 2002, the year Lewis tailed him and "Moneyball" came into being. The board reads "39, ZIE" and, under that, "40, PAP BON." This was a list of players from the 2002 draft — the one Lewis chronicled in his book — that the A's had yet to sign. "ZIE" was Brad Ziegler, a pitcher who later wound up with the team; "We just traded him," Beane said. And "PAP BON" was Jonathan Papelbon, the team's 40th pick in that year's draft, a long shot who spurned the team when it couldn't afford his signing-bonus demands. He went back into the draft the following season, was picked by the Red Sox and became a star — a bigger success in the major leagues than any of the 39 players the frugal A's drafted before him. Papelbon is less an example of the value of Moneyball than of the value of good old-fashioned money.

Beane considered the whiteboard. "It's not really a board to use anymore," he said. "It's more of a time capsule now." It's like the Billy Beane of that era was sending a scrawled message to the Beane of this era: Enjoy this streak because it won't last forever. Once the casino catches on to your card-counting tricks, you can't prosper at the table for long. And like any good card-counter, you need to know when to cash out and walk away.