

**A's News Clips, Tuesday, September 27, 2011**

**Oakland A's ponder whether they will re-sign D.H. Hideki Matsui**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

SEATTLE -- Hideki Matsui says he isn't thinking ahead to next season, which seems like a wise decision.

Based on his 2011 campaign, who can tell what's in store for the A's designated hitter?

He swung a frigid bat over the first half, hitting .209 and contributing to a team-wide offensive funk that buried the A's in the American League West race.

Then he went on a tear after the All-Star break, hitting .432 over a four-week span, but he's wobbling to the finish line.

Matsui is hitting .251 with 12 homers and 72 RBIs overall after Monday's 4-2 loss to the Seattle Mariners, a far cry from the .274/21/84 line he delivered with the Angels in 2010 and not nearly the production the A's expected from a player with five 90-RBI years in eight previous major league seasons.

"One thing I do know is that as far as this year, compared to my standard (production) in the past, the numbers area not something that I'm really proud of," Matsui said through translator Roger Kahlon.

Matsui, 37, who is on a one-year contract, said he has no idea what kind of interest he'll draw on the free-agent market.

How hard of a push will the A's make to bring him back?

That's one of their key decisions heading into the winter.

Surely it wouldn't break the bank to re-sign Matsui, who makes \$4.25 million this season. A one-year deal in the \$2 million range might get it done.

But the A's would need more production -- spread over the entire season -- than Matsui delivered this year, particularly if they don't retain cleanup hitter Josh Willingham, another impending free agent along with fellow outfielders Coco Crisp and David DeJesus.

The A's entered Monday averaging 3.99 runs per game, which would finish as sixth-lowest in Oakland history.

Matsui has said how much he likes playing under A's manager Bob Melvin, signed last week to a three-year contract. And Matsui has enjoyed the Bay Area.

"The location is great, and it's just very comfortable living here," he said.

But there are several variables that factor into his potential return.

Can the A's find a better replacement on the free-agent market?

David Ortiz, Vladimir Guerrero and Jim Thome are among the DH-types expected to hit free agency this winter, though Ortiz might be out of the A's price range.

It doesn't appear the A's have a better in-house DH option than Matsui. Power-hitting prospect Chris Carter is hitting .167 in 37 career big-league games.

Melvin has voiced his support for bringing Matsui back next season, and Melvin said he believes Matsui's late-season slump looks worse because of his post-All Star break hot streak.

"No one's going to keep up that pace for a whole half," Melvin said. "He's going to slow down at some point. And whether or not I got him a little tired with his playing time certainly is up for debate."

Matsui accounted for the A's first run in Monday's loss. He drove in Jemile Weeks with a first-inning single off lefty Jason Vargas (10-13). That snapped Matsui's 13-game streak without an RBI, which was his longest as a major leaguer.

A's starter Brandon McCarthy (9-9) went the distance in his final start, but he allowed Miguel Olivo's homer in the fifth to tie it and then gave up a three-run homer to Justin Smoak in the sixth that changed the game.

### **Oakland A's update: Former manager Art Howe not pleased with how he's portrayed in the movie 'Moneyball'**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

SEATTLE -- The movie "Moneyball" is getting sterling reviews, but don't count former A's manager Art Howe among those giving a thumbs up.

Howe blasted the portrayal of him in the film, which stars Brad Pitt as A's general manager Billy Beane and chronicles Beane's outside-the-box baseball thinking that spawned the "Moneyball" book based on the 2002 A's.

Howe saw the movie over the weekend and was extremely displeased with how his character -- played by Philip Seymour Hoffman -- was portrayed as being overly aggressive and combative with Beane.

"I'm very disappointed, very disappointed," Howe said by phone Monday from his Texas home. "I look at it as character assassination."

"Moneyball," released Friday, debuted at No. 2 at the box office in its opening weekend and is drawing lots of praise from movie critics.

But one of the most criticized aspects of the film is the portrayal of Howe, generally regarded as a mild-mannered individual who was easy to get along with during his tenure managing the A's from 1996-2002.

Howe is set up as a sort of villain in the movie, as he's shown pressing Beane about a new contract in one scene and clashing with Beane throughout the movie over who should play first base, Carlos Pena or Scott Hatteberg.

"It wasn't even close to my personality," Howe said. "They just went out of their way to degrade me."

In an interview with SiriusXM radio, Howe also said he was never consulted for his viewpoints in the making of the movie.

Right-hander Brandon McCarthy (9-9) went the distance in his final start of the season, but the A's lost 4-2 to the Seattle Mariners in the opener of a three-game series that finishes their season.

It was McCarthy's fifth complete game, which ties him with Seattle's Felix Hernandez for second in the American League. But McCarthy gave up Miguel Olivo's homer to tie it 1-1 in the fifth and then surrendered Justin Smoak's three-run shot in the sixth.

Right fielder David DeJesus (bruised hip) and shortstop Cliff Pennington (sore oblique) were out of the lineup, though A's manager Bob Melvin was hopeful Pennington could play Tuesday.

The A's signed radio play-by-play man Ken Korach to a three-year contract extension that takes him through the 2014 season.

### **Chin Music: Roof is closed as A's, Mariners begin season's final series**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune September 26, 2011 6:11pm

What's the mental image you get when you think of Seattle? Rainy, overcast, overall gloomy? That's the type of afternoon we had today, so the roof is closed at Safeco Field for the opener of this season-closing series between the A's and Mariners.

There's an interesting look to Oakland's lineup with Chris Carter and Michael Taylor batting back-to-back in the order. How often will we see these two bunched together next season, if at all, at the big league level? We might not get clarity on that until next spring, but the team's offseason decisions (which free agents they decide to bring back, and which ones they pursue from other teams) will impact the futures of both Carter and Taylor.

–Shortstop Cliff Pennington is out with his oblique injury, but A's manager Bob Melvin is hopeful of Pennington starting tomorrow. Right fielder David DeJesus remains out with a hip injury, and Melvin isn't as optimistic about DeJesus for tomorrow.

The lineups:

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

Mariners — Ichiro RF, Rodriguez SS, Ackley 2B, Carp DH, Smoak 1B, Olivo C, Robinson LF, Liddi 3B, Saunders CF; Vargas LHP.

### **Pizarro: It's movie night with Baseball San Jose**

By Sal Pizarro, San Jose Mercury News

Baseball season is essentially over here in the Bay Area, but hope springs eternal for members of Baseball San Jose, the group, encouraging the A's to dash down 880 to a new home in San Jose.

The boosters -- including Willow Glen businessman Michael Mulcahy and former state Assemblyman Jim Cunneen -- are getting a group together Wednesday at Camera 12 downtown to see "Moneyball," the Brad Pitt movie about the A's and general manager Billy Beane. The meetup at 201 S. Second St. is at 6:15 p.m., 35 minutes before the show starts.

People are encouraged to wear Baseball San Jose or A's apparel to get \$1 off admission. Get more info, or RSVP to join the group at <http://baseballsanjose.blogspot.com>.

**FASHIONABLE FORMS:** There was a great time had by all Saturday night at "Haute Havana Nights," InnVision's fall fundraiser at Villa Ragusa in Campbell. The evening was centered around some serious business -- bringing in money for InnVision's homeless services in Santa Clara County -- but the highlight was a fashion show featuring some notable folks from Silicon Valley.

Having been on the runway for InnVision last year, I know that fashion coordinator Bev Zeiss gives some great advice. And this year's models clearly followed it. All the ladies were top-notch, led off by an exuberant Aly Wagner, the Olympic gold medalist in soccer who played her college days at Santa Clara.

But the real strutting came from the guys, including KBAY's Sam Van Zandt, San Jose police officer Raul Peralez and former San Francisco 49er Guy McIntyre. But nobody vamped it up like Chris Boyd, senior vice president at Kaiser Permanente Santa Clara, who had women hooting from their tables with his slick, Euro playboy act.

**REAL MEAL DEAL:** Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley has a hearty fundraiser on its plate called "Lunch With ...," an eBay auction of meals with very interesting lunch dates that include Noah's Bagels founder Noah Alper, Oakland A's owner Lew Wolff and L.A.-based actor Kevin Weisman.

Probably the most intriguing lunch in the bunch is at the Santa Clara County Jail with Sheriff Laurie Smith, Undersheriff John Hirokawa, and Saratoga's Kathleen King, who's running for county supervisor. The meal won't be served in a cell but in the jail's Officer Dining Room. That is, however, a "no hostage" area, so let's hope the winner picks an uneventful day.

The auction started on Friday and runs through Sunday. Go to [www.jfssv.org](http://www.jfssv.org) for all the details and a link to the auction.

### **Weeks' meteoric rise has sense of destiny**

Scott Ostler, Chronicle Staff Writer

**OAKLAND** -- Here's a shopping list for your Jemile Weeks build-a-big-leaguer starter kit:

Tree branch, acorns, bottle caps, socks rolled into a ball, swimming pool, drum set, standard baseball equipment.

Mix in liberal amounts of strict parenting and great baseball/athletic genes, add love and hard work, boil under the Florida sun for 20 years, and the result is an overnight major-league sensation.

Jemile Weeks.

The A's called up Weeks from Triple-A on June 7, a temp fill-in for injured second baseman Mark Ellis. Weeks made himself at home and Ellis was traded. Weeks has been a .300-hitting switch-hitter with speed and style, a waif (5-foot-10 and 162 pounds) run amok, dreadlocks flying.

While playing in a home-field atmosphere that is a baseball version of the witness protection program, Weeks has given the A's the kind of instant impact that the legendary Buster Posey gave the Giants last season.

(Posey in 2010: 108 games, .305 BA, .756 OPS. Weeks in 2011: 95 games, .305 BA, .766 OPS.)

"We've got something special here," says Mike Gallego, the A's third-base/infield coach.

You sit down to talk with Weeks and you wonder where the rookie is.

### **Acts as if he belongs**

There is a hint of awe when he talks about coming to the big leagues: "The most fun thing is just being here. Getting called up, I was too happy. ... And then we get on those plane flights, man, going to the different cities. ... The food is all there for you, complimentary, you've got first-class seating throughout the plane, iPods playing ..."

But mostly Weeks carries himself as if he is unimpressed that he is tearing up big-league pitching, as if he has been here 100 years - which, in a genetic sense, he has.

Weeks' brother Rickie (4 1/2 years older and an All-Star second baseman for the Brewers), their father, their grandfather and their great-grandfather all had notable baseball careers.

Jemile has been a serious player since before he could walk. Growing up in the Orlando area, he would strain to roll his walker onto the field, wanting to play ball with Rickie. Jemile learned to count by keeping track of how many batting-practice pitches dad would throw to Rickie, then demanding an equal number of pitches.

Jemile's father, Rickie Sr., remembers coaching Rickie Jr.'s team when he was about 8. The players were complaining that someone was throwing rocks onto the field. Finally they noticed little 4-year-old Jemile under a nearby oak tree, using a tree branch to fungo acorns onto the field.

### **Sticks and stones**

The Weeks boys would hit acorns, bottle caps, tennis balls. They would swing underwater in the swimming pool. They would play sockball in the house, hitting from one knee. A hit into the couch is a double; over the couch is a homer. Break a vase or a dinner plate, uh-oh.

Broken china, that was the extent of trouble caused by the Weeks boys.

Rickie Sr. taught elementary school. Mom, Valeria, was in the Pentecostal ministry, on her way to becoming a pastor. You've heard of good cop/bad cop? The Weeks children had to deal with teacher/preacher.

"He and Rickie have not been mischievous, not under my roof," says Valeria Weeks-McMillian (she and Rickie Sr. are divorced, but are on friendly terms). "I'm just blessed, that's all I can say."

Both parents loved sports, but if the three kids (daughter Kaisha is one year younger than Rickie Jr.) were pushed and prodded, it was in the direction of the house rule: homework and church first, then baseball.

"We knew who the parents were. Put it that way," Jemile says with a smile.

Weeks is unfailingly respectful to umpires. An A's staffer recently asked him to make a public appearance and did a double take when Weeks showed up in shirt and tie. That's not the way today's ballplayer rolls.

Dress-up habits aren't all Jemile learned in church. He copied Rickie Jr. by becoming a drummer in the church's musical group and says that helped him develop rhythm, timing and hand-eye coordination, all useful in hitting. (Check out Weeks' stickwork on YouTube, in a drum-off with the Stockton Ports' mascot - "Dinger and Jemile Weeks drum battle.")

### **Claiming his place**

The A's drafted Weeks in 2008 out of Miami, the 12th overall pick. Injuries stalled his progress, but this year Weeks was healthy and ready when the A's called him up.

In his second game, Weeks doubled, singled and was deprived of a triple on a scorekeeping decision. The graph of his batting average is as smooth as his swing.

"I pretty much showed up and went to work," Weeks says, adding, "I don't know if it was that easy, but I knew a big factor of being up here was confidence, and that's something I try not to lack at any stage of the game. Obviously I had some nervousness, but I had to realize that you're called up for a reason."

The reason: Weeks can rake. His fielding is flashy, but rough around the edges. His swing is silk. Opposing pitchers haven't found the holes in his swing that often are the downfall of a hot rookie.

"You see a lot of guys," Gallego says, "they might start off pretty well and taper off. You see that happen a lot. This kid has, consistently, day after day, thrown major-league at-bats up there. Very impressive."

Weeks shrugs. Why should pitchers' adjustments knock him off-stride?

"Just like they try to understand me, I try to get an understanding of what they're trying to do to me," he says.

Rickie Sr. says, "I know they have hitting coaches in the big leagues, but Jemile was always big on correcting himself. After every swing, he always knows what he's done wrong."

The stroke is locked in. So is the attitude. Manager Bob Melvin says he is impressed with Weeks' reaction to the inevitable rookie speed bumps.

"He gets mad," says Melvin. "He doesn't start to doubt himself, drop the head and feel sorry for himself. He's very tenacious in what he does. He respects the game and he respects the opponent, but he's not awed by anybody, and that's pretty impressive to me."

If Weeks is riding a roller coaster of rookie emotion, it's all hidden under the polite smile.

"I wouldn't want to play him in a card game," Gallego says. "One of my big things for being a big-league player is not showing your cards, not letting the opponent know you're upset, that he beat you; not letting people know what you're thinking. ... I can't read the guy, and that's a good thing."

#### **Crisp decision looms; A's lose to Mariners 4-2**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

**Seattle** -- With the A's potential plans about free agents tied to a decision about a new stadium, it might be less likely that Coco Crisp returns to Oakland to play center field next season.

That doesn't mean, necessarily, that Crisp won't be in the Bay Area - the Giants could be an excellent fit for a solid offensive player with great speed and a good glove. Two industry sources told The Chronicle on Monday that they'd expect San Francisco to pursue Crisp if he does not re-sign with Oakland in the five-day window of exclusivity after the World Series.

Crisp stole two bases Monday night in the A's 4-2 loss at Seattle to tie Brett Gardner of the Yankees for the American League lead.

Steve Comte, Crisp's agent, said that, like others, he believes the A's spending will depend on the speed and the outcome of a stadium decision. Last week, Josh Willingham's agent, Matt Sosnick, told The Chronicle that he'd gone to the A's with proposals for a multi-year deal but was told the team is in wait-and-see mode while Major League Baseball continues to examine territorial rights issues that affect where a potential new stadium would be built - currently 2 1/2 years of deliberations and counting.

Comte said that he hasn't spoken to Oakland general manager Billy Beane recently, but he said, "The reality is that we knew in spring training that the situation with the stadium could impact their long-term spending."

There's another reality, too: Center field is an area where the A's don't necessarily have an in-house, everyday answer should Crisp depart. The most high-level center-field prospect is Grant Green, who recently converted from shortstop.

He's expected to be at Triple-A Sacramento next season, and another first-round pick who plays center, Michael Choice, will be at Double-A Midland.

"Covelli has been a productive player for them," Comte said, using Crisp's given name. "He gives them nice defense, speed at the top of the order, and he's a consummate pro."

And, with the A's good young pitching staff, the defensive part might be most important. "They've got to have someone who can go get the ball," Comte said. "But we'll keep an open mind, that's how we sort of approached it since the spring. And we'll see what the market brings."

Comte said that Crisp has enjoyed his time in Oakland, and Crisp said Monday, "I don't close any doors on anything."

Crisp is among the few A's with something left to play for: he and Gardner both have 48 steals after Crisp nabbed second and third in the ninth inning.

"I wouldn't bet against him," A's manager Bob Melvin said of Crisp. "When he gets on base, he's always a threat. His percentage is good. I'm pulling for him."

Crisp is 22-for-22 in steal attempts since the break.

**McCarthy's season ends:** Brandon McCarthy, signed as a free agent last winter, was one of the nicest stories the A's had in 2011, with a strong season following years of injury troubles.

"For my first year back, that felt pretty successful," he said.

McCarthy finished 9-9 with a 3.32 ERA and is expected to be back in the rotation next year. He threw his fifth complete game - and four of them were losses, including Monday's. He allowed four runs, three of them on Justin Smoak's homer in the sixth.

"I lost my focus a little bit in the middle innings," he said. "That isn't something that's going to leave a good taste."

**Briefly:** Adam Rosales snapped an 0-for-34 streak, the A's longest in 15 years, with a single in the eighth. ... Ryan Sweeney (right quad) is unlikely to play again this season. ... Radio play-by-play announcer Ken Korach signed a three-year extension through 2014.

### **Drumbeat: Pennington, DeJesus both out; A's open final series**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Safeco Field 9/26/2011, 6:07pm

Cliff Pennington might be an option batting left-handed tonight, and manager Bob Melvin is hopeful that Pennington will be able to start tomorrow. He's missed three games in a row now with left oblique tightness.

David DeJesus was walking with a bit of a hitch today after hitting the wall hard at Anaheim yesterday, and he's doing no baseball activity and just getting treatment. He can't see his right hip, but he's told he's got a pretty significant bruise. I asked if he still believes he'll be able to play tomorrow night. "I hope so," he said.

Ryan Sweeney won't play again this season. He told me he's done some hitting, but no running at all, and when I asked Melvin about Sweeney today, he said it would be a stretch. Really, what would be the point? I think that's everyone's take. There's no need to rush to get a player with a history of leg problems back after a quad strain.

It's Brandon McCarthy making his final start of the season tonight – and he's had a very, very nice season. Here's the lineup behind him: Weeks 2b, Crisp cf, Matsui dh, Willingham lf, Sizemore 3b, Suzuki c, Carter 1b, Taylor rf, Rosales ss.

Partly because of injuries, partly because this series means nothing to either teams in terms of the standings, there are more of the younger players in the lineup, as I'd mentioned might happen.

If you didn't see them yesterday, I tweeted some of the rookie hazing photos, twitter account: @susanslusser. I'm posting one – I think people might enjoy seeing Andrew Carignan as the Giants' Brian Wilson, plus Jemile Weeks as Sonic. The lighting wasn't good, the quality is shaky, but you'll get the idea. Melvin said that Carignan as Wilson was his favorite get-up.

Carignan told me it took two washes to get the black out of his hair and beard, and he's not sure he got it all still. Guillermo Moscoso, who was made up to look like an old man by a professional makeup artist, needed numerous scrubs to get the stuff off his face, and he said he was still red and puffy under the eyes this morning. The rookies got paraded around downtown Seattle at dinnertime last night, and it sounds as they were all good sports about it. Dallas Braden, one of the many veteran masterminds, said they went to play pool and he said that the sight of muscly catcher Anthony Recker playing pool in his costume was priceless. "Biggest Minnie Mouse I've ever seen," Braden said.

### **McCarthy starts strong, stumbles late vs. M's**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- Tucked away in Seattle on Monday were two teams not named the Red Sox, Rays, Cardinals or Braves.

The A's and Mariners, rather, collided for something of a meaningless contest -- at least that's the way it would appear from a distance, considering the two teams' standings in the cellar of the American League West.

But even though a postseason berth wasn't at stake, pride still was for several players who took the field, including Brandon McCarthy. The A's right-hander, arguably his own biggest critic, has put together the best season of his professional career and, on Monday, looked to wrap it up with a respectable showing.

Minus two pitches, it was. Yet the pair of mistakes resulted in a combined four runs, and the A's offense wasn't able to combat the deficit in an eventual 4-2 defeat to Seattle, leaving McCarthy with the loss in his sixth complete game of the season.

Five of those games, including Monday's, have spanned eight innings. Yet just one has resulted in a win.

"It stinks," catcher Kurt Suzuki said. "A guy who goes out there like that and pitches his butt off and gives us the chance to win, it always hurts a little more.

"He's probably been the most consistent starter throughout the season. We've been able to build a pretty good relationship out there together. He's a guy that throws strikes, that throws the ball where he wants to. That's the type of guy you like."



McCarthy finished the season 9-9 with a 3.32 ERA in a career-high 25 starts, despite missing nearly two months because of shoulder issues. The right-handed hurler is assumed back for next year, and he'll likely stick in the rotation following this year's efforts.

"He had a great season," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "For a guy that had some injuries the year before, he gave us complete games and consistency basically every time out."

"I'm happy with it," McCarthy said of his season. "For the most part I made a lot of the adjustments I wanted to make. Health-wise, outside of the part in the middle, I felt as healthy as I have in years. I haven't had any hiccups, any recurrences, so it's great in that regard. I still think I have a long way to go in becoming a complete pitcher. But, really, for that being my first year back pitching this way, I felt I was pretty successful."

In his final start of the 2011 campaign, the righty surrendered a quarter of his eight hits for home runs -- the biggest blow being a three-run go-ahead blast from Justin Smoak with two outs in the sixth inning.

"That's not an executed pitch right there," McCarthy said. "I thought the pitch selection was fine. I just didn't throw it where I wanted to, and he did what he was supposed to. It was supposed to be a cutter in, and I left it middle-down. Credit to him, he didn't miss it. I'd love to have that pitch back and a few others in that inning."

"He was trying to throw sinkers away and come in to brush me back," Smoak said. "He threw me a fastball in and tried to come back in there and I was able to stay on one, finally."

The long ball proved more than enough cushion for lefty Jason Vargas.

The Seattle starter gave up a first-inning run on Hideki Matsui's RBI base hit but was nearly flawless thereafter, offering up just three hits after the frame while striking out a career-high 10 in eight strong innings.

Oakland's 1-0 lead lasted through the fourth, before a solo shot off the bat of Miguel Olivo in the fifth evened things out.

The A's final run came in the ninth off Brandon League, when Coco Crisp led off with a base hit and, after swiping two bags, scored on Josh Willingham's groundout. The pair of stolen bases gave the A's outfielder 48 on the season -- tying him with the Yankees' Brett Gardner for the AL lead with two games to play.

"He knows in those situations he's gotta make it, with us being down," Melvin said. "But that's his game and it's part of our game, and when he's on base we have to push it a little bit. He's one of the best in the league at doing it. He's got a green light and really never abuses it. He's a guy that really pushes it for us at the top of the lineup, and it really creates a lot of havoc."

### **Beavan aims to round out successful rookie campaign**

By Louie Horvath / MLB.com

Blake Beavan will make the last start of a successful rookie season for the Mariners on Tuesday when they take on the Athletics at Safeco Field.

Beavan appeared to hit a wall from Aug. 12 to Sept. 4, when he went 0-3 with a 6.44 ERA in five starts. In the three starts since, he is 2-0 with a 2.11 ERA.

Beavan has learned from his struggles and has searched to find a way to rebound.

"It's good because if you're having success all the time, you don't have anything really to focus on," Beavan said. "Because when you have success, you're cruising and having good outings after good outings. You're just trying to stay in the groove and not trying to work on anything or do more or do less. When you're struggling, that's when you find out more or less what you need to work on; and as a person, what kind of character you have and how you're going to bounce back."

And he'll likely be facing at least a few rookies on the other end

A's manager Bob Melvin had been reluctant to play his rookies and young players in their previous two series against the Angels and Rangers, when both opponents were competing for their playoff lives.

But with the Mariners languishing with the A's at the bottom half of the American League West standings, Melvin sees these final two games as a chance to get some of his younger players some experience.

"I'm looking forward to watching them play together," Melvin said. "Our goal, from here on out, is to create a winning atmosphere that we can take into next year."

Chris Carter and Michael Taylor both started for the A's on Monday, and there is a chance that Melvin will give them another day in the lineup, starting alongside fellow rookie Jemile Weeks.

#### **A's: DeJesus nursing a right hip contusion**

- David DeJesus is unlikely to play Tuesday's game after suffering a right hip contusion in the fifth inning of Sunday's game against the Angels. He hurt it when he slammed into the right-field fence while robbing Howard Kendrick's leadoff fly ball.

#### **Mariners: Ryan, Wells out for final two games**

- Casper Wells, who is suffering from an equilibrium issue, will sit out the remainder of the season, regardless of the results of the tests he was scheduled to undergo on Tuesday. Shortstop Brendan Ryan also won't see action, as he is nursing an injury to a disk in his neck.

- Luis Rodriguez started at shortstop on Monday after Kyle Seagar had played there in five of the last six games.

#### **Worth Noting**

- Trevor Cahill is 2-1 with a 3.71 ERA in five starts against the Mariners this season.

- Ichiro is 10-for-24 lifetime against Cahill.

- Beavan has given up seven hits in each of his two outings against the A's, in which he's 1-1.

#### **Sweeney unlikely to see action in final series**

SEATTLE -- Ryan Sweeney's frustrating season likely won't involve any more time on the field, as the A's outfielder has essentially been ruled out of the Mariners series.

Sweeney, who was forced into a bench role this season, is still nursing a strained upper left quad, and manager Bob Melvin said on Monday that the chance of him making another appearance this year is "getting less and less."

"I would say, at this point, it's probably a stretch," Melvin said.

Instead of opening the opportunity of having Sweeney potentially hurt himself further, the A's are set to give playing time to some youngsters in the final series of the season. On Monday, Michael Taylor made a start in right field in place of David DeJesus, who was unavailable because of a right hip contusion that he suffered the day before.

Also in question was shortstop Cliff Pennington, who was held out of the starting lineup because of left oblique tightness. In his stead, Adam Rosales made just his 16th start of the season and sixth at shortstop.

Moreover, Chris Carter joined the young corps, garnering a start at first base while Brandon Allen, who is batting .129 with 42 strikeouts over his last 26 games, received the day off.

### **Worth noting**

- The A's announced on Monday that they've reached agreement on a three-year contract with Ken Korach, whose new deal extends through the 2014 season.

Korach, the team's lead radio play-by-play voice on the A's Radio Network, is completing his 16th season in the A's radio booth.

### **Smoak's blast beats A's McCarthy**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEATTLE — This was supposed to be a breakout season for Seattle Mariners first baseman Justin Smoak but about the only thing that broke was his nose.

Smoak, the featured player in the 2010 midseason trade with Texas for lefty Cliff Lee, had his otherwise injured-ridden season sweetened Monday night with his three-run home run that helped give the Mariners a 4-2 victory over the Oakland A's.

"It's been a lot of ups and downs, too much watching games and not playing," said Smoak, who has missed 41 games with a thumb injury, a fractured nose and a groin strain at various points in the season. "It's been a learning experience and I know what I need to do this offseason to get prepared for a full big-league season."

With the score tied at 1-1 in the sixth, Dustin Ackley drilled a two-out single to center. Mike Carp dropped a single into left center, sending Ackley to third. Smoak then connected on a 1-0 fastball for his 15th home run, into the right-field seats.

"This is a guy we believe in," Mariners manager Eric Wedge said. "I feel like he's going to have a real good year for us next year. I know he's going to work hard this winter to shore himself up to stay away from those injuries and be stronger."

"You saw what his capability is tonight. Those three-run homers are big separators for a ballclub. He's capable of doing that."

Smoak is hitting .318 with four home runs and 14 RBI since coming off the DL Sept. 2.

Jason Vargas (10-13) earned his career-high 10th victory. He worked eight innings, allowing one run on five hits, walking none and striking out career-high 10.

Miguel Olivo also hit a solo home run in the fifth, his 19th. That broke the Mariners club record for most home runs by a catcher, one more than both Kenji Johjima and Dan Wilson.

Brandon League finished the ninth, allowing a run on Josh Willingham's RBI groundout, scoring Coco Crisp from third. Crisp had opened the inning with a single and stole second and third to give him 48 steals. He's now tied for the league steals lead with New York's Brett Gardner.

League still managed to pick up his 37th save in 42 opportunities.

A's starter Brandon McCarthy (9-9) went the distance, allowing four runs on eight hits. He struck out six and walked no one. It was his fifth complete game this season.

It was the first time this season that McCarthy has given up more than one home run in a game.

"I thought my pitch selection was fine, I just didn't throw it where I wanted to and (Smoak) did what he's supposed to," McCarthy said. "It was supposed to be a cutter in and I kind of left it middle down, right where a lefty likes to drop his barrel into it and he didn't miss it."

The A's touched Vargas in the first. Jemile Weeks lead off the game with a double into the left-field corner. Crisp moved him to third with a right-side groundout. Hideki Matsui sent Weeks home with a flare single to left.

That broke Matsui's 13-game streak without an RBI, the longest stretch of his career.

No A's player reached second against Vargas after the first inning. At one point, he retired 14 straight batters.

Vargas finished the season strong with three wins in his last four starts and a 2.03 ERA. But before that he had a stretch from July 6 to Sept. 2 in which he went 1-8 in 11 starts.

"I always felt like he was strong; that was never an issue," Wedge said. "But you want to see him bow his neck and finish strong, for his own confidence for next year, and for his teammates and everybody to see that."

Vargas said he tinkered with some mechanical issues over the past few weeks that has allowed him to stay over the rubber more with better control of his fastball.

"It really seemed to help how the fastball was coming out of my hand," he said. "It seemed to make everything else a little better."

"I think the key for me next year is being able to maintain that consistency after the All-Star break. That seems the thing I've had to fight with the most. This year was another learning experience. I'll reflect on it a little bit and get ready for next year."

He added that reaching 200 innings (201) was a big step.

"I think 200 innings is what every starter shoots for," he said. "That means every starter is doing their job pretty good."

With one out in the fifth, Olivo tied it, hitting a 1-0 fastball over the left-field wall. Olivo leads the team in home runs and RBI (62). No catcher has ever led the team in either category.

The A's Adam Rosales had a two-out single in the eighth, ending an 0-for-34 slide. His last hit was June 30, a span of 15 games.

Notes: Wedge has had meetings with his players, his coaches and the front office all geared toward improving next season's results. "This is going to be arguably the most important winter that these guys are going to have," he said. "With all these young guys who are here and where they're at and what they've experienced this year, they need to understand what they need to do physically to make sure they're coming to spring training where they need to be and not leaving anything to chance. Believe you me, I'll know when I see these guys or talk to these guys in regard to what we've been talking to these guys about the last two or three weeks and where they come in next spring." ... SS Brendan Ryan (neck) and OF Casper Wells (head) will not play again. ... A's have a pair of injured players, OF David DeJesus (hip) and OF Cliff Pennington (oblique) who did not play Monday but manager Bob Melvin hopes to have both available Tuesday.

**RockHounds Named Texas League Organization of the Year**

Midland Rockhounds

The RockHounds "celebrated" the franchise's 40th anniversary season ... and Citibank Ballpark's 10th anniversary year ... by setting a new all-time attendance record (308,810). A season in which the club marked four decades of professional baseball in the Permian Basin has now been capped with a major honor.

***The RockHounds have been named the 2011 Texas League Organization of the Year.***

The announcement was made today by league president **Tom Kayser**.

Kayser said the award is based on a combination of "overall operations and results of each club over a particular year," along with "improvements, advances, innovations, community involvement, fan relations, sales and attendance."

"A primary factor in the selection of the RockHounds in 2011 was the ability of the club to surpass the 300,000 level of tickets sold for the first time in the history of the club," Kayser said. "That the sales staff could accomplish this in a location that has a total population of far fewer people than the number of tickets sold is nothing short of amazing."

It is the fourth time the franchise has been named the league's top organization since the award was established in 1989 (the Midland Angels won the league's Promotional Award, a forerunner of the current award, in 1988). Each of the four awards has come during the tenure of team owners **Miles Prentice** and **Bob Richmond** and general manager **Monty Hoppel** (see quote, below).

Kayser also pointed to the club's "Rocky Town" ballpark theme, saying "... all the elements (sign posts, the Town Hall and other innovations) fit the RockHounds persona and add an attractive and useful element to the overall experience for fans visiting Citibank Ballpark."

"Every franchise in this league is outstanding, so to be selected is a great honor," Hoppel said. "It's really a community award, for our sponsors, season ticket holders and the great fans in West Texas."

"What I'm most proud of is seeing the efforts of our staff rewarded. Their hard work and dedication to the RockHounds and the sports complex are second to none. They deserve so much credit for achieving a level of success that no one thought possible in a market this size."

As noted by the league (see above), the RockHounds' attendance figure of 308,810 is nearly three times Midland's population (111,147 according to the 2010 census). Even when including Odessa (99,940) and other surrounding communities, the club operates in one of the smallest markets in all of Double-A baseball (there are 30 AA franchises nationwide).

The award marks the fourth major honor in the last five seasons for the club, beginning with Minor League Baseball's highest accolade, the John H. Johnson Award, in 2007. Hoppel was named Texas League Executive of the Year in 2009 and *Baseball America's* national Minor League Executive of the Year in 2010.

**"There is also an element of the long standing service that the RockHounds ownership and staff have provided to the Permian Basin for more than 20 years."**

**"Under the ownership of Miles Prentice and Bob Richmond and the administration of Monty Hoppel and the staff of the club, the RockHounds (and the Angels before them) have been firmly integrated into the fabric of the community through the various charitable programs, community involvement, as well as the extra events that the club sponsors."**

## Cactus League: Phoenix losing grip on spring-training baseball

### A's, Brewers may exit Phoenix for other Valley sites

Peter Corbett, The Arizona Republic

Phoenix could be losing its grip on spring-training baseball, even as the Cactus League looks to attract more teams to the Valley from Florida.

The city has been working hard to try to keep the Milwaukee Brewers in Maryvale and the Oakland Athletics at Phoenix Municipal Stadium, but both teams are considering other options for when their leases expire in 2012 and 2014, respectively, said Rob Harman, Phoenix deputy parks director.

*The Arizona Republic* has learned that Phoenix and the A's did not extend their contract agreement this past spring despite public announcements in April that the deal was imminent.

"I expect the A's and Brewers will both be moving, but exactly where is to be determined," said Robert Johnson, a Cactus League advocate who ran Mesa's campaign to publicly fund a new Chicago Cubs stadium.

Mesa's Hohokam Stadium is the most immediate option for the A's, Brewers or a possible team from Florida's Grapefruit League, Major League Baseball's other spring-training league. Hohokam should be available as early as 2014, when the Cubs are scheduled to move to a new stadium near Riverview Park.

"We've had talks with a few different baseball teams (about Hohokam), but I'm not at liberty to divulge who," said Marc Heirshberg, Mesa parks director.

The growing Cactus League has had six teams relocate over the past three years - three of them arriving from Florida - and added three new stadiums, Goodyear Ballpark, Salt River Fields and Camelback Ranch Glendale.

Both spring leagues now have 15 teams. That growth pushed Cactus League attendance to a record 1.59 million fans this year and the league's economic impact is estimated at \$360 million, according to the Cactus League Association.

The 2012 Cactus League season will feature no new teams for the first time since 2008, but league officials say more moves could be coming by 2013 or the following year. A 16-team league would be better for game scheduling because of the even number of teams.

There has been speculation about five Florida teams showing interest in the Cactus League, but nothing definite is in the works, said Robert Brinton, Cactus League Association past president who is involved with Mesa's Cactus League efforts.

Those teams are the Houston Astros, Minnesota Twins, Washington Nationals, Toronto Blue Jays and St. Louis Cardinals. But leases are in place until 2016 for the Astros, 2017 for the Nationals, Blue Jays and Cardinals, and 2020 for the Twins.

"Teams can break leases, but historically that's not the norm," Brinton said.

### **Funds tapped out**

Building any more new spring-training stadiums in the Valley will be a difficult challenge. The Arizona Sports and Tourism Authority, the agency that distributes tax dollars for Cactus League venues, is tapped out for new stadium funding.

And the price tag soared beyond \$100 million for Salt River Fields, the new home of the Arizona Diamondbacks and Colorado Rockies, raising the bar for the type of spring-training complex teams want. That facility was built on the Salt River Reservation just east of Scottsdale with tribal money.

Tribal officials from the Gila River or Fort McDowell communities have shown past interest in Cactus League development and could possibly fund a new complex, Brinton said.

The sports and tourism authority does have \$46 million for five renovation projects at existing stadiums over the next 10 years, said Tom Sadler, authority president.

The Brewers are first in line for \$6.7 million in renovation spending at the 13-year-old Maryvale Baseball Park, at 3600 N. 51st Ave.

Phoenix Muni, at 5999 E. Van Buren St., south of Papago Park, is due for \$3.7 million in renovations. The ballpark opened in 1964 and is the league's oldest stadium.

But unless it has a long-term agreement with a team, Phoenix is unlikely to receive any renovation money for its two stadiums.

Team officials for the Brewers and A's refuse to discuss their Cactus League plans.

"We don't have any comment at this point on our spring-training plans beyond 2012," Brewers spokesman Tyler Barnes said.

Ted Polakowski, A's director of Arizona operations, said the team is committed to Phoenix through 2014.

"As far as post-2014, we are continuing internal discussions," he said.

Oakland team owner Lewis Wolff has other business interests in Mesa. His company built and operates the Hyatt Place hotel at Mesa Riverview shopping center.

### **Brewers' options**

The Brewers have three two-year options to extend their lease at Maryvale beyond the end of 2012, said Harman, the Phoenix parks administrator.

Milwaukee, this season's National League Central Division winner, has struggled to draw fans despite having competitive teams and stars like Prince Fielder and Ryan Braun.

Average attendance this spring was 4,646, 13th among the 15 Cactus League teams. The Cleveland Indians had the lowest average attendance of 3,734 fans per game at Goodyear Ballpark.

Oakland drew 5,009 fans per game, 11th in the spring league. The A's have not won a division title or more than half their games since 2006.

Harman said Phoenix could lose both the Brewers and A's over the next five years.

"I certainly think that might be a possibility," he said.

Johnson, who led the Cubs stadium campaign, said the Cactus League has a chance to lure other Florida teams to Arizona because the facilities here, in one metro area, are closer together than in the Grapefruit League, where teams are spread around the state on both coasts, which causes longer travel times.

"There is no comparison," he said.

Cactus League officials said that Surprise has considered hosting three teams in its stadium. A three-team stadium would have to host a double-header and have the other team on the road, said Brad Curtis, Cactus League Association president.

