

Oakland A's GM Billy Beane fires back at angry Art Howe over portrayal in 'Moneyball'

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

SEATTLE -- Billy Beane fired back Tuesday after former A's manager Art Howe intimated that his unflattering portrayal in the movie "Moneyball" was the general manager's doing.

Beane, who was consulted for the movie but not involved in the actual making of it, said that simply wasn't true.

"I was wondering who was going to be the first guy to think I produced, wrote or directed this movie," Beane told this newspaper. "Now I have my answer. (Howe's) comments are completely misguided."

Beane cut off any other questions relating to the movie.

"Moneyball," based on the 2003 Michael Lewis-penned book of the same name, stars Brad Pitt as Beane and is earning rave reviews from critics. But it's being criticized for some of its inaccuracies, particularly the light in which it casts Howe, who managed the A's from 1996-2002.

A day after describing the movie as "character assassination," to this newspaper, Howe continued to vent his hostility at how he was portrayed by Oscar-winning actor Philip Seymour Hoffman. Being that Howe said he wasn't consulted by anyone involved in making the movie, he wondered if filmmakers built their negative characterization of him based on discussions with Beane.

"Where else would they get the information?" Howe said on Tuesday. "People who don't know me are going to think that's how I was. You work to build a reputation and then in two hours this movie breaks it down."

Howe took a stronger stance on several Bay Area radio talk shows Tuesday.

On KNBR, when Howe was asked if he felt Beane was responsible for the portrayal, he said, "That's the way it kinda looks. I don't know for sure, but I wouldn't be surprised." Later in the interview, Howe was asked what he'd say to Beane if he ran into his former boss.

"I wouldn't say anything first," Howe said. "I'd want to see if there was an apology coming."

Howe continued that Beane "knows who I am and what I did for the organization for seven years. ... If he watched this movie, which I'm sure he has, he knows there was a lot of injustice done here. I would hope he would be man enough to step up and call me and say, 'Hey Art, I'm really sorry this happened.' "

Asked if he expected Beane to reach out to him, Howe said, "Not really."

Later, Howe appeared on 95.7 The Game and was asked if he might consider legal action.

"Some guys have told me I should get a hold of somebody and see what I can do," he said. "I don't know."

It's no secret that Howe and Beane had a frosty relationship while Howe managed Oakland. But Beane scoffed at any suggestion that he had influence in the way Howe was portrayed in the movie.

Howe is portrayed as being confrontational and defiant. In one scene, he presses Beane about wanting a contract extension in 2002. But Howe notes that, in reality, he was in the first year of a two-year contract that season and therefore had no reason to ask for an extension.

"It's certainly nothing like Art Howe," said A's special adviser Grady Fuson, who was the team's scouting director from 1995-2001 and returned in 2010. "(Hoffman's) look is not close. (And) he's not an arrogant man."

Howe wasn't the only A's official cast in an unflattering light by "Moneyball."

Fuson butted heads with Beane during his first stint in Oakland but left on decent terms after the 2001 season, taking an assistant G.M. position with Texas.

But in the movie, Fuson -- played by actor Ken Medlock -- gets fired after a heated exchange with Beane and yells an expletive into his face. Fuson attended the "Moneyball" premiere Sept. 19 in Oakland with his wife, Kathy, who didn't take kindly to that scene.

"She was upset," Fuson said. "She goes, 'That never happened.' I said, 'I know, but we don't control Hollywood.' "

Fuson said he got a heads-up from director Bennett Miller that he would come out on "the villain side" in the movie. But Fuson said he enjoyed the movie.

"The only thing that didn't fare well with me was dropping an F-bomb on my boss," Fuson said with a laugh. "I don't think I can take my grandson to see it yet."

Oakland A's update: Trevor Cahill flashes form of old with seven shutout innings

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Cahill in fine form, throws seven shutout innings

SEATTLE -- The Trevor Cahill who took the mound Tuesday night is the pitcher the A's expected for all of 2011. Where he was for most of the season is difficult to explain, but the right-hander ended his year with seven shutout innings as the A's beat the Seattle Mariners 7-0 at Safeco Field.

The teams finish the season against each other Wednesday night. Cahill (12-14) allowed four hits, struck out seven and walked one.

After a 6-0 start, Cahill entered the night 5-14 with a 5.22 ERA in 25 outings since then.

"It was just an inconsistent season," Cahill said. "It started off real strong and kind of went downhill from there."

"We saw a lot of the Cahill (Tuesday) that we saw in the first half when he was at his best," left fielder Josh Willingham said.

Willingham provided offensive support with his 29th homer -- a three-run blast in the top of the first off Blake Beavan (5-6). Scott Sizemore hit a two-run homer in the fifth.

A's manager Bob Melvin said he considers second baseman Jemile Weeks a legitimate candidate for the American League Rookie of the Year award. Weeks, who wasn't promoted from the minors until June 7, entered Tuesday's game leading A.L. rookies in triples (8), ranked second in stolen bases (22) and third in hits (121), doubles (25) and multiple-hit games (35). He's batting .303.

But the A.L. boasts a deep list of candidates, including Angels first baseman Mark Trumbo, Rays pitcher Jeremy Hellickson and Yankees pitcher Ivan Nova, and Weeks could be penalized by his late call-up.

The A's swung a trade with Kansas City for first baseman Kila Ka'aihue, sending the Royals minor league pitcher Phillip Hollingsworth. Ka'aihue, 27, started the season in the majors but hit .195 over 23 games and was optioned to Triple-A. To make room for Ka'aihue on the 40-man roster, the A's placed reliever Joey Devine on the 60-day DL with a strained back muscle. "He's got power, which is pretty important at that position," Melvin said of Ka'aihue.

Shortstop Cliff Pennington missed his fourth straight game with a left oblique injury and likely will sit out Wednesday's finale as well.

Chin Music: Pondering Jemile Weeks as Rookie of the Year candidate

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune 9/27/2011 6:17pm

The lineups for game 2 of A's-Mariners:

Oak — Weeks 2B, Crisp CF, Matsui LF, Willingham DH, DeJesus RF, Sizemore 3B, Suzuki C, Allen 1B, Sogard SS; Cahill RHP.

Sea — Ichiro RF, Rodriguez SS, Ackley DH, Carp LF, Smoak 1B, Olivo C, Seager 2B, Liddi 3B, Saunders CF; Beavan RHP.

—Much to Bob Melvin's surprise, David DeJesus (bruised hip) was feeling good enough to return to the lineup. Although Cliff Pennington said his oblique is feeling better, Melvin said the shortstop might be shut down for the final two games, though

he didn't rule out a pinch-hitting appearance. Melvin worries that Pennington could aggravate the injury going after a ball in the hole.

—Melvin said he believes Jemile Weeks is a legitimate AL Rookie of the Year candidate. I've batted this one around in my head a lot. And if it comes down to pure impact on a team, Weeks should be in the conversation. He was a huge factor in the A's improved second-half offense, and he brought a spark to a team that needed it with his speed and enthusiasm. Weeks is second among AL rookies in stolen bases, and third in hits, doubles and multiple-hit games. He leads rookies in triples. But, this year's AL Rookie of the Year class is very deep — Tampa Bay pitcher Jeremy Hellickson, New York Yankees pitcher Ivan Nova and Los Angeles Angels first baseman Mark Trumbo are three leading candidates. And because of that depth, the fact that Weeks spent the first two months in the minors hurts him. A member of the A's P.R. staff sent out a release earlier this week pushing Weeks' candidacy. But Weeks' abbreviated season, along with the fact that the A's have such a low national profile, makes it an uphill battle for sure. Too bad, because the guy has had a terrific season.

What do you think of Weeks' case to be ROY?

Willingham's blast sets tone as A's win in Seattle

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

With one game to go, free-agent-to-be Josh Willingham needs one homer and two RBIs for a 30-homer, 100-RBI season.

"It would be really cool," Willingham said. "You never know. I'll be happy either way."

On Tuesday, Willingham's three-run blast in the first inning ignited the A's 7-0 win at Safeco Field, but he's not the only one with goals remaining. Coco Crisp goes into the A's last game tied with New York's Brett Gardner for the AL stolen-base lead, at 49. And Jemile Weeks is trying to wedge his way into the Rookie of the Year conversation, with a team-best .303 average, tops among AL rookies.

Crisp turned an ankle slightly in the sixth and he came out in the ninth because manager Bob Melvin had no plans to steal with a seven-run lead. Melvin said Crisp will play tonight.

The A's also have some team interests at stake: Strong finishes by David DeJesus and Hideki Matsui could make them Type-B free agents, providing the A's extra draft picks should they leave as free agents, and Crisp's good month should ensure his Type-B status. Plus, the A's would like to avoid being the first Oakland team since 1997 to finish more than 14 games below .500. The A's are 15 under (73-88).

Trevor Cahill had one of his best outings since early in the season, working seven scoreless innings and allowing four hits. He walked one and struck out seven.

"After the first inning, he was dominant," Melvin said. "That's the guy we're used to seeing."

Ka'aihue acquired: The A's picked up first baseman Kila Ka'aihue, designated for assignment by the Royals last week, in exchange for minor-league right-hander Ethan Hollingsworth. Assistant general manager David Forst said that Ka'aihue might be an option at designated hitter or first base.

Ka'aihue is friends with DeJesus from Kansas City and with Kurt Suzuki from growing up in Hawaii. "He's got some pop," Suzuki said.

Briefly: The Arizona Republic reported that the A's will explore moving from their spring training home in Phoenix to Mesa after 2014. ... Reliever Joey Devine was placed on the 60-day disabled list with a strained back muscle.

A's adjust to conditions, 'Moneyball' be darned

Bruce Jenkins, San Francisco Chronicle

San Francisco -- A certain Angels fan had seen quite enough of Jemile Weeks. "What's this guy doing on the A's?" he wrote via e-mail as Weeks' five-hit weekend helped Oakland dismantle L.A.'s postseason hopes. "And can they get rid of him, please?"

As the season winds down and "Moneyball" has people flocking to movie theaters, the A's are a team of contradictions. They have eyes on a new ballpark, but may never get there. Billy Beane has come to life through Brad Pitt's clever acting, but he'll face the lure of tempting offers from other clubs. And as the team builds its lineup of the future, "Moneyball" is about as relevant as an 8-track tape deck.

This is old news for anyone familiar with the A's inner workings, but just as they were a progressive, unconventional organization at the turn of the century, as portrayed in Michael Lewis' book, they remain flexible and open-minded. There's a hint of desperation behind any attempt to blend success with a modest payroll, and the A's aren't about to get locked into any hard-and-fast approach.

And thus, there is Weeks, the type of aggressive speed merchant Beane wouldn't have targeted 10 years ago. There is Michael Choice, last year's No. 1 draft pick (10th overall), a somewhat undisciplined hitter who nevertheless drew raves for his power hitting (29 homers) and potential in the Class A California League. The big leagues proved to be a rude awakening for Chris Carter and Michael Taylor, a couple of raw-power athletes, but ask Brandon Belt or the Angels' highly touted Mike Trout, who recently went through a 3-for-38 slump; the first time around isn't so easy.

One of the best things about "Moneyball," the movie, is the ongoing sequence of comments from the A's current staff. Old-school scouts are belittled on screen, but Grady Fuson, the longtime scouting director who was rehired by the A's last year, sets the record straight. "The whole thing has come back full circle as far as using numbers and statistics," he said. "Back then, I think they were using numbers for maybe 80 percent of the opinions formed. I'd like to think now that it's 60-40, with scouting being the 60."

Much has been made about the A's obsession with on-base percentage and a patient approach to hitting, to the point where active players around the game, including Texas pitcher C.J. Wilson, have ridiculed the notion. But they're not seeing the whole picture. "Selective is good," director of player development Keith Lieppman told espn.com, "but we're leaning more toward aggressiveness, where passive is a problem. It's about having a plan and teaching young hitters what they're capable of, and picking good pitches to hit."

It's crucial to note that Beane not only hired Bob Melvin to replace ill-chosen manager Bob Geren, but that he signed Melvin to a three-year deal. Melvin is hardly a raging eccentric, but he places more emphasis on speed and defense than past A's regimes, lending a refreshing tone of unpredictability to the A's style. We've all been beaten down by the San Jose rumors and the sight of a near-empty Coliseum, but a heart beats steadily within.

Art Howe livid over his portrayal in 'Moneyball'

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Art Howe finally saw "Moneyball," and he's furious.

Howe, the A's manager during the 2002 season celebrated in the movie, said that he is not portrayed fairly. As played by Philip Seymour Hoffman, Howe is mostly concerned about his contract, and he's pigheaded and surly when presented with new ways of thinking about personnel.

"They couldn't have demeaned me more," Howe told The Chronicle by phone Tuesday. "It's disgusting. I'm hurt by it. My reputation is altered by it. People who don't know me are going to think that's the real Art Howe."

In truth, Howe was well-respected and well-liked as a player and manager.

"I *wish* they'd communicated with me," Howe said of the filmmakers.

Original director Steven Soderbergh planned to have many principals, including Howe, play themselves, but Soderbergh left the project.

Many aspects of Bennett Miller's "Moneyball" rankled Howe.

"I don't know how you can get away with saying it's a true movie," Howe said. "I like how in the movie, it's Billy Beane who's the one who tells Mike Magnante he's being released, and he tells Magnante, 'Thank you so much for everything, Mike.'"

"Give me a break. I'm the one who had to tell Magnante, and he was less than a week away from getting his full pension. I like Mike, I tried hard to get him those days, I told them to put him on the DL to get him the time; it wouldn't have cost them anything."

The A's policy is not to place healthy players on the DL, but many in the clubhouse did feel that the team should have found a way to get Magnante the four days he needed for full benefits.

Drumbeat: A's Weeks for AL Rookie? Plus, DeJesus back, Pennington iffy

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Safeco Field, 9/27/2011, 6:10pm

I asked manager Bob Melvin during his media session today if he's surprised that Jemile Weeks isn't getting more notice for Rookie of the Year, and he said he hasn't been following the discussions much, but hearing that Weeks isn't getting much attention does give him pause.

"I don't know why he wouldn't," Melvin said, pointing out that he doesn't believe Weeks is any less important to the A's than, say, Mark Trumbo is to the Angels. "I'd be surprised if he wasn't mentioned in concert with some of those other guys."

Few of the national baseball writers who have written about the rookie race have mentioned Weeks, though it's seen as a wide net this year, with Trumbo, Eric Hosmer of the Royals, Jeremy Hellickson of the Rays, Ivan Nova of the Yankees, Seattle's Michael Pineda, Jordan Walden of the Angels, Mariners second baseman Dustin Ackley, Toronto's Brett Lawrie – and several others.

Weeks is batting .305, and though he only has two homers and 36 RBIs, he also has 22 steals and 50 runs – and that's with coming up in early June. He's batting .400 with runners in scoring position. He's a position player, who like Hosmer, Trumbo, Lawrie and Ackley is a potential future All-Star.

I don't have a Rookie of the Year vote this year, but I do have AL MVP, and two of the A's advised me to vote for Jacoby Ellsbury when he went deep for Boston (again) tonight. Most of the A's were watching the Red Sox's game intently before batting practice started.

Melvin said that if Cliff Pennington (oblique) appears in either of the final two games, it would be as a left-handed pinch hitter. Pennington wants to play, Melvin said, but he has concerns about Pennington going deep in the hole and trying to make a throw – there's no sense in possibly aggravating an injury in the final days of the season.

David DeJesus is back after missing a game-plus with a bruised right hip, and Trevor Cahill is on the mound. Here's the lineup in full: Weeks 2b, Crisp cf, Matsui lf, Willingham dh, DeJesus rf, Sizemore 3b, Suzuki c, Allen 1b, Sogard ss

The A's acquired first baseman Kila Ka'aihue, 27, from the Royals today; Ka'aihue has been up and down starting from 2008, and the Royals designated him for assignment last week. He's friends with catcher Kurt Suzuki from growing up in Hawaii, and with DeJesus from the Royals organization, and Suzuki and DeJesus noted that Ka'aihue was in a tough spot behind Billy Butler and, recently, Hosmer.

Now he comes to the A's organization (though not until the spring, he's not arriving tomorrow for the final game or anything) where there are already some young(er) first basemen in Brandon Allen (25) and Chris Carter (24).

"We're stockpiling some first basemen," Melvin acknowledged. "He's another guy who has some power."

Pair of dingers back Cahill's stellar effort

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- Should the A's afford the opportunity -- literally -- to bring back Josh Willingham for the 2012 season, it's likely that they'll be able to enjoy several repeats of the 7-0 victory that they posted in Seattle on Tuesday.

Willingham, a free agent at season's end, has been the club's most prolific player this year, leading the team in home runs and RBIs -- numbers he added to in fine fashion on the eve of Oakland's final game of the season.

Slotted in the designated hitter spot, Willingham belted a three-run homer to give the A's an immediate 3-0 edge in the first inning off Mariners righty Blake Beavan, marking his career-high 29th homer and 98th RBI of the year -- the most by an A's team leader since Frank Thomas tallied 114 in 2006.

"Willingham hit a fastball, just middle up," Beavan said. "I was trying to go inside and I left it right over the middle of the plate and up."

With one game to play, Willingham now is just one home run and two RBIs away from a 30/100 season. A's manager Bob Melvin said that the slugger will again DH on Wednesday, when Seattle lefty Anthony Vasquez -- who has surrendered 12 home runs in 27 1/3 innings in six big league starts -- is set to take the mound.

Though Willingham admitted Tuesday night that "it would be really cool" to achieve the feat, he said it's not one he listed as a goal prior to the season.

"I've always been a 20-25 guy with 80-85 RBIs when healthy the whole year," he said. "Fortunately I've been able to be healthy the whole year, except for the 15 days I missed with the Achilles. And that's allowed me to put up some numbers."

The veteran's latest efforts were aided by a strong showing from Trevor Cahill, who bowed out of the 2011 campaign with a seven-inning scoreless performance, allowing just four hits with one walk and seven strikeouts on 101 pitches.

A first-inning double-play ball that wiped away two baserunners to end the frame provided just enough momentum.

"After the first inning he was dominant," Melvin said. "I think that's the guy we're used to seeing. He had first and second, then got a double-play ball and was off to the races. All of his pitches were working to both sides of the plate. He's got a lot of weapons, and you saw all of them tonight."

"Great sendoff for him. Great way to finish. I considered letting him go out with his pitch count, but there's no way he's going to throw nine innings, so there's really no reason to. And I wanted him to end on a good note. That's a good feeling, knowing everything was there. He was over 200 innings, and he still had real crisp stuff in his last start of the season."

"It was good to end on a positive note, go deep in the game," Cahill said. "I was kind of tired there that last inning. I knew I was kind of done. I didn't want to go out there and leave with some guys on base with it out of my hands, so I think it was good to end right there."

It marked an encouraging conclusion to the season for the A's right-hander, who endured an inconsistent season that resulted in a 12-14 record and a 4.16 ERA, despite starting the year 6-0 with a 1.72 mark. It was his first scoreless outing since July 27, when he didn't give up a run in 7 1/3 innings against the Rays.

"I think he did a great job, ending the season exactly the way he started the season," Willingham said. "It was the Cahill we saw in the first half, when he was at his best."

Cahill's early 3-0 lead extended in the third, when Scott Sizemore collected an RBI hit and Kurt Suzuki added on with a sacrifice fly.

Sizemore reached base in each of his four at-bats -- collecting three hits along the way -- including a two-run homer in the fifth, his 11th of the season.

The damage chased away Beavan, who exited after the frame with seven runs on eight hits to his name.

Adding to the positive vibes was David DeJesus, who notched two hits after missing a game with a right hop contusion. The A's outfielder, who struggled perhaps more than any other regular this year, is writing a rather happy ending to an otherwise disappointing 2011 story, getting hits in 12 of his last 29 at-bats.

"I wanted him to play today," Melvin said. "And after being injured, it didn't look like he would. But he came in and responded. "With two games left in the season, he doesn't have to go out there. But he wanted to, and what he did really impressed me for a guy that could have easily said, 'My season's over. I haven't had a great year, so I'm done.' But he really fought to get in the lineup today."

The A's are set to close out their season on Wednesday in Seattle. A victory would secure the series win and give Oakland a 4-2 record on their final road trip, marking a positive for a team that previously struggled greatly when playing away from home this season.

Gio goes for career-high 16th win against Mariners

By Louie Horvath / MLB.com

The Mariners will send rookie Anthony Vasquez to the mound to close out their season against the Athletics on Wednesday night.

He may have a battered ego after being victimized for six home runs in 6 1/3 innings in his last two starts, both against the division-champion Rangers.

"It's all about getting that confidence going and just being able to relax and trust the things that got you here," Vasquez said. "Right now it's a process, and I just have to learn to trust and believe in myself and attack every guy with complete confidence."

Vasquez pitched well in the Minors, going 9-10 with a 3.57 ERA between Double-A Jackson and Triple-A Tacoma.

He relies on pinpoint control and keeping hitters off balance with his offspeed offerings, but he hasn't had much success with that of late.

"I thought his breaking ball was pretty good," Mariners manager Eric Wedge said. "But it's the same thing we've been talking about with him, just the fastball command. Without that, it's hard to utilize your changeup. It's him just not commanding the baseball. That's his MO. That's what he's done in the Minor Leagues. We've seen small stretches of it up here, but we haven't seen him do it consistently. And that's what he'll continue to have to work on."

Instead of contending with the Rangers' prodigious power, Vasquez will have to contend with the speed of Coco Crisp, who has set a career-high for steals, and enters Wednesday's finale tied with Brett Gardner for the league lead in steals.

"I don't care about it," he said. "I'm going to run, and whatever happens, happens. If I get it, I get it. If I don't, I don't. I'll talk about it after the season ends. I'll tell you how I feel about it then."

The A's will start Gio Gonzalez, their season leader in wins and ERA.

Gonzalez, who enters the game with 15 wins, will be looking to set a career-high for victories.

Athletics: A's acquire another first baseman

•: On Tuesday, the Athletics traded Ethan Hollingsworth to the Royals to get 27-year-old Kila Ka'aihue. Ka'aihue enters into a crowded first-base equation in Oakland, as the A's have been splitting time between Chris Carter and Brandon Allen.

He will also have to compete with Daric Barton, who entered this season as the starting first baseman. Allen has an early edge, but the club would like to see all of them compete for the job in Spring Training in 2012.

He will not start on Wednesday, as he can't be added to the active roster.

Mariners: Olivo on brink of franchise history

•: If Miguel Olivo finishes the season leading the Mariners in home runs and RBIs, he'll become the first catcher to ever pull off that double-dip for Seattle. Only three catchers have ever led their franchises in those two categories since 1961 -- Victor Martinez in 2007, Johnny Romano in 1962 and Lance Parrish in 1983 and '84.

Worth Noting

•: Vasquez will be making his first career start against the A's.

•: Brandon League's 37 saves are the fourth-most in franchise history in a season. He is one shy of David Aardsma, who recorded 38 saves in 2009. Kazuhiro Sasaki set the team record with 45 in 2001.

•: Michael Saunders and Miguel Olivo are a combined 0-for-17 with 12 strikeouts against Gio Gonzalez in their careers.

A's acquire Ka'aihue from KC for Hollingsworth

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- Just a day before season's end, the A's traded for additional depth at first base, acquiring Kila Ka'aihue from Kansas City in exchange for Minor League right-hander Ethan Hollingsworth.

Ka'aihue, 27, began the season on the big league roster but struggled in 23 games for the Royals. He batted just .195 with two home runs and six RBIs before being optioned to Triple-A, where he compiled a .272 mark with 11 homers and 65 RBIs in 95 games. He was designated for assignment on Sept. 21.

Known primarily as a slugger who can draw a good amount of walks, Ka'aihue fits the A's mold well and, according to manager Bob Melvin, will be included in the first base mix come spring. Heading into the offseason, Brandon Allen has the edge there, but Daric Barton will also have something to prove, as will Chris Carter.

"We're stockpiling a lot of first baseman right now, and that's another guy that's got a lot of power," said Melvin, who spoke to Ka'aihue briefly on Tuesday. "At that position, I think that's important to an extent. We wouldn't have made the push to get him if we thought he wouldn't compete and be part of the process next spring."

To make room for Ka'aihue on the 40-man roster, the A's recalled right-hander Joey Devine and placed him on the 60-day disabled list with a right rhomboid strain.

Hollingsworth, meanwhile, heads to Kansas City following a solid showing in the Minors this year. He spent most of his time with Double-A Midland, posting a 3.61 ERA over 94 2/3 innings before being promoted to Triple-A Sacramento on Aug. 27. In two starts with the River Cats, he posted a 1-0 record with a 5.06 ERA.

The right-handed hurler was originally acquired by the A's from the Rockies for righty Clayton Mortensen in January.

Crisp reflects as push continues for SB crown

SEATTLE -- The A's have long been eliminated from any postseason race, but Coco Crisp is very much alive in another battle.

The speedy outfielder is in contention with the Yankees' Brett Gardner for the stolen base crown. Entering Tuesday, both led the league with 48 swiped bags. The number represents a career-high for Crisp, who in the afternoon downplayed the competition.

"I don't care about it," he said, bluntly. "I'm going to run, and whatever happens, happens. If I get it, I get it. If I don't, I don't. I'll talk about it after the season ends. I'll tell you how I feel about it then."

In Monday's loss, Crisp stole two bases in essentially as many minutes, and he's been successful in each of his 22 attempts since the break.

"I'm always thinking about running," he said.

Also soon to be at the forefront of his mind is his future. Crisp insists "no doors are going to be closed," but on Tuesday the soon-to-be free-agent spoke of Oakland in the past tense, perhaps signaling a message that his time in green and gold is nearing the finish line.

"This was a great experience," he said. "It was a good group of guys. We had the capability of winning, but we didn't. We just couldn't put it together. I had a lot of fun here."

Even through his Twitter account Crisp shared on Tuesday what could be viewed as something of a goodbye.

"Unfortunately the season is ending," he tweeted. "I had a blast in Oakland and want to thank all the A's faithful and the organization for their support."

Crisp has been a mainstay at the top of the lineup this season, combining with rookie Jemile Weeks to create a dual threat on the basepaths. He's also a .305 hitter with runners in scoring position and provides above-average defense -- minus a below-average arm -- in center field, where the A's could be left staring down a big void should he depart.

Top prospect Grant Green made the transition from shortstop to center field this season but is likely to continue the grooming process in Triple-A next year. And 2010 first-round Draft pick Michael Choice, though seen as a potential star, is set to start the season at Double-A.

In the meantime, Crisp says "there are a lot of things I'm taking into consideration."

"Location's one, money's another," he said. "The quality of team is another."

Spring Training location may be another factor -- "Arizona is way better than Florida," he said.

"I don't have a crystal ball, I don't know what's going to happen," he said. "We'll finish these last two games, I'll spend time with my family, let the pieces fall where they are. No doors are going to be closed. It's a business. I enjoyed playing here. I've enjoyed every place I've played, so I've been blessed."

Worth noting

- While David DeJesus returned to the lineup on Tuesday after missing one game with right hip contusion, Cliff Pennington (left oblique tightness) remained out of the mix. Manager Bob Melvin said he believes that if Pennington were to see any time during the club's final two games, it would be as a left-handed pinch-hitter.

A's shut out Mariners 7-0

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEATTLE — Trevor Cahill and two relievers held Seattle to just four hits while Josh Willingham and Scott Sizemore hit home runs in the Oakland Athletics 7-0 rout of the Mariners on Tuesday night.

After allowing a pair of singles in the first inning, Cahill (12-14) retired the next 13 batters in a row. No base-runner advanced past second base. He struck out seven and walked one. Craig Breslow and Jerry Blevins each pitched a perfect inning to close out the four-hitter.

Cahill's 40 career wins in his first three seasons are second-most in Oakland history — behind Vida Blue's 42 — for a pitcher before his 24th birthday.

Mariners starter Blake Beavan (5-6) gave up seven runs and eight hits in five innings. He walked the second batter of the game, Coco Crisp, to end his streak without issuing a walk at 24 1-3 innings. It's the longest streak of consecutive walkless innings by a rookie starter since San Diego's Josh Banks had a 25-inning streak in 2008. Beavan's 1.27 walks per nine innings are third lowest all-time by a rookie pitcher.

That was the beginning of Beavan's troubles. Crisp stole second, his 49th. That tied him with New York's Brett Gardner for the league lead.

Hideki Matsui singled to right and Willingham followed with his club-leading 29th, a three-run shot that caromed off the left-field, second-deck facade for a 3-0 lead.

The A's pushed a couple more runs across in the third. Willingham drew a one-out walk and David DeJesus singled to left. Scott Sizemore singled to right, scoring Willingham and sending DeJesus to third.

DeJesus scored on Kurt Suzuki's sac-fly to deep left for a 5-0 lead.

Matsui opened the fifth with a single and eventually trotted home on Sizemore's two-out home run, his 11th, into the left-field bullpen.

Notes: Willingham is one of 10 big-league players nominated Tuesday for the annual Hutch Award. The award, first given in 1965, is presented to the player who best exemplifies the honor, courage and dedication of player and manager Fred Hutchinson, who died of cancer at age 45. In his honor, his brother, Dr. Bill Hutchinson, founded the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle. ... With LH Jason Vargas nudging over the 200-inning mark (201) Monday, that gives the Mariners two 200-inning pitchers (Felix Hernandez has 233 2-3) for the first time since 2004 with Jamie Moyer (202) and Ryan Franklin (200 1-3). ... Mariners catcher Miguel Olivo will finish as the team leader in both home runs (19) and RBI (62), the first time ever for a catcher in Mariners history. He also will be just the fourth catcher to do that in the expansion era, since 1961. The others were: Cleveland's John Romano (1962), Detroit's Lance Parrish (1983, 1984) and Cleveland's Victor Martinez (2007).