

Oakland A's manage only one hit in loss to Kansas City Royals

Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

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Oakland's hitters? They might as well have stayed warm and dry in the clubhouse during a 3-0 loss that was called with two outs in the top of the eighth.

The A's managed just one hit, giving them a total of eight hits and one run through the first 16²/₃ innings of this three-game series that is scheduled to finish Wednesday afternoon.

Royals left-hander Danny Duffy, who was 4-8 with a 5.64 ERA as a rookie last season, struck out eight over six innings. The only hit he allowed came on Cliff Pennington's third-inning double, though he issued four walks.

Duffy -- a native of Lompoc, in Santa Barbara County -- had a big following on hand. And surely he was able to hear their cheers from the mound.

The paid attendance was announced at 10,670, but it appeared that no more than about 2,000 showed up to a game that was delayed 43 minutes at the start.

Every wisecrack echoed throughout the Oakland Coliseum, combining with the weather for a dreary atmosphere that seemed to suck the A's right in.

But A's manager Bob Melvin wasn't using that as an excuse.

"We've played before small crowds before, we've played in inclement weather," he said. "That doesn't affect it."

They didn't advance anyone past second base, and the base runners they did muster didn't fare well.

Collin Cowgill was doubled off first in the second inning when Royals center fielder Lorenzo Cain made a running catch on the warning track to rob Daric Barton. Cowgill had rounded second base at the time Cain caught the ball and couldn't make it back in time.

After Pennington doubled with one out in the third, Duffy promptly picked him off.

A's right-hander Graham Godfrey fared well in his first start of the season, going six innings and allowing two runs on six hits with one walk and one strikeout.

The Royals scored the only runs they needed in the fourth. With runners on the corners, Mike Moustakas drove a ball to center. Yoenis Cespedes tracked the ball down but couldn't make the running over-the-shoulder catch, with the ball bouncing off his glove and then his body.

Billy Butler scored, and Jeff Francoeur would come home on Humberto Quintero's sacrifice fly for a 2-0 lead.

Jerry Blevins relieved Godfrey in the top of the seventh and allowed Mitch Maier's homer to right on his second pitch for a 3-0 Royals advantage.

- A's reliever Joey Devine will miss the entire season after undergoing his second reconstructive elbow surgery Tuesday, performed by Dr. James Andrews in Pensacola, Fla.

It's a devastating blow for the right-hander, who had the same procedure in April 2009 and missed two full seasons while recovering. He made 26 appearances for the A's last season and was viewed as a potential closer candidate entering this season.

"The frustration level and sadness he's going through right now ... to have to go back and do that again, I really feel bad for him," Melvin said.

Devine, 28, appeared in just three spring training games, as his elbow began giving him trouble early in camp. He visited Andrews -- who performed his 2009 surgery -- Monday.

Devine's ulnar collateral ligament had re-torn and needed to be replaced -- the process known as Tommy John surgery. Andrews also repaired the ulnar nerve and cleaned out Devine's flexor tendon.

Recovery from Tommy John surgery typically takes 12-18 months.

Requiring the surgery twice is rare, although A's head trainer Nick Paparesta points out that Los Angeles Angels closer Jason Isringhausen has come back from three Tommy John procedures.

"Obviously (having it twice) within a three-year period, it's a little unusual," Paparesta said.

Royals closer Joakim Soria underwent his second Tommy John procedure April 3, but Royals head trainer Nick Kenney estimated that fewer than 20 major league pitchers have had the surgery multiple times.

"The thing that's going to come out eventually is how long these (surgeries) last," Kenney said. "We don't know that yet. The reason that's going to start coming up is you have younger kids who are 15, 16 years old having this procedure."

- The A's avoided their first home rainout since May 5, 1998.
- With Josh Reddick getting the night off, Cowgill drew the start in right field and Cespedes batted third. Anthony Recker also made his first start, spelling Kurt Suzuki behind the plate.
- A's left-hander Brett Anderson, almost nine months removed from his Tommy John surgery, continues to recover well. He threw 45 pitches Tuesday, his first time throwing all of his pitches -- fastball, curve, slider and changeup -- at full distance.

"Feeling good is the No. 1 factor," Anderson said. "But I'm at a point now where my stuff is getting better and my competitive side is coming out. I'd rather focus on that than how my arm's feeling."

Anderson will fly to Phoenix on Wednesday to continue rehabbing in warmer weather. If all goes well, he will begin throwing live batting practice and possibly simulated games "in a week or two," he said.

- Cespedes, who defected from Cuba last summer, declined to comment on Ozzie Guillen's recent inflammatory comments, in which Guillen voiced support for Cuban dictator Fidel Castro. Former A's pitcher Ariel Prieto -- another Cuban defector now acting as Cespedes' interpreter -- also politely declined to discuss the topic.

Reliever Joey Devine has second Tommy John procedure; will miss season

Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

A's reliever Joey Devine will miss this entire season after under going Tommy John elbow surgery for the second time.

Devine went to visit Dr. James Andrews, the specialist who did his 2009 surgery, because the ulnar nerve on his elbow was bothering him. Multiple tests showed that Devine's ulnar collateral ligament needed to be replaced for a second time.

Typically, recovery from Tommy John surgery takes 12-18 months. It's a devastating setback for Devine.

"in spring training, from game 1, he had gone downhill," A's trainer Nick Paparesta said.

Several pitchers have come back from multiple Tommy John surgeries, Paparesta said. Jason Isringhausen has had three procedures.

Inside the Oakland A's: A's bats get washed away in 3-0 loss to Royals

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 4/10/2012, 11:47pm

Because of tonight's late finish, many of you won't get my game story in your morning paper, so here's a version of it below ...

By Joe Stiglich
jstiglich@bayareanewsgroup.com

The A's and Kansas City Royals managed to squeeze in seven innings between rain showers Tuesday. Oakland's hitters? They might as well have stayed warm and dry in the clubhouse during a 3-0 loss that was called with two outs in the top of the eighth.

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Duffy — a native of Lompoc, in Santa Barbara County — had a big following on hand. And surely he was able to hear their cheers from the mound. The paid attendance was announced at 10,670, but it appeared that no more than about 2,000 showed up to a game that was delayed 43 minutes at the start. Every wisecrack echoed throughout the Oakland Coliseum, combining with the weather for a dreary atmosphere that seemed to suck the A's right in. But A's manager Bob Melvin wasn't using that as an excuse.

"We've played before small crowds before, we've played in inclement weather," he said. "That doesn't affect it."

They didn't advance anyone past second base, and the base runners they did muster didn't fare well. Collin Cowgill was doubled off first in the second inning when Royals center fielder Lorenzo Cain made a running catch on the warning track to rob Daric Barton. Cowgill had rounded second base at the time Cain caught the ball and couldn't make it back in time.

After Pennington doubled with one out in the third, Duffy promptly picked him off. A's right-hander Graham Godfrey fared well in his first start of the season, going six innings and allowing two runs on six hits with one walk and one strikeout.

The Royals scored the only runs they needed in the fourth. With runners on the corners, Mike Moustakas drove a ball to center. Yoenis Cespedes tracked the ball down but couldn't make the running over-the-shoulder catch, with the ball bouncing off his glove and then his body. Billy Butler scored, and Jeff Francoeur would come home on Humberto Quintero's sacrifice fly for a 2-0 lead. Jerry Blevins relieved Godfrey in the top of the seventh and allowed Mitch Maier's homer to right on his second pitch for a 3-0 Royals advantage.

—A's reliever Joey Devine will miss the entire season after undergoing his second reconstructive elbow surgery Tuesday, performed by Dr. James Andrews in Pensacola, Fla.

It's a devastating blow for the right-hander, who had the same procedure in April 2009 and missed two full seasons while recovering. He made 26 appearances for the A's last season and was viewed as a potential closer candidate entering this season.

"The frustration level and sadness he's going through right now ... to have to go back and do that again, I really feel bad for him," A's manager Bob Melvin said.

Devine, 28, appeared in just three spring training games, as his elbow began giving him trouble early in camp. He visited Andrews — who performed his 2009 surgery — on Monday. Devine's ulnar collateral ligament had re-torn and needed to be replaced — the process known as "Tommy John" surgery. Andrews also repaired the ulnar nerve and cleaned out Devine's flexor tendon.

Recovery from Tommy John surgery typically takes 12-18 months. Requiring the surgery twice is rare, although A's head trainer Nick Paparesta points out that Los Angeles Angels closer Jason Istringhausen has come back from three Tommy John procedures.

"Obviously (having it twice) within a three-year period, it's a little unusual," Paparesta said.

Kansas City Royals closer Joakim Soria underwent his second Tommy John procedure April 3, but Royals head trainer Nick Kenney estimated that fewer than 20 major league pitchers have had the surgery multiple times.

"The thing that's going to come out eventually is how long these (surgeries) last," Kenney said. "We don't know that yet. The reason that's going to start coming up is you have younger kids who are 15, 16 years old having this procedure."

–The A's avoided their first home rainout since May 5, 1998. With Josh Reddick getting the night off, Cowgill drew the start in right field and Cespedes batted third. Anthony Recker also made his first start, spelling Kurt Suzuki behind the plate.

–A's lefty Brett Anderson, almost nine months removed from his Tommy John surgery, continues to recover well. He threw 45 pitches Tuesday, his first time throwing all of his pitches – fastball, curve, slider and change-up — at full distance.

“Feeling good is the No. 1 factor,” Anderson said. “But I’m at a point now where my stuff is getting better and my competitive side is coming out. I’d rather focus on that than how my arm’s feeling.”

Anderson will fly to Phoenix on Wednesday to continue rehabbing in warmer weather. If all goes well, he will begin throwing live batting practice and possibly simulated games “in a week or two,” he said.

–Cespedes, who defected from Cuba last summer, declined comment on Ozzie Guillen’s recent inflammatory comments, in which Guillen voiced support for Cuban dictator Fidel Castro. Former A’s pitcher Ariel Prieto – another Cuban defector now acting as Cespedes’ interpreter – also politely declined to discuss the topic.

Inside the Oakland A's: Joey Devine undergoes second Tommy John surgery — he'll miss entire season

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 4/10/2012 9:09pm

Here's the item I wrote on Joey Devine for tomorrow's newspaper ...

By Joe Stiglich

jstiglich@bayareanewsgroup.com

A's reliever Joey Devine will miss the entire season after undergoing a second reconstructive elbow surgery Tuesday, performed by Dr. James Andrews in Pensacola, Fla.

It's a devastating blow for the right-hander, who had the same procedure in April 2009 and missed two full seasons while recovering. He made 26 appearances for the A's last season and was viewed as a potential closer candidate entering this season.

“The frustration level and sadness he’s going through right now, working as diligently as he did ... to have to go back and do that again, I really feel bad for him,” A’s manager Bob Melvin said.

Devine, 28, appeared in just three spring training games, as his elbow began giving him trouble early in camp. He went to visit Andrews – who performed his 2009 surgery – because he had pain in the ulnar nerve in his elbow.

An arthroscopic exam showed that Devine’s ulnar collateral ligament had re-torn and needed to be replaced – the process known as “Tommy John” surgery. Andrews also repaired the ulnar nerve and cleaned out Devine’s flexor tendon.

Recovery from Tommy John surgery typically takes 12-18 months, so Devine is likely to be sidelined well into the 2013 season.

Requiring the surgery twice is rare, although A’s head trainer Nick Paparesta points out that Los Angeles Angels closer Jason Istringhausen has come back from three Tommy John procedures.

“I think as we start to see these Tommy John guys come back and pitch longer and longer, we’re starting to see more of them have it done (a second time),” Paparesta said. “Obviously (requiring it within) a three-year period, it’s a little unusual.” Kansas City Royals closer Joakim Soria underwent his second Tommy John procedure April 3; his first one took place in 2003 while he was in the Dodgers’ system.

Royals head trainer Nick Kenney estimated that fewer than 20 major league pitchers have undergone the surgery multiple times.

“The thing that’s going to come out here eventually is how long these (surgeries) last,” Kenney said. “We don’t know that yet. The reason that’s going to start coming up is you have younger kids who are 15, 16 years old having this procedure.” One player who sympathizes with Devine – A’s left-hander Brett Anderson, who is coming back from Tommy John surgery himself. The two had talked often in recent days before Devine left for Florida.

“You could tell in the back of his mind he felt something wasn’t right,” Anderson said. “You’ve just got to put in the work and get in the frame of mind that you’re going to be healthy.”

Yoenis Céspedes declines comment about Guillen

[John Shea, Chronicle Columnist](#)

One reported reason Yoenis Céspedes chose the A's over the Marlins was the possible circus atmosphere in Miami - he wanted to focus on playing baseball more than being the Marlins' symbol for anti-communist and anti-Castro sentiment.

Céspedes' extraordinary power and five-tool capabilities are the main stories in these parts, especially because he refuses to discuss politics, the circumstances in which he defected from Cuba or Ozzie Guillen's motor mouth.

Far removed from the Guillen epicenter, Céspedes declined Tuesday to address the Miami manager's flattering comments about Fidel Castro and ensuing apologies.

Earlier Tuesday, the Marlins suspended Guillen for his Castro statements to Time magazine.

"Miami's very political, and he feels more at ease, more relaxed here," said Amaury Pi-Gonzalez, the longtime announcer who's working on the A's Spanish broadcasts this year. "When I met (Céspedes), I said, 'I will not ask you anything political.' He said, 'Even if you did, I won't talk about it.'"

"From that indication, he doesn't want to get involved. He just wants to play ball. He could be idolized in Miami, but the pressure would be humongous."

Pi-Gonzalez was 17 when he left Cuba in 1961, two years after Castro took power, and settled in Miami long before it became a professional sports hotbed. He said Guillen's five-game suspension is enough, adding, "Ozzie speaks before he thinks," but it's not enough for Cuban American groups that want Guillen dismissed.

A native of Venezuela, Guillen was quoted saying he loves Castro and respects the retired Cuban dictator for maintaining power so long. At a Tuesday news conference, Guillen said he was misinterpreted in the article but took responsibility for his comments.

A new era of Marlins baseball is under way, featuring a new ballpark, new uniforms and, yes, a new manager. The team historically hasn't drawn well and expected the Cuban American community to be a huge part of the fan base, so there wasn't a worse time or place for Guillen to pop off.

Asked to envision Céspedes playing for Guillen, Pi-Gonzalez said, "That would've been interesting. The Marlins never had a big Cuban superstar (hitter). He could be a hero on that team, but if he lays an egg, the pressure could be bigger than in Oakland."

Last weekend, I asked Céspedes if he had any regrets about not signing with the Marlins, and he suggested joining the A's was a business decision. He wanted a four-year deal, and the Marlins were offering six. His A's contract allows him to return to free agency before the 2016 season, when he'll be 30.

Even without Céspedes and Albert Pujols, another of Miami's offseason targets, the Marlins beefed up their roster heading into their new ballpark, signing shortstop Jose Reyes and pitchers Mark Buehrle and Heath Bell. Guillen oversaw Hanley Ramirez's transition from shortstop to third base and even agreed to babysit volatile pitcher Carlos Zambrano.

Guillen was supposed to be the glue, the man who'd mold the team into a winner and serve as liaison between the team and Latin Americans throughout South Florida. If he stuck to baseball, he'd be fine, but Guillen never sticks to baseball. The Jeffrey Loria ownership, with a track record that's anything but glowing, needs to take blame.

Guillen has a history of saying outrageous things, and if Loria didn't want that in a manager, he shouldn't have hired Guillen. The suspension was levied by the club and supported by Commissioner Bud Selig, who spoke in a prepared statement of baseball as a "social institution with important social responsibilities."

Selig called Guillen's remarks "offensive to an important part of the Miami community and others throughout the world" and said they "have no place in our game." No explanation in the statement as to why Selig, along with Baltimore owner Peter Angelos, sat with Castro during an Orioles exhibition game in Cuba in 1999.

That's part of the game Céspedes keeps to himself. A long way from Miami, he chooses to focus on baseball and stay away from politics. Unlike Guillen.

A's dream of running is all wet

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Before the A's rain-delayed game with the Royals on Tuesday, manager Bob Melvin mentioned that he'd like to find a way to get his team's running game going.

The Royals put an end to thoughts of that in a rain-shortened 3-0 victory at the Coliseum. Just getting baserunners on proved problematic for the A's, who recorded one hit in seven innings. After a delay of more than an hour, the game was called with two outs in the eighth. It was the A's first shortened game in Oakland since May 4, 2005, against Texas.

"They needed to stop it when they did," Melvin said. "You could barely see the outfielders when it was called."

The night before, Kansas City had three runners thrown out on the bases, and on Tuesday, it was payback time: The A's didn't get a man past second base, but did have one man doubled off in the second inning and another picked off second in the third inning.

Graham Godfrey made his season debut for Oakland and the No. 4 starter allowed six hits and two runs in six innings, walking one and striking out one.

"It was a little wet tonight, but nothing I haven't seen before," Godfrey said. "It's definitely a challenge, but both teams have to play in it."

Kansas City starter Danny Duffy earned his third career win at the Coliseum in as many starts; he worked six scoreless innings, allowing one hit.

With a left-hander on the mound for Kansas City, Melvin tweaked his lineup significantly, putting Collin Cowgill in right field and Anthony Recker behind the plate, the first starts of the season for both.

With Josh Reddick out of the lineup, Melvin moved Yoenis Céspedes to third in the order, reasoning that designated hitter Jonny Gomes is most comfortable batting cleanup. Melvin joked that the way Céspedes keeps moving up the lineup - from seventh to sixth, then fifth, fourth and now third - he'll soon hit leadoff and then will have to go back to ninth and start over.

Céspedes, playing center field while Coco Crisp was moved over to left before the season started, could not make an over-the-shoulder grab of a deep drive by Mike Moustakas in the fourth; the ball ticked off Céspedes' glove and went for a double that drove in Billy Butler with the Royals' first run. Humberto Quintero added a sacrifice fly later in the inning.

Kansas City ended a 25-inning scoreless streak at the Coliseum.

Royals center fielder Lorenzo Cain did make a terrific running catch, robbing Daric Barton of an extra-base hit with a dash to the warning track in the second inning. Cain then threw out Cowgill, who had taken off from first when the ball sailed toward the wall and was past second when Cain made the catch.

The next inning, Cliff Pennington doubled, but Duffy picked him off second.

The start of the game was delayed 43 minutes by rain, and the game was called with two outs in the top of the eighth after Eric Hosmer lost his grip on his bat during a downpour, the bat nearly flying into the Kansas City dugout.

A's Devine has 2nd Tommy John surgery

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Only three years after his first ulnar-collateral-ligament replacement surgery, A's reliever **Joey Devine** had the same procedure again Tuesday.

Devine had struggled with discomfort, particularly in the flexor-tendon area, for more than two years, so Dr. **James Andrews** decided to take a look at the elbow in an arthroscopic procedure earlier in the day.

What he discovered was some fairly significant damage - along with a torn UCL, Devine had problems with the ulnar nerve, which was essentially buried under scar tissue and had to be moved, and Andrews also debrided the flexor tendon. He replaced the torn UCL with the palmaris longus muscle from Devine's left arm.

Devine will miss at least 12 more months, although his last comeback from Tommy John surgery took more than two years.

"It's brutal for him," said left-hander **Dallas Braden**, who recently had a setback in his return from shoulder-capsule surgery. "But he and I talked about the idea of getting everything right, and he's by far not the oldest player to go through this. He'll definitely be in position to come back from this and find himself back on a major-league mound again."

A's trainer **Nick Paparesta** said that Devine's youth - he's 28 - will help and is one reason Andrews was determined to get this injury completely resolved. Andrews did Devine's first surgery, and he has known Devine since Devine was in the Braves' organization.

Second Tommy John surgeries are becoming more frequent; often they're needed about 10-11 years after the first one. The Angels' **Jason Isringhausen** has had three of them, and he's still pitching. Kansas City's **Joakim Soria** is out for the season after a second Tommy John, and **Chris Capuano** had a good season with the Mets last year after having the procedure again.

"It's just unfortunate, but at this point, he might as well get it out of the way, clean everything up," left-hander **Brett Anderson** said. "It's a tough process."

Anderson is doing well in his recovery - he's on track to be back roughly one year after his July 14 procedure. On Tuesday, Anderson threw his first full bullpen session, 45 pitches, using all his pitches (fastball, curveball, slider) and at the full distance.

Anderson, soaked after throwing in the rain, said that his fastball is the best it has been in a year and a half.

Anderson will head to extended spring training after this homestand, and he expects to start throwing live batting practice next week.

Briefly: More rain is forecast Wednesday, but the A's again expect a letup around game time. ... **Grant Green**, Oakland's top pick in 2009, hit a grand slam for Triple-A Sacramento on Tuesday.

A's On Deck

Wednesday

vs. Royals

12:35 p.m.

Chen (12-8) vs. McCarthy (9-9)

Thursday

Off

Friday

at Mariners

7:10 p.m. **CSNCA**

Colon (8-10) vs. Hernandez (14-14)

Leading off

Reddick's arm: Josh Reddick's throw from right to get Jason Bourgeois at third Monday was a revelation for Bob Melvin. "I knew he had good arm strength, but I didn't know he can make a play like that. I was already thinking about where to play the infield with one out," Melvin said.

The Drumbeat: A's officially fall 3-0; after delay of 1 hour, game called

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum, 4/10/2012, 11:34pm

I'm not sure why it needed an hour delay, rather than the prescribed 30 minute wait, to call the A's 3-0 loss to Kansas City with two outs in the top of the eighth, but it's officially over. All stats stand, including the A's one whole hit, a double by Cliff Pennington, who promptly was picked off second base.

Manager Bob Melvin said he agreed with the decision to delay the game at 10:01 p.m.; you couldn't even see the outfielders, he said. And once the tarp was on and it kept raining, taking it off could have affected tomorrow's field availability. So the decision was made to end it.

On a damp, miserable evening, the one sort of highlight, an odd one at that, was the Bacon Tuesday celebration in the right-field bleachers, and Royals outfielder Jeff Francoeur – who loves the crowd out there and whose \$100 donation got the whole thing going – was proudly showing off his Bacon Tuesday t-shirt in the clubhouse after the game; I saw photo evidence. He also received bacon mints from the fans out there, and all I have to say to that is: Gross!

I am told that Francoeur might have something for the right-field fans tomorrow, which makes me intrigued, and also a little sad I'll be at the Sharks' practice instead – although I believe I might be missing a few more rain delays, too, and that won't be a problem at hockey, thank goodness.

The Drumbeat: A's go into a rain delay with two outs in 8th

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum, 4/10/2012, 10:25pm

This rain delay, which began at 10:01, must last 30 minutes before any decision to end things, but it's raining hard, the warning track is saturated, and just before the umpires decided on this delay, Eric Hosmer lost hold of his bat and it nearly landed in the Royals dugout. Conditions are pretty poor. If this game is called with two outs in the eighth, all the stats will count and be official.

This has not been the A's night. They recorded just one hit during Danny Duffy's six scoreless innings of work, and they had two runners, Collin Cowgill and Cliff Pennington, thrown out on the bases.

It would have taken a pretty spectacular catch for Yoenis Cespedes to get Mike Moustakas' drive to deep center in the fourth; it glanced off his glove and Billy Butler scored KC's first run. Would Coco Crisp have made the catch? It was debated in the press box, but no matter who was out there, it would have been a tough play.

Humberto Quintero added a sacrifice fly that inning, and in the seventh, Mitch Maier homered off Jerry Blevins.

Duffy loves it here. He's earned three wins in three career starts at the Coliseum. He has all of 21 career big-league starts altogether.

Kansas City center fielder Lorenzo Cain made a great running catch in the second, robbing Daric Barton of an extra-base hit, and then he doubled off Cowgill, who'd charged from first past second. Cain left the game with a groin strain incurred on the play.

The Drumbeat: Joey Devine needs Tommy John surgery again

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum, 4/10/2012, 6:02pm

Just three years after his first ulnar-collateral ligament replacement surgery, A's reliever Joey Devine had the same procedure again Tuesday.

Devine had struggled with discomfort, particularly in the flexor-tendon area, for more than two years, so Dr. James Andrews decided to take a look at the elbow in an arthroscopic procedure today. What he discovered was some fairly significant damage – along with the torn UCL, Devine had problems with the ulnar nerve, which was essentially buried under scar tissue and had to be moved, and Andrews also debrided the flexor tendon.

Devine will miss at least another 12 months, although his last comeback took more than two years. It's such a tough situation, the right-hander – who had a remarkable 2008 season – just goes through one thing after another, and so many rounds of rehab.

"It's brutal for him," left-hander Dallas Braden told me. "But he and I talked about the idea of getting everything right, and he's by far not the oldest player to go through this. He'll definitely be in position to come back from this and find himself back on a major-league mound again."

A's trainer Nick Paparesta said that Devine's youth – he's 28 – will help and is one reason Andrews was determined to get this injury completely resolved and get Devine back to full health. Andrews did Devine's first surgery, and he has known Devine since Devine was in the Braves organization. Paparesta said that Andrews was as upset as he's ever heard him with the orthopedist called Paparesta to fill him in on Devine's surgeries (arthroscopic and then the full Tommy John surgery) today.

Second Tommy John surgeries are becoming more frequent; often they're needed again about 10-11 years after the first one. Jason Isringhausen has had three of them, and he's still pitching. Pitchers' UCLs are prone to tears, there's no way around it. Devine was back and pitching effectively last year – he threw 46 1/3 innings between Oakland and Sacramento, and in his 26 appearances with the A's, he had a 3.52 ERA and 20 strikeouts, but back trouble cut short his season a bit.

Brett Anderson, who is coming back from Tommy John surgery, said of Devine, "It's just unfortunate, but at this point, he might as well get it out of the way, clean everything up. It's a tough process."

Anderson is doing well in his recovery – he’s on track to be back roughly one year after his July 14 procedure. On Tuesday, Anderson threw his first full bullpen session, 45 pitches, using all his stuff (fastball, curveball, slider) and at the full distance. Catchers had been moving up in front of the plate to catch his breaking stuff before today.

Anderson – soaked after throwing in the rain -told me his fastball is coming out of his hand better than it has in the past year and a half, with very good life. He’s trying to temper his optimism, but he feels great, and that’s the main thing. He’s now at the point where he’s thinking about the quality of his pitches and his command, which is a good sign that he is feeling great physically, but he also has to keep reminding himself that the quality of his stuff isn’t all that important at this point.

I’m told the A’s expect the game to start on time; the tarp is still on the field, but Clay Wood, the head groundskeeper, is meeting with crew chief Jim Joyce to discuss things. The A’s believe there is a window in which to play, and they’re hoping to get in at least five.

If they don’t, it’s likely a doubleheader Wednesday, though the weather isn’t supposed to be much better then or on Thursday, which is an off day for both teams.

UPDATE: It’s 6:45 and the tarp is still on. It takes 30 minutes to prepare the field when it comes off, so there isn’t much chance we’ll start before 7:30 or so.

A's offense can't get going in rainy loss to KC

By Jane Lee / MLB.com | 4/11/2012 3:15 AM ET

OAKLAND -- Playing in a quiet atmosphere amidst a steady rain at the Coliseum on Tuesday night, the A's offense proved equally silent against Royals lefty Danny Duffy.

The result was a 3-0 rain-shortened loss, their fourth in six games this season, as they head into Wednesday's rubber match with Kansas City.

Rain covered the field all night, but the two teams were intent on getting in the game in an attempt to avoid a possible doubleheader on Wednesday. With two outs in the top of the eighth, after Eric Hosmer lost the handle of his bat in the downpour, sending it into the visitor's dugout, the game was delayed for a second time before being called.

"They needed to stop it when they did," manager Bob Melvin said. "You couldn't even see the outfielders from the dugout at that time."

In a game whose start was delayed by 43 minutes, the A's never found a rhythm against Duffy, who walked four but allowed just one hit with eight strikeouts in six innings of work. The California kid, a product of Lompoc in the southern part of the state, maintained a mid-90s fastball in the wet weather -- while also displaying an effective breaking ball.

"He pitched well, you gotta give him credit," Melvin said. "He has plus-velocity, and he threw us more changeups than we anticipated."

A's starter Graham Godfrey, meanwhile, allowed six hits, three of which came in a two-run Royals fourth. Billy Butler's leadoff double was followed by Jeff Francoeur's base hit. Mike Moustakas' RBI double scored Butler, while Humberto Quintero followed two batters later with a sacrifice fly to score Francoeur.

The inning left Godfrey wanting to press the rewind button.

"Looking back, I left a fastball over the middle of the plate to Moustakas, and I was scratching my head at the ball Butler hit," Godfrey said. "I don't know how he got to it. Then, the ball Francoeur hit, I don't know if any other human puts that in play."

Otherwise, Godfrey fared rather well, despite taking a loss in his season debut. He gave the A's six innings of work before handing the ball over to an Oakland bullpen that extended the Royals' lead by one, when lefty Jerry Blevins surrendered a leadoff homer to Mitch Maier to start the seventh.

The A's didn't depart without more than one chance to score, though. Twice they put a runner in scoring position with just one out, but were unable to capitalize.

In the third, Cliff Pennington collected Oakland's first and only hit of the night -- a one-out double. But minutes later, he was picked off at second by Duffy. The baserunning error marked the A's second of the night, as Collin Cowgill -- making his first start of the season -- was doubled off at first base on Daric Barton's fly ball to end the second inning.

It was Kansas City center fielder Lorenzo Cain who made the impressive catch on Barton's deep ball. Melvin was quick to point out that he was the one calling for Cowgill to run.

"That was a tremendous catch," Melvin said. "I didn't think there was a chance he'd get to that ball, and it ended up being a big play as it turned out."

"It was a great play by Lorenzo Cain out there, and I was so hyped after that," Duffy said. "When my family's here, it's really easy to be loose on the mound -- and we had about 150 people here from Santa Barbara County. So I had a great time out there. I couldn't help but smile out there a couple times. It was fun."

The A's weren't about to blame the rain for their lackluster play, though.

"A little wet for baseball," Godfrey said, "but nothing I haven't seen before."

"When you're competing, it doesn't matter," Melvin said. "We've played in small crowds and in inclement weather, but it doesn't affect us."

Well-traveled vets meet in rubber game

By Zack Meisel / MLB.com

A few years ago, Bruce Chen and Brandon McCarthy were fighting for Major League survival. Now, they're the de facto aces of their respective ballclubs.

The two hurlers will square off on Wednesday when the Royals and Athletics meet for the final contest of their three-game set.

In 2009, the nomadic Chen joined the Royals, his 10th big league team. He didn't pitch in the Majors the year before, and he posted a 1-6 record and 5.78 ERA while splitting time starting and relieving in '09. The following season, however, the southpaw resurrected his career, going 12-7 with a 4.17 ERA.

He also appeared to have finally found a home.

Chen paced the Royals' staff with 12 more wins and a 3.77 ERA last season, and started for Kansas City on Opening Day last week, when he blanked the Angels over six innings.

"Oh, wow, man, Bruce really pitched a heck of a game," manager Ned Yost said. "I was proud of Bruce to come out and give us six strong innings like he did."

McCarthy's path to the top of his team's rotation hasn't been quite as long and winding, but it has been painful.

The right-hander cracked Chicago's rotation during the 2005 season, when he was just 21. He struggled in subsequent years with the White Sox and Rangers, as he battled injuries and inconsistency. He pitched mostly out of the bullpen in 2006, went 5-10 with a 4.87 ERA in '07, missed most of '08 with an injury and made 17 starts in '09. In all, he lost parts of four seasons to injuries, including three stress fractures in his right shoulder.

Something clicked, however, in 2011. McCarthy made 25 starts for the Athletics, going 9-9 with a 3.32 ERA. He was rewarded with an Opening Day start in Japan on March 28.

"It's a cool thing personally," McCarthy said about starting on Opening Day, "but really I'll be more excited if I pitch up to that level and do everything I'm capable of doing -- not just on that day, but the entire season."

Like an ace should, he delivered, holding Seattle to one run in seven innings.

Royals: Royals comment on Guillen situation

- Ozzie Guillen's remarks about Cuban dictator Fidel Castro -- and the manager's subsequent five-game suspension -- sparked league-wide and nationwide reaction.

Royals catcher Brayan Pena, who defected from Cuba in 2000, thought Guillen appeared sincere during his apology on Tuesday morning in Miami.

"I really saw somebody that was very regretful, somebody that was in a lot of pain, somebody who knew he'd caused him and his family and a lot of people a lot of pain," Pena said. "And somebody who really believed that he can change, that he learned from his mistake. He was like a piñata.

"This is America, everybody deserves a second chance. That's why I'm proud to be an American, that's why I became an American citizen."

Kansas City third-base coach Eddie Rodriguez hopes everyone involved -- both Guillen and the Cuban community -- comes away with a better understanding of the issues at hand.

"I don't think Ozzie meant any harm," Rodriguez said. "I feel that way, [but] it's a thorn in the Cuban community's side. I hope it passes -- and it passes in the right way -- and that balance and understanding comes across from everybody."

- Left fielder Alex Gordon went 0-for-3 in Tuesday's 3-0 win over the Athletics. Gordon remains without a hit in 17 at-bats this season. Manager Ned Yost gave him a break on Monday, using him only to pinch-hit in the ninth inning.

Athletics: Devine undergoes second Tommy John surgery

- Oakland reliever Joey Devine underwent his second Tommy John surgery in the last three years. The right-hander will miss the 2012 season, after missing the majority of the 2009 campaign and all of the 2010 season after his first procedure.

"The frustration level and the sadness he's going through ... having worked his way as diligently as he did to come back, it's tough," manager Bob Melvin said. "To have to go back and do that again, I really feel bad for him."

- Outfielder Yoenis Cespedes batted third on Tuesday, the fifth different spot he has hit in this season. Melvin has also penciled his rookie slugger into the seventh, sixth, fifth and fourth spots in his batting order.

"Before long, he'll be back down to nine, working his way back up," Melvin joked. "But I've said all along, he's a 3-4-5 hitter, and we'll rotate him around a bit."

Worth noting

- Oakland outfielder Coco Crisp has been successful in each of his last 24 stolen-base attempts.
- Royals outfielder Lorenzo Cain left Tuesday's game with a left groin strain.

Devine has second Tommy John surgery

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- It's a disheartening thing for any player to deal with Tommy John surgery. Imagine, then, having to undergo the procedure twice -- the second time just three years later, no less.

Joey Devine is living this nightmare.

It was revealed on Tuesday that the A's reliever was forced to undergo his second Tommy John surgery in Pensacola, Fla., and will miss all of the 2012 season. His first operation was performed April 21, 2009, and Devine proceeded to not only miss that year but 2010, as well. Since then, he's made just 26 big league appearances.

"In instances like this, you don't even consider what it means to the club," manager Bob Melvin said. "It's all about him, right now. The frustration level and the sadness he's going through ... having worked his way as diligently as he did to come back, it's tough. To have to go back and do that again, I really feel bad for him."

Though uncommon, a second Tommy John surgery is not foreign to the baseball community. In fact, it's becoming more frequent, though Devine's case remains slightly rarer -- in light of the short timeframe between the two surgeries.

The Royals, in Oakland for a three-game set that concludes on Wednesday, watched their own Joakim Soria undergo a second Tommy John surgery just last week. The Royals closer first had it done in 2003 as a Minor Leaguer.

Elsewhere, left-hander Chris Capuano, currently with the Dodgers, had Tommy John surgery in 2002 and again in 2008. He made his return in 2010 with the Brewers and last year, pitched with the Mets, posting an 11-12 record and 4.55 ERA in 31 starts (33 appearances overall).

Other pitchers to endure the procedure more than once include: Hong-Chih Kuo, Doug Brocail, Scott Williamson, Al Reyes, Darren Dreifort, Shawn Kelley and Mike Lincoln. Jason Istringhausen has gone through the surgery three times, while Jose Rijo had five Tommy John procedures before his career ended.

According to A's head trainer Nick Paparesta, youth is on the 28-year-old Devine's side. The righty had been plagued by discomfort in the flexor-tendon area for more than two years, particularly after three appearances this spring. Ultimately, Dr. James Andrews -- who also performed Devine's first surgery -- ended up taking the arthroscopic route on Tuesday.

What Andrews found was significant damage. Not only was there a tear in Devine's ulnar collateral ligament, but he had to monitor the debridement of the flexor tendon and also repair damage to the ulnar nerve, which was covered in scar tissue.

"They've obviously grown close over the last few years," Paparesta said of Devine and Andrews. "When I spoke to Dr. Andrews to see how everything went, he was just as upset as Devine. ... He gave it all he had."

Dr. Frank Jobe, the originator of the Tommy John surgery in 1974, recently spoke to MLB.com and admitted that, with a second round of the procedure, "you do worry a little bit more."

"There's a couple reasons for that," Jobe said. "One, you might be someone whose connective tissue is not quite as quality as the other guys who have gotten it just once and it held up. The other thing is, he might have gone back to pitching too soon. You can't be sure, though. If you're going to do it a second time, you want to be sure that you're going to get some really good tissue to replace it this time around."

Cespedes hits third vs. Royals on Tuesday

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- At this rate, Yoenis Cespedes will be batting in the leadoff spot by Thursday.

A's manager Bob Melvin, who placed the outfielder in the seven-hole for his Major League debut on March 28, has since slotted him into the sixth, fifth and fourth spots, respectively. Melvin hit him third against the Royals on Tuesday.

"Before long, he'll be back down to nine, working his way back up," Melvin joked. "But I've said all along, he's a 3-4-5 hitter, and we'll rotate him around a bit. Today, he's hitting third."

Elsewhere in the lineup, Collin Cowgill and Anthony Recker drew their first starts of the season, with Cowgill giving Josh Reddick a day off in right field and Recker spotting catcher Kurt Suzuki behind the plate. The timing seemed just right for them, said Melvin, with the Royals expected to pitch a lefty and Tuesday coming before a day game.

"It's the way I had it planned," Melvin said. "We need to get everyone involved, and those are the two guys that haven't really been as involved, as much, since the regular season started."

Cowgill, who hit a team-leading .396 in 20 spring games, pinch-ran in the team's opener, but had not played since. Recker was the last player on the A's Opening Day roster to see playing time. Melvin said it's likely Cowgill will get a second start on Wednesday, while left fielder Coco Crisp rests.

Worth noting

- Crisp stole his first base of the season on Monday night, and has now been successful in each of his last 24 stolen-base attempts.
- The A's have started the season with six consecutive night games, the most since 2006, when they also played six consecutive games under the lights. Last year, the A's were 42-57 at night, compared to 32-31 during the day.

Instant Replay: Royals 3, A's 0

Nate Stuhlberg, csnbayarea.com

Any fans who toughed the rain for the first seven innings were defeated in the top of the eighth, when a cell moved over the Coliseum resulting in a substantial downpour. The game officially entered a rain delay at 10:01 p.m. as the tarp was rolled onto the field.

The rain didn't stop falling all game, and neither did the A's batting averages. They were overmatched at the plate against power lefty and California native Danny Duffy. Cliff Pennington delivered Oakland's only hit, and Duffy finished with eight strikeouts.

Graham Godfrey, making his fifth career start, did not fare as well. He was touched up for six hits and two runs.

Persistent rain gave Jim Joyce's umpire crew the incentive they needed to officially call the game at 11:07 p.m.

It was the first rain-shortened game in Oakland since the A's were denied a chance to come back from a 16-7 ninth-inning deficit to the Rangers in 2005.

Starting pitching report: A's fourth starter Graham Godfrey had to wait six games before he got the nod, thanks to scheduling. He had to wait an additional 43 minutes to make his first start, thanks to rain.

Three-up, three-down innings in the third and fifth book-ended a troublesome fourth, in which the Royals pushed across two runs. Still, it was a flared single and a defensive miscue that spurred the Royals' rally, and Godfrey did well to limit the damage.

Godfrey threw 85 pitches to get through six innings, allowing six hits and two earned runs while walking one and striking out one. He took the loss in the first start of his first full MLB season.

Bullpen report: Godfrey lasted six innings, giving way to Jerry Blevins in the seventh. The second pitch Blevins threw, an 89-mph fastball, was turned around by Mitch Maier for a solo home run to right field and a 3-0 Royals lead.

At the plate: The A's looked patient against Danny Duffy early. Duffy, a California coast native who earned two wins in Oakland last year, was coaxed into 22 first-inning pitches. Jemile Weeks set the tone for the patient approach, seeing eight pitches before flying out in the A's first at-bat.

But patience doesn't score runs. The A's managed just one hit against Duffy -- a double by Cliff Pennington in the nine-hole.

Duffy looked good, mixing change-ups in the 70s with curve balls in the 80s and fastballs in the mid-90s over six innings of eight-strikeout baseball. He topped out at 97 mph on his seventh pitch of the game.

The A's narrowly avoided instant offense in the sixth inning when Yoenis Cespedes smashed a no-doubter just wide of the left-field foul pole.

In the field: Bob Melvin penciled Collin Cowgill and Anthony Recker into the lineup for the first time this season. Each did their part defensively.

Recker threw out both would-be base stealers, though it appeared as if Butler was left out to dry on an unconverted hit-and-run.

Cowgill made Melvin look good in the second inning when, with two runners on and two away, Chris Getz roped a ball to right. It looked like the Royals would be on the board with extra bases, but Cowgill, who was playing shallow against the nine-hitter, recovered nicely, racing into the right-field corner to make the over-the-shoulder catch and end the inning.

Over in center field, Yoenis Cespedes didn't have the same success on his tough play. Mike Moustakas sent one towards the 400-foot sign in dead center field. Cespedes had a beat on it, and tracked it to his glove, but he couldn't squeeze it. The bobbled ball fell safely to the warning track and the Royals were in business in the fourth.

With a runner on and no outs in the seventh inning, Getz sharply grounded a ball to the right of second base. Weeks went down to field it on the backhand with delusions of a highlight-reel double play in mind. He failed to glove the ball cleanly, though, and was forced to bat the ball towards second with his bare hand. Pennington picked up the rolling ball bare-handed to record the force out.

On the bases: Pennington, hitting out of the nine-hole, got the A's first knock. Standing on second base after he smacked a double, his mind must have strayed a moment, and Duffy took advantage. The Royals picked off Pennington for the one-four putout, and it was back to the drawing board for Oakland.

Attendance: If ever you wanted to communicate with the players on the field, Tuesday was the day to do it.

Steady rain delaying the battle between two of the four youngest teams in the majors drove down the attendance numbers as the *announced* crowd of 10,670 seemed much more sparse.

That said, the right-field bleacher crowd -- rowdy on the second unofficial celebration of Bacon Tuesday -- showed ample life and could be heard throughout the stadium.

Up next: The A's and Royals are scheduled to take the Coliseum field Wednesday at 12:35 p.m. in a rubber match pitting starting pitchers Brandon McCarthy (0-1, 2.25) and Bruce Chen (0-0, 0.00) against each other.

New A's slugger Yoenis Cespedes making strong early impression in rookie major league season

Janie McCauley, Associated Press, 4/11/2012

OAKLAND, Calif. — With one monster 462-foot home run, Yoenis Cespedes showed off a power stroke reminiscent of Oakland's Bash Brothers back in the day.

That swing spoke volumes to those who questioned whether the prized Cuban defector could dominate in the major leagues for the Athletics as he did in his Caribbean homeland.

Cespedes shrugs off his impressive start with a welcoming smile and a vow to be more patient at the plate in order to cut down on a strikeout total — nine through his first five games — that is too high by his standards.

He is determined not to get too high or too low along the way, knowing full well his rookie season with the A's will have its share of ups and downs.

Cespedes is working furiously to learn two new English words each day under the direction of former A's pitcher and fellow Cuba native Ariel Prieto, who was called away from his minor league coaching assignment to work with Cespedes as an interpreter and mentor this year. Cespedes also is studying opposing pitchers and trying not to put too much pressure on himself after Oakland outbid the Marlins and others by giving the center fielder \$36 million over four years with a chance to start his career in the big leagues — even if he is far from polished at age 26.

His batting practice has become a downright spectacle.

"A good batting practice is a way to know if you're going to do well that day," Cespedes said Monday in Spanish. "I need to have more patience. I'm striking out a lot, but I'm working to resolve it. I'm a little bit impatient. I like to swing at the ball. I'm still a little bit anxious at the plate. Playing every day should take care of it."

Cespedes is flattered by the immense interest in his pregame cuts, swing sessions that quickly began drawing comparisons to former Bay Area sluggers Barry Bonds with the Giants, and ex-Oakland stars Jose Canseco and Mark McGwire.

Even his teammates — not to mention his manager — regularly pause to watch.

"As far as the team goes, no one looks away when he takes batting practice," Melvin said. "We've seen him take batting practice many days and it's still a nice little show to watch."

It took all of four games for Cespedes to prove to the A's they had found a much-needed, reliable power man for the middle of the order. He homered in Game 2 against Seattle in Tokyo, then added two more against the Mariners as the teams' series resumed stateside in Oakland last weekend.

Melvin has already watched pitchers change their approach when Cespedes steps in to hit. He was batting .250 with the three homers and seven RBIs heading into Tuesday night's game with Kansas City.

"After his first couple at-bats and the success he had, they started pitching him differently right away," Melvin said. "He's made some adjustments. It's an ongoing battle with anybody as far as longevity and how long you stay in the big leagues and how well you do is the adjustments that you make."

Cespedes wasted no time gaining the confidence of his teammates, who were thrilled to add an offensive spark after a rather depressing winter in which the low-budget franchise traded away three top pitchers: former All-Stars Trevor Cahill, Gio Gonzalez and Andrew Bailey.

"He's doing a lot better than a lot of people anticipated, and that's a good thing for us," A's first baseman Daric Barton said. "He gets big hits at the right time so far. I think he'll have a great year and a good career. It will be fun playing with him and picking his brain. He's a good hitter. He's a quiet assassin for sure. That's one of those qualities that we like about him. He's a good dude. He comes to play, he plays hard and he plays right."

In Friday night's home opener against Seattle, Cespedes crushed a fastball that slammed off the second-deck cement facade above the Coliseum's suite windows in left-center.

Some are already pegging him to take part in the Home Run Derby at this summer's All-Star game festivities.

While the A's expected Cespedes to eventually assume the role of cleanup hitter, he has taken hold of that spot right away. Still, shortstop Cliff Pennington doesn't believe in comparing his new teammate to any of the game's great power hitters just yet.

"Oooh, I don't know. Way too soon," Pennington said. "I don't want to put too much pressure on him. Let the guy play. If the numbers say that at the end, the numbers say that at the end. No doubt there's a talent. He's very talented with a lot of potential."

Cespedes starred for Cuba in the 2009 World Baseball Classic and hit .458 with two home runs and five RBIs in six games. Yet nobody knew if he could put up similar numbers in the majors.

Brayan Pena, a Cuban with the Royals, knows how big an adjustment it can be during those early days in the big leagues.

"It is. That's why they pay him the big bucks, right?" Pena said. "Everybody knows about his talent. The only thing for him is just to adjust to the big league level. So far he's been doing a great job for them."

During games, Melvin communicates with Cespedes through hitting coach Chili Davis. The A's aren't worried about the outfielder doing the necessary preparation.

"He studies the game. It's not like he just sits on the bench and doesn't watch," Melvin said. "Everything he does is measured. It's not like he's just out here on ability alone. He's looking to shorten the gap. He's learning English. There are a lot of things that he's dealing with and he's very serious about every aspect of it."

Kansas City's Yuniesky Betancourt, another Cuban, is thrilled about Cespedes' contributions at this level.

"I'm very proud when my countrymen come out like this and make a good baseball name for my country," he said. "I know he's a five-tool player and he's going to be very successful."

The A's know it will be a while before Cespedes is a finished product, but that's OK. They like what he is doing against all types of pitchers.

"It's not like they don't throw breaking balls in Cuba," Melvin said. "He's going to get better as we go along. He's going to learn the opponent and he'll start seeing guys for the second and third time and he'll have a better idea what they're going to try to do to him. What he's done to this point has been terrific."

Added Pennington, "If he touched the ball, then he's doing better than some of the skeptics said, right?"

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Sacramento Slugs Its Way Past Tucson, 18-6

Sacramento River Cats

Tucson, Ariz. - Grant Green's fourth-inning grand slam flipped a 4-1 deficit into a 5-4 lead for the Cats, who went on to win their fourth-straight game, 18-6, over Tucson on Tuesday night at Kino Stadium.

The Padres jumped out to an early 4-0 lead on Sacramento, but the Cats scored the game's next 10 runs to take a 10-4 lead they would not relinquish. Green's grand slam was one of 22 hits for the Cats, who scored 10 or more runs for the fourth time in six games this season.

Travis Banwart (1-0) earned the victory, allowing six earned runs on nine hits in six innings of work. The right-hander struck out five without walking a batter in a 77-pitch effort.

Tucson starter Joe Wieland struck out four in just two innings before being lifted. Brian Tallet (0-1) suffered the loss after giving up seven runs-all earned-in 1.1 innings of relief.

Eight Cats hitters finished with at least two hits Tuesday, led by Green's two-for-five, six-RBI night. Jermaine Mitchell had four hits out of the leadoff spot, while Brandon Moss homered, tripled and drove in three runs as well.

The River Cats look for their fifth-straight win Wednesday night, with RHP Jarrod Parker (0-0, 4.50 ERA) scheduled to take the ball against Tucson RHP Casey Kelley (0-0, 4.50 ERA). First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. from Kino Stadium.

The River Cats open the 2012 home slate on April 13 at 7:05 p.m. against the Reno Aces, in a rematch of the 2011 PCL Pacific Conference championship series.

'Hounds end 6-game road trip with loss to Springfield

Midland Reporter - Telegram

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. -- Springfield scored five late runs off Midland RockHounds reliever James Simmons as the Cardinals came from behind to take a 5-2 victory Tuesday afternoon at Hammons Field.

The game concluded a six-game road trip for the 3-3 RockHounds, who will make their 2012 home debut at Citibank Ballpark against Arkansas at 7 p.m. Thursday.

The loss spoiled a great start by A.J. Griffin, who pitched six no-hit innings, walked one and struck out eight.

Midland clung to a 1-0 lead heading into the seventh inning when the Cardinals struck with three runs against Simmons (0-1). RBI singles by Adam Melker and Thomas Pham were sandwiched in between two walks and two wild pitches by Simmons.

Then in the eighth, Simmons walked leadoff batter Rainel Rosario, and then allowed a bunt single by Jose Garcia and a sacrifice bunt by Greg Garcia before being lifted for Brett Hunter. Jake Shaffer then greeted Hunter with a single to center field to score Rosario and Jose Garcia for a 5-1 lead.

The RockHounds added a run in the ninth when Michael Choice scored and later scored on an infield throwing error.

Comeback Kids: Ports Erase Two Deficits In Thrilling 10-9 Win

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. - Prior to Tuesday night's game at Sam Lynn Ballpark, the windy conditions made for a wild setting. The ballgame between the Stockton Ports and the Bakersfield Blaze was no less wild. Stockton fell behind 7-0 after four innings, scored eight unanswered runs, then fell behind heading into the ninth and scored a pair of runs to retake the lead and ultimately win the game by a final of 10-9.

In the early going, Bakersfield dominated the contest and gave Ports starter Ian Krol a rude welcome to the 2012 season. The Blaze scored two runs in the first on an RBI double from Yorman Rodriguez and an RBI groundout from Donald Lutz to take an early lead.

The Blaze tacked on to their lead in the third on an RBI single from Billy Hamilton and a fielding error charged to catcher Petey Paramore, as he mishandled a throw at the plate that would've prevented Hamilton from scoring later in the inning.

In the fourth, the Blaze got back-to-back singles from Travis Mattair and Devin Lohman to start the frame. After a walk loaded the bases, Kurtis Muller knocked an RBI single to right and Hamilton a two-run double to left to give the Blaze a commanding 7-0 lead.

Krol retired the final three batters he faced, but was removed after four innings. The left-hander allowed seven runs (six earned) on seven hits while striking out four and walking two.

Beginning with Krol retiring his final three hitters, Ports pitching found its groove. Sean Doolittle took over in the fifth and tossed two perfect innings while striking out three. Jose Guzman (1-0) retired the first two batters he faced in the seventh.

The Ports offense eventually came around in the sixth. Michael Gilmartin singled to start the inning and Josh Whitaker followed with a double to left to put runners at second and third. Miles Head drove in the first Stockton run with a groundout to second to make it 7-1. After Paramore walked, A.J. Kirby-Jones singled to center to make it 7-2 and knock Blaze starter Daniel Renken from the game.

With two aboard, Jamie Walczak came in from the bullpen and had his first pitch driven over the left field fence by Tony Thompson, getting the Ports back in the thick of things at 7-5.

Renken received a no-decision for the Blaze, going 5.1 innings and allowing four runs on six hits while striking out three.

Stockton's offense didn't slow down in the seventh. Myrio Richard led off with a single and two batters later, Whitaker walked and chased Walczak from the game. Daniel Wolford came on and walked Head, then allowed three straight RBI singles to Paramore, Kirby-Jones and Thompson which gave Stockton an 8-7 lead.

Walczak was charged with three runs in his inning of work, while Wolford was responsible for the go-ahead run scoring in the seventh.

After tossing a scoreless seventh, Guzman came out to pitch the eighth and was greeted by a leadoff home run off the bat of Mattair that knotted the game at 8-8. Lohman came up next and reached on an error committed by Thompson as he had a liner go off his glove at third. Tucker Barnhart followed with a single to right that put runners at the corners, and Mattair would score on a wild pitch to give the Blaze the lead back at 9-8.

The Ports would display resiliency once again in the ninth. With Brian Pearl (0-1) in to try and close the game, the Ports got back-to-back singles from Head and Paramore. After Kirby-Jones drew a walk, Thompson singled to center to bring the tying run in and knot the game at 9-9. Two batters later with the bases loaded and one out, Ryan Pineda hit a sac-fly down the right field line to score the go-ahead run, giving the Ports a 10-9 advantage.

Pearl would suffer the loss and a blown save after allowing both runs in the ninth.

Zack Thornton (SV, 1) came on to close the game in the last of the ninth and recorded his first save, striking out two and pitching around a two-out fielding error.

In the bottom of the first, catcher Max Stassi, who had started the game behind the plate for Stockton, appeared to have rolled his ankle as he took a relay throw on a play at the plate. Stassi came out of the game and was replaced by Paramore.

The Ports and Blaze are scheduled to play a matinee for the finale of their three-game set at Sam Lynn Ballpark. Blake Treinen (1-0, 2.84 ERA) will head to the bump for Stockton, opposed by Bakersfield right-hander Chad Rogers (0-1, 0.00 ERA). First pitch is set for 12 p.m. PDT.

Bees Win in Second Try at Home

Burlington Bees
By Daniel Trivinos

BURLINGTON, Iowa (April 10, 2012) - The Burlington Bees earn the first win of the home schedule with a 5-1 victory over the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers. After a 6-2 loss in the home opener Monday night, the Bees pitchers did a great job of striking out several Timber Rattlers and holding Wisconsin to one run.

Right-hander Sean Murphy didn't look sharp initially, but after walking two of the first three batters he faced, Murphy struck out the next two Wisconsin hitters to end the inning. Murphy didn't seem to struggle much in a five inning effort, and tallied seven strike outs, while giving up one hit and four walks. Despite putting runners on, Murphy kept Wisconsin driving in a run.

Bees manager, Aaron Nieckula then turned to left-hander Brent Powers to lead the Bees through the second half of the game. Powers earned a win in game two of the season after a strong effort against the Clinton LumberKings. The lefty distributed five walks in 2 2/3 innings pitched, but also struck out five batters. Powers allowed one run to score, but the run was unearned. Jeff Urlaub earned a hold after pitching one out in the top of the eighth. Ryan Doolittle pitched the ninth inning and struck out the last batter to finish the game. Overall, the Bees struck out 13 batters.

The first five innings saw the Bees putting runners on and leaving them stranded. In total the Bees left 11 runners on base Tuesday night, and have failed to score 24 base runners in the last three games. Still, the Bees managed to put together two good innings in the bottom of the sixth and seventh. With Sean Jamieson on third base, Dusty Robinson drove a two-strike pitch to the left-center field wall for an RBI triple. Bobby Crocker walked and Royce Consigli hit a ball to second base that went right through Carlos George's legs and allowed Robinson to score. Chad Lewis' base hit gave the Bees a 3-0 lead before the inning ended.

The Bees ended up scoring two more times in the bottom of the 7th to grab a 5-1 lead, and won by the same score.

Wednesday night is Kids Eat Free Night at Community Field. The Bees send right-hander, Drew Granier to the mound in an attempt to win the series before hosting the Kane County Cougars. First pitch is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. For tickets, go online to www.gobees.com or call the Bees office during normal business hours at (319) 754-5705.

Oakland A's MLN: Star Performances

Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Apr 11, 2012

It was an ugly night in Oakland thanks to the continuation of an unseasonably wet spring in the Bay Area and the Oakland A's early season offensive woes. Down on the farm, however, there were several A's prospects lighting up the boxscores. We take a look at those who shined brightest on Tuesday inside...

A.J. Griffin: Griffin is threatening to make quick work of his second tour of the Texas League. The tall right-hander has been nearly flawless thus far in 2012 for the Double-A Midland Rockhounds. On Tuesday, the only thing that could stop Griffin was pitch count, as he was pulled after six innings to keep his early-season work load low. Griffin allowed only one base-runner (who reached on a walk) in his six innings of work. He struck-out eight. In two starts this season, Griffin has allowed two hits and two walks in 11 innings. He has struck-out 16 and has a 1.33 groundout-to-flyout ratio. Unfortunately for Griffin, the Rockhounds have scored only one run with him on the mound and he has yet to record a win despite his hot start.

Grant Green: In two at-bats, Green drove-in a week's worth of runs. The A's 2009 top pick had two at-bats with the bases loaded in the Sacramento River Cats' 18-6 win over Tucson and he made them count, hitting a grand slam and a two-run

single. The homer was Green's second of the season. He had only nine all of last year.

Tony Thompson: The Stockton Ports roared back from an early 7-0 deficit to defeat the Bakersfield Blaze by a score of 10-9 on Tuesday. Thompson was a big reason for the Ports' comeback. He collected four hits and finished just a triple short of the cycle. One of Thompson's hits was a three-run homer and he finished with five RBIs.

Sean Murphy: The rangy right-hander made his 2012 debut for the Burlington Bees on Tuesday and he helped the Bees earn a 5-1 victory. Murphy was a little wild (four walks), but he allowed only one hit and he struck-out seven in five shut-out innings.

Jermaine Mitchell: Mitchell has shown no ill effects from his off-season knee surgery. The centerfielder is off to a hot start. On Tuesday, he filled up the boxscore, going 4-for-5 with three runs scored, three RBIs, one walk and a stolen base. He was also caught stealing. Mitchell is 9-for-19 to start the year with an 1124 OPS.

Sean Doolittle: Stockton starter Ian Krol struggled in his first start of the season, allowing seven runs (six earned) in four innings under windy conditions in Bakersfield. Doolittle came on in relief of Krol in the fifth and gave the Ports the opportunity to make their comeback by stopping the Blaze's offensive momentum. Doolittle threw two perfect innings, striking out three. Thus far, Doolittle has seven strike-outs and has yet to allow a base-runner in 3.2 innings this season.

Brandon Moss: Sacramento had plenty of offense, with 22 hits and seven walks, on Tuesday. Moss was another big bat in the River Cats' line-up. He went 2-for-4 with a homerun, a triple, two runs scored, two walks and three RBIs. Moss has a 1509 OPS on the season.

Petey Paramore: Paramore wasn't in the starting line-up for the Ports, but he entered the game early after starter Max Stassi exited with an apparent ankle injury. Paramore made the most of the opportunity, going 3-for-4 with a walk and two runs scored.

Michael Taylor: Taylor had another big game to extend his early season hot streak, going 3-for-5 with two doubles and three RBIs. He also walked. Taylor already has 11 RBIs this season in only six games.

A.J. Kirby-Jones: Kirby-Jones had a rough start to his 2011 season, but he isn't repeating those April blues thus far in 2012. The first baseman had another two hits, two RBIs and two walks on Tuesday for Stockton. Kirby-Jones is 8-for-15 with four walks in four games this season.

Brandon Hicks: Hicks had been off to a slow start with the River Cats at the plate, but he turned it around on Tuesday with a three-hit effort. He also scored two runs. Two of his three hits were doubles.

Derek Norris: It has been awhile since the A's acquired a position player prospect who immediately hit well after the trade. Norris appears to be bucking that trend. He had three more hits in six at-bats for the River Cats on Tuesday and is batting .375 with a 1179 OPS this season.

Adam Rosales: Rosales hasn't let the disappointment of not making the A's Opening Day roster get him down. He collected two hits in five at-bats with a walk and three runs scored on Tuesday. One of the hits was a triple. Rosales has a 962 OPS on the year.

Zach Thornton: It was a wild affair in Bakersfield on Tuesday, with the Ports and Blaze trading offensive punches throughout the game. Stockton fell behind 9-8 in the bottom of the eighth, but crawled back into the lead with two runs in the top of the ninth. Thornton came on in the ninth and prevented another lead change, working a perfect inning with two strike-outs to collect his first save of the season.

Hitters Off To Fast Starts In A's System

Chris Biderman, OaklandClubhouse.com

Apr 9, 2012

While the Oakland A's have technically been playing their regular season for more than a week, the A's minor league affiliates kicked off 2012 last Thursday. Here's a look at some of the A's hitter prospects that got off to a good start this year.

Michael Taylor, OF, Sacramento River Cats

The River Cats began the year in Las Vegas, where they took 3-of-4 games from the 51s behind a strong showing from nearly everyone in the lineup. Taylor led the way, getting eight hits in 14 at-bats with a home run and eight driven-in. He

was one of two Sacramento players to play in all four games of the series and finds himself with a .444 average and 1143 OPS to start the year. Taylor is looking to maintain his strong start after a wrist injury derailed the first two months of his season in 2011.

Derek Norris, C, Sacramento River Cats

The catcher acquired in the Gio Gonzalez trade showed his power potential in his first three games with Sacramento, hitting two homers and driving in six hitting behind Taylor. He has five hits in his first 14 at-bats, including two doubles and even a triple. He's second on the team in RBIs with six, only trailing Taylor's eight. But the career on-base dynamo is one of four River Cats hitters to not reach base via walk. Not that manager Darren Bush is complaining. He'll gladly take a 1.071 slugging percentage and 1384 OPS from his backstop.

Stephen Parker, 3B, Sacramento River Cats

After a somewhat disappointing year at the plate last year, Parker is looking to regain his 2010 form, when he hit 21 home runs and drove-in 98 for High-A Stockton. He got off to a good start in his first three games with Sacramento, getting four hits in nine at-bats and walking four times. That puts his early on-base percentage at .571 and OPS at 1238. But he does have an error to his name and will need to improve defensively if he wants a chance to get to the majors.

Daric Barton, 1B, Sacramento River Cats (Rehab)

The A's have alternated their starting first basemen in 2012's first four games. Neither Brandon Allen nor Kila Ka'aihue appears to have earned a long-term spot on the major league roster with their early play, so the organization has plenty of eyes on Barton's hot start. In four games, Barton's hitting line of .368/.455/.684 with a 1139 OPS could vault him back to Oakland in a hurry since he's now eligible to come off the DL. He's second on Sacramento in hits with seven and hit a grand slam in Sunday's game, giving him five RBIs.

Josh Horton, IF, Midland Rockhounds

Horton is another infielder off to a hot start. With Double-A Midland, Horton has five hits in 11 at-bats, albeit all singles. But he's also walked six times, giving him a .647 on-base percentage and 1102 OPS in his first four games. The left-handed hitter starts the year with both a four-game hitting streak and walk streak. He has walked twice in each of the last two games. The lack of power is pretty typical of Horton, however. His career slugging percentage in his six seasons is just .358.

Michael Choice, CF, Midland Rockhounds

The A's top prospect has gotten off to a good start at the plate. He didn't hit a home run during the Rockhounds' first series, but he did reach base 10 times in his first four games, giving him an on-base percentage of .556 and OPS of 972. He has struck out four times, but the organization will take it if he's able to reach base at a good clip and hit for good power.

Conner Crumbliss, UT, Midland Rockhounds

Crumbliss is Midland's only player to have hit a home run in 2012. The utilityman had two to start the year. While Crumbliss has just four hits in 16 at-bats, he's slugging .688 and has an OPS of 1088. His 11 total bases lead the team while four players are tied for second with five. Crumbliss hasn't shown much power early in his career. He has slugged just .381 in his four years in Oakland's system, so his early jolt must be a pleasant surprise for the A's. More true to his career to date, Crumbliss has walked four times in four games and has two stolen bases.

Josh Whitaker, OF/1B, Stockton Ports

After hitting 17 home runs with a 957 OPS in the Midwest League last year, Whitaker has picked up where he left off in his first four games at High-A with the Ports. Whitaker has two home runs in 16 at-bats, where he's hit .375/.444/.813 with a 1257 OPS. However, the Kennesaw State alum has struck out five times. Last year set the bar high for the outfielder, who is poised to have another good year at the plate in the hitter-friendly California League.

Dusty Robinson, OF, Burlington Bees

It's been a good few days to be an outfielder in the A's system. In three games, Robinson already has two home runs and five RBIs for Low-A Burlington. Last season with Low-A Vermont, Robinson, a 2011 10th-round pick, had a line of .219/.270/.461 in 36 games. Robinson has struggled with plate discipline in the past, but he has already walked twice in three games after drawing only eight walks in 36 games with the Lake Monsters last year.