

Walk-off hit batter caps Oakland A's comeback win over the Kansas City Royals

By Ben Enos, Oakland Tribune

The A's winning rally didn't include a hit, but it did involve two of their batters getting hit by pitches in a 5-4 win over the Kansas City Royals in 12 innings Wednesday at the Coliseum.

Kansas City right-hander Jonathan Broxton, who for now has inherited the closer role while Joaquim Soria recovers from season-ending surgery, nailed Yoenis Cespedes to load the bases, then drilled Jonny Gomes to send home the winning run.

The Royals had taken a 4-3 lead in the top of the 12th, but a one-out error and two walks ignited the A's.

Seth Smith reached on the error, then Jemile Weeks and Eric Sogard walked to load the bases. A grounder to the right side by Coco Crisp tied the score 4-4.

Broxton threw only two more pitches. The first was a fastball that hit Cespedes in the arm to again fill the bases. Broxton's next offering hit Gomes to end the a game that lasted four hours and 10 minutes.

The A's captured two of three against the Royals and improved their early-season record to 3-4.

"You like to see, early in the season, some tenacity and coming back," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "Obviously, we had to do that against the closer in the last inning, and we didn't try to do too much. Make him throw the ball over the plate, and guys had some good at-bats."

Cespedes and Gomes offered what little offense the A's produced through the first nine innings. Cespedes doubled, stole third and scored on a throwing error in the second. Gomes hit a two-run home run in the fourth. The A's managed only six hits for the entire game.

A's starter Brandon McCarthy pitched six innings, exiting with a 3-2 lead, but Alex Gordon's home run off Brian Fuentes in the seventh inning tied the score.

Andrew Carignan (1-1) got the win after recording one out in the 12th.

Cliff Pennington fouled a ball off his leg in the fifth inning and was eventually replaced at shortstop by Sogard. Josh Reddick also had to leave the game early after getting hit in the shoulder by a pitch that ricocheted up and hit Reddick in the jaw. The A's right fielder said he saw spots after opening his eyes, so he was taken out of the game to be monitored. He and Pennington said they expect to play Friday when the A's begin a three-game series in Seattle.

Melvin said he has no plans to move Cespedes from center field, saying any adjustments his rookie outfielder is making would happen no matter what position Cespedes is playing. Melvin's comments came a day after Cespedes couldn't make an over-the-shoulder catch in deep center field. The ball hit off the bottom of his glove.

"I think he's doing a pretty good job out there," Melvin said of Cespedes. "There are probably a couple balls that stand out that I think were tough plays, but I think if you put him in a different position right now, I think you're going through bigger growing pains. He's a center fielder."

Royals right fielder Jeff Francoeur continued to show fans in the right field bleachers some love, sending 20 individual pizzas and a signed bat to section 149 at game time. Francoeur's history with Oakland fans began last year when he saw some people holding the first "Bacon Tuesday" sign in the bleachers. The right fielder tossed fans an autographed baseball with \$100 and a message inviting them to buy beer or bacon dogs. This year, fans dedicated the second Bacon Tuesday to Francoeur and gave him a T-shirt.

Brett Anderson was in the clubhouse before the game but said he was leaving for Arizona later in the day to continue his rehab from reconstructive elbow surgery in July. He said he felt good after throwing 45 pitches at full distance on Tuesday, and is scheduled to throw again Friday.

The A's announced that fans who attended Tuesday's rain-shortened game against the Royals will receive a free Field Level ticket to an upcoming game. The A's trailed 3-0 when the game was called. Fans can present their ticket stub to A's ticket services and trade it for any Monday through Thursday game excluding July 2-4 and July 19.

Inside the Oakland A's: Dry skies for A's to wrap up series vs. Royals

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 4/11/2012, 3:18pm

Ben Enos from the O.Co Coliseum, filling in for the incomparable Joe Stiglich.

Call today's weather in Oakland a definite win after last night's rain-soaked affair. It's not overly hot, not overly cold, and best of all it's dry. As I write this, the A's and Royals are tied at 3 in the final game of a three-game set here in Oaktown.

This might not be the most newsy item, but it sure is fun. Jeff Francoeur had 20 pizzas and a signed bat delivered to fans in section 149. It's an extension of the "Bacon Tuesday" love that Francoeur's been getting into with Oakland fans.

For those who don't know, it started last year when the right fielder saw fans in the right field bleachers celebrating their first Bacon Tuesday. He tossed them a ball with \$100 and a message that said "beers and bacon dogs on me." A's fans responded yesterday, giving Francoeur a t-shirt to commemorate the now second-annual Bacon Tuesday.

I don't care who you are. That's pretty cool stuff.

In other news, one topic discussed with A's manager Bob Melvin was the play of Yoenis Cespedes in center field. Melvin was direct in saying he has no plans to move the rookie out of center field, saying he thinks Cespedes has done a pretty good job.

"There are probably a couple balls that stand out that I think were tough plays," Melvin said. "But I think if you put him in a different position right now, I think you're going through bigger growing pains. He's a center fielder."

Also had a chance to chat with Brett Anderson for a minute, and the left-hander said he felt good just one day after throwing a 45-pitch session with his full complement of pitches. He is headed for Arizona today to continue his rehab from elbow surgery, and is scheduled to throw again on Friday.

Another note to pass along comes from the A's themselves. If you were one of the die-hard few that sat through last night's rain-shortened loss to the Royals, you earned yourself a free ticket. The A's announced that if you bring your ticket stub to Ticket Services, you can trade it for a Field Level ticket to any Monday through Thursday game (excluding July 2 thru 4 and July 19).

Finally, a note from the game itself. Cliff Pennington fouled a ball off his leg (looked like it hit his knee, actually) in the fifth inning, played another inning in the field, and eventually came out of the game. Eric Sogard replaced him at shortstop.

Alrighty. That's all for now. Feel free to return to your regularly-scheduled programming.

A's top Royals in 12th on game-ending hit by pitch

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

The A's were 0-for-9 hitting with runners in scoring position on Wednesday, and nobody cared. That's because their final two batters were 2-for-2 *getting hit* with runners in scoring position.

"That's as unintentional as you can get," Jonny Gomes said after getting drilled by Jonathan Broxton in the 12th inning to end a 5-4 A's victory over the Royals at the Coliseum.

Broxton's previous pitch plunked Yoenis Céspedes to load the bases. If two guys got drilled on consecutive pitches at a less meaningful point of a game, someone might charge the mound. In Wednesday's case, Gomes simply danced to first.

How rare is a walk-off hit by pitch?

Not so rare for Gomes, who was the victim - beneficiary, rather - of the majors' last two WOHBPs. On Aug. 21, he was popped by Brad Lidge to end a Nationals' victory over the Phillies, also in extra innings.

"Been there, done that," Gomes said.

It's a little more rare for a guy to hit back-to-back batters to end a game. The previous time was Sept. 2, 1966, when Baltimore's Stu Miller hit Al Weis and Tommie Agee in a loss to the White Sox.

Yes, that also went extras.

"You don't want your guys getting hit like that unless it's game-winning hit-by-pitches, obviously," manager Bob Melvin said.

Royals' pitchers hit three batters, including Josh Reddick, who exited in the eighth inning when a pitch by Jose Mijares hit his right shoulder and ricocheted off the back of his jaw. He was on the ground for several moments, got escorted off the field and went for tests.

"I opened my eyes and saw spotty light," said Reddick, who felt better by game's end and, according to Melvin, could return to the lineup Friday.

Furthermore, Gomes hit the deck in the sixth inning to avoid Kelvin Herrera's 98-mph fastball sailing toward his head. On the season, A's hitters have been drilled by pitches six times while A's pitchers haven't hit a soul.

Céspedes, who has been hit three times in seven games (including near the left wrist Wednesday), glared at Broxton on his way to first base but said later (as did Melvin) he didn't think it was a purpose pitch. However, Céspedes added, "It's the same way in Cuba. If we get hit (on purpose), we hit back."

The A's said it's too early to consider the plunkings a trend, but Brandon McCarthy, who pitched the first six innings, said, "As we keep going, it's something we'll monitor. If it's something we need to do something about, we'll look at it."

Gomes added, "You can hit me four times if we win. It doesn't bother me much. At the same time, we do have to write that down and keep it in the back of our heads and make sure it doesn't happen too much because 98 mph could end your season."

Nobody used the R-word (retaliation) for all the Céspedes bruises, but Melvin said, "If he continues to get hit, certainly there are ways to try to combat that."

Royals' Francoeur brings the bacon

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

Royals right fielder **Jeff Francoeur** said he's saddened by Oakland's tiny crowds and hopes the city will get a new ballpark to house the A's.

For now, Francoeur is perfectly fine with the fans who do show up. Wednesday, he resumed a love affair with fans beyond the right-field wall and had 20 pizzas delivered to section 149.

"They're diehards," Francoeur said. "Those are the people you feel bad for with all the stuff that's going on right now - whether they're going to move or not. Those are the fans who obviously love coming out and being a part of it."

Francoeur said he was razzed by A's fans two seasons ago and engaged in friendly back-and-forth, and somehow the discussion turned to bacon. So last year, he tossed a ball wrapped in a \$100 bill to the fans, suggesting they buy bacon and beer.

Tuesday, fans presented Francoeur a green T-shirt with the words "Second Annual Bacon Fest Sponsored by Jeff Francoeur." They called it Bacon Tuesday, and Francoeur is looking forward to 2013, saying, "I told them I'll come out early and hang out with them in the parking lot and eat bacon."

He added, "Baseball to me is fun. We can take it too seriously sometimes. It's nights like last night that makes it a lot of fun to play this game."

As for the pursuit of a new A's ballpark and MLB overseeing the process?

"It is unfair to the organization, unfair to the team, unfair to the fans," said Francoeur, who's familiar with A's history and used to emulate the Bash Brothers in his backyard. "I wish somebody could build a new stadium because I think the A's deserve to be in Oakland, but I don't know if that'll ever happen. It'd be nice. But I also know a bunch of other stuff would have to happen."

Briefly: Yoenis Céspedes had the green light to steal after opening the 11th with a single, but he stayed at first because of lefty **Tim Collins'** effective slide step. ... Céspedes is the only Athletic to reach base on a hit or walk in all seven games. He's also the only one to strike out in each game. ... **Cliff Pennington**, who exited after fouling a pitch off his knee in the sixth inning, is expected to play Friday. ... **Collin Cowgill** started in left because **Coco Crisp** had been expected to rest, but Crisp replaced **Josh Reddick** in the eighth inning when Reddick was plunked.

A's On Deck

Thursday

Off

Friday

at Seattle

7:10 **CSNCA**

Colon (1-1) vs. Hernandez (1-0)

Saturday

At Seattle

6:10 **CSNCA**

Godfrey (0-1) vs. Beavan (0-1)

Leading off

Goodwill gesture: Rain-soaked fans who attended Tuesday's game can get free field-level tickets to a future Monday-through-Thursday game, excluding July 2-4 (Red Sox) and July 19 (Yankees), by bringing the ticket stub to ticket services at the Coliseum.

The Drumbeat: Nobody loves A's fans like Kansas City's Jeff Francoeur

John Shea reporting from the Coliseum . . . 4/11/2011, 3:57pm

Royals right fielder Jeff Francoeur said he's saddened by Oakland's tiny crowds and hopes the city will get a new ballpark to house the A's.

Until then, Francoeur is perfectly fine with the fans who do show up. Wednesday, he resumed a love affair with fans beyond the right-field wall and had 20 pizzas delivered to section 149.

"They're diehards," Francoeur said of 15 to 20 fans in particular. "Those are the people you feel bad for with all the stuff that's going on right now – whether they're going to move or not. Those are the fans who obviously love coming out and being a part of it."

Francoeur said he was razzed by A's fans two seasons ago and engaged in friendly back-and-forth, and somehow the discussion turned to bacon. So last year, he tossed a ball wrapped in a \$100 bill to the fans, suggesting they buy bacon and beer.

Tuesday, with rain delaying the game, fans presented Francoeur a green shirt with the words "Second Annual Bacon Fest sponsored by Jeff Francoeur." They called it Bacon Tuesday (for video of the fans and Francoeur celebrating the glory of bacon, [click here](#)).

"I'm going to wear it, and they're getting me another one signed by the whole group," Francoeur said. "It's awesome."

"Baseball to me is fun. We can take it too seriously sometimes. It's nights like last night that makes it a lot of fun to play this game. It's something more than just baseball. It's interacting with fans and having an experience you can talk about."

Francoeur said he's looking forward to the third annual bacon fest.

"I told them I'll come out early and hang out with them in the parking lot and eat bacon," he said.

"You don't get to build a relationship with a group like that in a lot of places. Here, they're in right field every single night. They don't miss a game. They cheer like crazy for their team. It's kind of cool. Last night was a blast. It's so much fun messing around with them every inning."

As for the A's search for a new ballpark and MLB overseeing the process, which remains in neutral?

"It's tough to see," Francoeur said. "I was born in '84. but I've known baseball for so long and hear stories from my dad about the early '70s A's, and I watched the A's in the late '80s and early '90s. trying to be like the Bash Brothers in my backyard. So much history with this franchise. It is sad. There's no answer to it. Two years coming out here, the decision keeps getting put off."

"It is unfair to the organization, unfair to the team, unfair to the fans. I wish somebody could build a new stadium, because I think the A's deserve to be in Oakland, but I don't know if that'll ever happen. It'd be nice. But I also know a bunch of other stuff would have to happen."

The Drumbeat: Bob Melvin: We're sticking with Yoenis Cespedes in center field

John Shea reporting from the Coliseum . . .4/11/2012, 12:43pm

Yoenis Cespedes has struggled on a few balls hit his way, but Bob Melvin is sticking with him in center. No plan for Coco Crisp, who can run down a lot of flies but doesn't come close to Cespedes' arm strength, to take his place defensively.

"I think he's doing a pretty good job out there," Melvin said. "There are a couple of balls that probably stand out that I thought were tough plays. But if you put him in a different position, there would be more growing pains. He's a center fielder."

Crisp has a scheduled day off today, so Collin Cowgill is in left field.

Tuesday night, Cespedes didn't make an over-the-shoulder catch of Mike Moustakas' fourth-inning drive, a double that scored the Royals' first run. Conversely, Royals center fielder Lorenzo Cain made a nice running catch to rob Daric Barton.

"If he secures that ball yesterday, everyone's talking about what a great play it was, similar to the play Cain made in the gap in right-center field," Melvin said. "He's still learning a lot of things. Conditions. Ballparks. Different lights. I think day games will be another experience for him here. Certain ballparks are positioned a little differently and have different sight lines. Everything he's going through right now are firsts for him, and I think he's handled it nicely."

Melvin and the A's are confident Cespedes will feel more comfortable in center and make the plays he's not making now. I asked if Cespedes will be a work in progress defensively.

"He works on everything," Melvin said. "You watch him in BP, he's taking balls off the bat all the time. But understand, too, if we made a switch, it would be a work in progress somewhere else, too. He's used to playing center field. That's what he is, a center fielder. So at this point, we're fine with where we are."

Today's lineup: 2B Weeks, SS Pennington, RF Reddick, CF Cespedes, DH Gomes, C Suzuki, 3B Donaldson, 1B Barton, LF Cowgill.

Gomes takes hit as A's stun Royals in 12

By Eric Gilmore / Special to MLB.com | 4/11/2012 8:20 PM ET

OAKLAND -- For Oakland A's designated hitter Jonny Gomes, the scenario was oddly familiar on Wednesday, as Jonathan Broxton's pitch bore in on him in the bottom of the 12th inning, with the bases loaded in a tie game against the Royals.

On Aug. 21 last season, Gomes had a walk-off hit-by-pitch when Philadelphia's Brad Lidge drilled him in the bottom of the 10th, giving the Nationals the victory.

Gomes took one for the team again on Wednesday. When Broxton's fastball made contact, it forced Jemile Weeks home with the winning run in the A's 5-4 comeback victory at Oakland Coliseum.

For added measure, this walk-off hit-by-pitch came directly after Broxton hit Yoenis Cespedes to load the bases.

It was the third walk-off hit-by-pitch in Oakland A's history and the first time Gomes, who also crushed a two-run homer in the fourth, had ever seen a game end with back-to-back hitters getting drilled.

"You cover this game long enough, play this game long enough, nothing's going to surprise you," Gomes said. "That's why you play 162, and that's why you come out to the game. You see something special every day."

The Royals had taken a 4-3 in the top off the 12th. Royals designated hitter Billy Butler ripped a two-out double off A's right-hander Andrew Carnigan, scoring Eric Hosmer from first to put Kansas City ahead. Carnigan had entered the game after Jordan Norberto gave up a two-out single to Hosmer.

But with one out in the bottom of the 12th, A's pinch-hitter Seth Smith reached off Broxton when shortstop Alcides Escobar booted a ground ball. Broxton then walked Weeks and Eric Sogard to load the bases, bringing Coco Crisp to the plate.

Crisp grounded out to second base, bringing Smith home with the tying run. Broxton then hit Cespedes to reload the bases, before hitting Gomes to end the game.

"I wasn't very good today, with the walks and everything else," Broxton said. "It started out good, but I just didn't have it."

The A's took two out of three games from Kansas City, winning a series for the first time this season with their strangest victory of the year.

"You never want to see your guys get hit like that unless it's the game-winning hit by pitches, obviously," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "I think you like to see early in the season some tenacity and coming back. We had to do that against the closer in the last inning. We didn't try to do too much. Let him throw the ball over the plate. Guys had some good at-bats, but it was a bit of an odd game."

Cespedes was hit by a pitch for the third time this season, but he said he doesn't believe Broxton tried to hit him in that situation.

"Everybody could see that he was wild a little bit," Cespedes said. "He tried to throw strikes."

Right-hander Brandon McCarthy said the A's pitchers will watch the situation closely and respond in kind if Cespedes keeps getting plunked.

"As we keep going, it's something we'll monitor," McCarthy said. "I know the reasons for it. I'm pretty sure they're not intentional. You see guys that are trying to throw him in a lot. Anytime you throw in there's that chance, especially with a guy that has his kind of power. You're trying to not miss middle, so it's just going to run off. But again, if it gets out of control and that's something that we have to do, it's something we'll look at that."

McCarthy allowed two runs on six hits over six innings against the Royals. He struck out four and walked two, getting back on track a bit after a rough outing Friday against Seattle. McCarthy left with a 3-2 lead but is still searching for his first victory after three starts, despite a 2.50 ERA.

"It was kind of a day that was a fight from the beginning," McCarthy said. "I wasn't necessarily sharp or fresh. Just sort of a day you try to get through. It was good in that regard, but just kind of one of those days you've got to work with."

A's left-hander Brian Fuentes took over for McCarthy to start the seventh, and he gave up a one-out solo homer to Alex Gordon, tying the score at 3-3.

A's reliever Ryan Cook turned in 1 1/3 hitless innings and closer Grant Balfour held the Royals without a run in the ninth and 10th, stranding two runners in the 10th.

Norberto took over in the 11th and pitched a scoreless inning before running into trouble in the 12th.

The A's took a 1-0 lead in the second when Cespedes blooped a leadoff double to right, stole third and raced home after catcher Brayan Pena's throw sailed into left field for an error.

Kansas City pulled even in the third. Pena drilled a one-out double to right-center and scored with two outs when Gordon grounded a single up the middle.

The Royals moved ahead 2-1 in the fourth on Butler's home run to deep left-center. He hammered McCarthy's first pitch over the 362-foot sign.

Oakland answered back in the bottom of the frame, grabbing a 3-2 lead on Gomes' two-run blast to deep left-center. Cespedes led off with a walk, and Gomes turned on Bruce Chen's 1-1 pitch for his second home run of the season.

"That pitch came after I think five consecutive pickoffs with Cespedes over there," Gomes said. "Waiting, waiting, waiting. I was actually full green light. I was hoping his arm angle wasn't going to be where he wanted it to be after throwing over there five times. Sure enough he left a fastball up and I got some good wood on it."

Eight innings later, Gomes ended it without swinging his bat, just seconds after Broxton hit Cespedes.

"You can hit me four times if we win," Gomes said. "It doesn't really bother me much. At the same time we do have to write that down and keep it in the back of our heads and make sure that doesn't happen too much because 98 mph could end your season."

Felix faces Colon in Mariners' home opener

By James Walker / MLB.com | 4/11/2012 10:44 PM ET

The A's will get a third dose of Felix Hernandez in this young season Friday when they go up against the former Cy Young Award winner in the Mariners' home opener, the first of a three-game weekend series.

The A's and Mariners already have played each other four times, including two games in Tokyo, March 28 and 29.

It's no day at the park, but facing Hernandez doesn't make A's hitters all wobbly-kneed, Oakland Manager Bob Melvin said.

"We are used to Felix," Melvin said. "We all know what he brings to the table and what he does confidence-wise for their team, but hopefully we can gain some confidence off of last time."

The A's will counter with Bartolo Colon, who pitched brilliantly against the Mariners in Japan, allowing one run on three hits over eight innings on March 29, only to be roughed up by the Mariners last Saturday in Oakland, giving up seven runs in 4 1/3 innings.

Hernandez pitched a strong eight innings in the March 28 game, giving up five hits and one earned run, while striking out six in a game the Mariners eventually won 3-1 in 11 innings.

The A's had better success against the Mariners ace last Saturday in Oakland, touching him up for eight hits and six earned runs in 6 1/3 innings, but Hernandez still was the winning pitcher in a 8-7 Seattle victory.

"Most of us have seen Felix enough, and he's seen us enough that there's a game plan already in place," A's shortstop Cliff Pennington said.

"It's just about execution and if hitters don't miss their pitches and he doesn't miss his spots, it usually works out to whoever executes better."

Hernandez professes to believe that neither he nor the A's hitters have an advantage going into their third meeting.

"It can help me and it could help them, too," Hernandez said. "They'll have seen me three times, but I'm not going to change anything. I'll just go out there and pitch."

Hernandez did indicate that his last outing against the Athletics left him dissatisfied.

"I gave up six runs," he said. "That is not going to happen again."

It will be good to see the Mariners in the rear-view mirror, Melvin said.

"It's going to be another Opening Day where I'm going to have to go and shake the manager's hand at home plate again," the A's manager said. "I've shaken his hand more than a lot of my own players, I think. I think we'll both be ready to move on from the getting called out onto the line on that opening day thing."

A's: Gomes' game-winning HBP

- Jonny Gomes' game-winning RBI on a walk-off hit-by-pitch in Wednesday's 5-4, 12-inning victory over the Royals was his second in two years.

The same thing happened to him last year as a member of the Washington Nationals, when Gomes was hit by a pitch by the Phillies' Brad Lidge pitch to win the game. That game was also an extra-inning affair.

Mariners: Olivo gets the day off

- Manager Eric Wedge gave rookie Jesus Montero his first start behind the plate Wednesday, with Miguel Olivo getting the night off. Olivo figures to be back at catcher in the day game on Thursday.

Anderson continuing to make progress

Left-hander planning to throw BP after successful bullpen session

By Eric Gilmore / Special to MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's left-hander Brett Anderson took another step Tuesday in his recovery from Tommy John surgery when he threw his first full bullpen session, using all his pitches.

Anderson said on Wednesday that he expects to take an even bigger step in the next week or two.

"I'm going back to Arizona in a couple hours," Anderson said before the A's game against Kansas City. "And I'm going to stay there for a while, because I'm going to start throwing live BPs here pretty soon, I think. Guys don't want to come in at 11 o'clock to face live BPs when they've got to play 162 games."

Anderson will throw his next bullpen session on Friday at the A's Spring Training headquarters in Phoenix and begin throwing live battling practice to Minor Leaguers in "the next week or two."

"Get some warm weather and some younger guys so I can face them at my disposal," Anderson said.

Anderson underwent Tommy John surgery on July 14, and he's on track to return in mid-July.

"His [bullpen sessions] have really been terrific," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "I've said often in Spring Training, if you were to watch him throw, you'd think he was rehabbing something else. He's got the potential to be the top-of-a-rotation starter, and we probably look for that when it's almost like a trade, a midseason trade when he comes back. We're not trying to put an exact timetable to speed him up or anything, but he's doing beautifully at this point."

Anderson said he's not surprised that he's making such good progress.

"Tommy John's kind of a cut-and-dried deal, hopefully, for the most part," Anderson said. "If you do the rehab and you do the work, you're going to come back. I've been step for step right now. Hopefully there's no setbacks, but just follow the daily plan, and I've been feeling good. That's the goal."

A's offer tickets to Tuesday's rain-soaked fans

OAKLAND -- Ticket holders from Tuesday night's rain-shortened 3-0 loss to Kansas City will have a chance to return to a future game -- compliments of the Oakland A's.

The A's announced on Wednesday that ticket holders who attended Tuesday's game will receive a free field-level ticket to a future game of their choice this season, scheduled on a Monday through Thursday, excluding games on July 2-4 and July 19.

Ticket stubs can be exchanged for field-level tickets at Ticket Services, located on the West Plaza at the Coliseum.

"This gesture serves as only a small token of our appreciation towards our die-hard, rain-soaked fans who attended last night's game at the Coliseum," A's executive director of ticket sales and operations Steve Fanelli said. "Despite the less than ideal baseball conditions, our fans were tremendous in their loyal support of the team. We look forward to welcoming them back soon."

Cowgill gets second straight start

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Less than 24 hours after making his first start for the Oakland A's, outfielder Collin Cowgill was back in the starting lineup Wednesday afternoon for the finale of a three-game series against Kansas City.

Cowgill started in right field on Tuesday night for Josh Reddick, and he started in left on Wednesday, giving Coco Crisp a day off.

Cowgill, acquired from Arizona in an offseason trade, went 0-for-1 with two walks in his starting debut.

"Obviously what you want to do is play, so anytime you get one, two, however many you can, it's nice," Cowgill said. "I'm fortunate to be in there yesterday and today, and [I'm] looking forward to getting a 'W' today."

Cowgill hit a team-best .396 during Spring Training, and he welcomed the chance to make a good impression in back-to-back regular-season games. The key for a backup with limited playing time, Cowgill said, is to stay relaxed.

"The worst thing you can do is try to put pressure on yourself," Cowgill said. "Just go out there and try to play like you play every day. I've found if you come to the park and prepare the same way every day, it's not a surprise when you're in the lineup. That's a big factor in being comfortable in this role. Just prepare every day like you're going to play, and the day's you play, it's all the same."

Royals Broxton wild as A's rally for 5-4 win in 12

By JANIE McCAULEY — AP Baseball Writer

Jonathan Broxton lost his command and lost the game on his final two pitches.

Broxton hit Jonny Gomes on the first pitch he threw with the bases loaded in the 12th inning, forcing Jemile Weeks home for the winning run in the Kansas City Royals' 5-4 loss to the Oakland Athletics on Wednesday.

Moments earlier, Kansas City's new closer (0-1) plunked rookie cleanup hitter Yoenis Cespedes on the first pitch to load the bases, prompting a mound visit from pitching coach Dave Eiland.

"I wasn't very good today, with the walks and everything else. It started out good but I just didn't have it," said Broxton, hoping to return to the form that made him one of baseball's most feared ninth-inning pitchers a couple of years back. "One was a sinker and one was a four-seam fastball."

It marked the third time the A's won on a game-ending hit by pitch in Oakland history and first since Olmedo Saenz on July 20, 2002, against Texas.

"You can hit me four times if we win," said Gomes, nearly plunked earlier by a heater from Kelvin Herrera. "We have to write that down and keep it in the back of our minds because 98 mph could end your season."

Coco Crisp's RBI groundout earlier in the 12th tied it at 4 after Billy Butler doubled home the go-ahead run in top half of the inning against Andrew Carignan (1-1).

A day after rain shortened the Royals' 3-0 win following seven-plus innings, fans got their share of baseball in the finale.

Cespedes already has been hit three times, and his teammates are taking notice. While Cespedes didn't think Broxton intentionally fired at him - "Everybody could see he was wild" - he was glad to hear starter Brandon McCarthy had spoken up on his behalf and that the pitchers would consider retaliation if it comes to that point.

These teams meet again June 1-3 in Kansas City, and suspended A's slugger Manny Ramirez could be in the lineup by then. He's eligible to play on his 40th birthday May 30 if all stays on track.

For now, Kansas City heads home for the first time since the start of spring training in mid-February at 3-3, but without the same momentum it would have had with a second winning road series after taking two of three at Los Angeles.

"It's been a good road trip in terms of our pitching staff. The bullpen did a phenomenal job to keep us in it as we waited for the big hit," manager Ned Yost said. "We got it with Billy's double."

Oakland closer Grant Balfour pitched a scoreless ninth and 10th. He allowed Alcides Escobar's leadoff single in the 10th and a two-out walk to Jeff Francoeur on four pitches before striking out Mike Moustakas.

The A's now head out for their first real road trip - a seven-gamer - considering the two matchups with the Mariners in Tokyo two weeks ago counted as Oakland home games. They get Seattle ace Felix Hernandez for the third time Friday at Safeco Field.

Kansas City's Alex Gordon hit a tying home run off Brian Fuentes in the seventh.

Jose Mijares hit Josh Reddick with a breaking ball in the right shoulder area leading off the eighth, and the ball ricocheted into Reddick's neck and jaw as he tried to raise his arm to protect himself. He went down for a couple of minutes before leaving the game. Crisp came in to run and Greg Holland relieved Mijares, but the A's couldn't capitalize.

Reddick briefly had spotty vision and was put through concussion tests as a precaution but he expects to play Friday.

"That last inning was kind of weird," Reddick said. "You don't really see a game ending like that."

Gomes hit a two-run homer in the fourth to put the A's ahead and McCarthy in position for his first victory of the season before Fuentes gave it up.

Cespedes doubled, swiped third for his first steal and scored on catcher Brayan Pena's throwing error to make it 1-0 Oakland in the second. Pena threw wildly into left field trying to get Cespedes at third on his steal.

Cespedes hit his first career single in the 11th after his initial five hits went for extra bases. The Cuban rookie wrapped up his first homestand 4 for 16 with two home runs and eight strikeouts.

Gordon also singled in a run in the third for the Royals, who squandered a chance when they left the bases loaded in the fifth.

Mitch Maier started in center field for the Royals as Yost had planned. Maier entered Tuesday's game as an injury replacement for Lorenzo Cain, who left with a strained left groin following a double play in the second.

Cain already was slated to sit out the day game, and the Royals listed him as day to day with the hope he would be ready for the club's home opener Friday against Cleveland.

NOTES: The Royals will work out Thursday afternoon at Kauffman Stadium before Luke Hochevar starts Friday against the Indians' Derek Lowe. ... The A's are offering free comp tickets for a field-level seat to another game for fans who attended Tuesday's rainy game.

Cuban broadcaster talks about Guillen's Castro comments

By LOWELL COHN, THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

OAKLAND — Yoenis Cespedes, the A's exciting rookie and recent expatriate from Cuba, is not talking about Ozzie Guillen. He will talk baseball but he will not talk Cuban politics. For that he is wise.

Marlins manager Ozzie Guillen is not so wise. He recently told Time magazine, "I love Fidel Castro." He said he respects the retired Castro for holding power so long.

Guillen certainly is allowed to declare his love for Castro. But considering he is the new manager of the Marlins, who have a new ballpark in the Little Havana section of Miami, and considering the park was funded with public money — much of it from Cuban Americans — his remarks were tactless and insensitive, and went a long way toward alienating the Marlins fan base. Guillen has come to understand all that — after the Marlins suspended him five games, and some Cuban-American groups said he should get fired.

Because Cespedes won't talk about Guillen, I went to Amaury Pi-Gonzalez, the legendary announcer who does Spanish broadcasts for the A's and Angels. Pi-Gonzalez grew up in Cuba and left for Miami in 1961 when he was 17. Here is our interview:

"How would Cubans in Miami hear what Guillen said about loving Castro?" I asked.

"You have to realize close to a million Cubans live in Miami. Some people were political prisoners in Cuba. A lot of people have suffered — my family has suffered. Castro confiscated property, not only from the wealthy but the middle class. And he controls everything. Nobody moves in Cuba without his approval.

"They probably think Guillen's a communist. Those people in Miami, remember most of them are 60 and older, they lived through Castro for over 50 years. You live in Cuba and you lose your livelihood and your way of life, and there's no freedom. And then this guy in the United States, and he's a public figure, says, 'I love Fidel Castro.' You say, 'What's to like about him? Explain yourself.'

"Ozzie talks before he thinks. That's typical Ozzie. He likes to talk. But he's not qualified. He doesn't know what happened in Cuba. He's not even from Cuba. He's from Venezuela. When you say, 'I give credit to Castro,' I'm paraphrasing, 'he's been able to stay in power so long,' let me tell you this, the mere fact that you can hold power for 30, 40 or 50 years, that doesn't make you a good person. You're still a dictator."

Do Cuban people in Miami feel outrage at what Guillen said?

"Oh, yes. It's very strong. In Miami, I have family, older people there, and one of my cousins called me and said, 'You're in baseball. Do you understand this guy?' I talked to Ozzie many times. I like him. He's a good manager. And I feel proud that he's Hispanic like me because he's the only Hispanic manager to ever win a World Series, 2005.

"So he hurt me when he said that. You can say that any place else, but not in Miami. It's almost like going to Delancey Street (New York) and saying, 'Well, Hitler wasn't that bad, really.'

"When he said 'I love Fidel Castro' in Miami in Little Havana, that's so stupid. They don't have a megastar. Ozzie Guillen is the face of the Marlins. It's a new beginning and then the first week of the season he says something like this."

Can Guillen get past this crisis?

"I think so. I think what they're trying to do is educate him. He was meeting with some ex-political prisoners, so he could understand what happened in Cuba. My father used to tell me, 'In the United States, you can say anything you want but you've got to be able to back it up. You can't just say stuff.' And God bless Ozzie. I like him. And I think five-game suspension is enough punishment. I don't want him fired."

Cespedes won't talk about Guillen. Why?

"Cespedes has got family there (in Cuba). There could be reprisals. They won't put you in jail. They won't kill you, but they'll make your life miserable. They'll pick on you. They'll look at your mail. It's like the old Soviet Union. Cuba is still a repressive society, and that's what Ozzie doesn't understand.

"When I first met Cespedes in spring training, I said, 'I'm not going to talk to you about politics' And he said, 'Don't worry. Even if you did, I don't want to talk about it.' Here's the irony. If Ozzie Guillen said something (praising the United States) in Cuba, he could be in real trouble."

Why did Cespedes come to Oakland instead of Miami?

"I think he had a better deal here. I also think he understood Miami is going to be a lot of pressure for him. Miami doesn't have a Cuban superstar. The Marlins never had a Jose Canseco. They never had a Rafael Palmeiro. Here he doesn't have to be that superstar right away. He can develop and become a superstar if he's good enough. He understood here would be less pressure. To play in Miami I think would be tough for him mentally."

What is your final thought on Guillen?

"Don't crucify this man. This is a free country and you can say what you feel. However, you must understand there are consequences to what you say. It's not the same thing as saying, 'I ordered a hit and run.' I think he realizes that. I saw his press conference. He was contrite. He said he didn't sleep in two days. I believe that."

Die-hard A's fans turn out despite team's woes

Marcos Breton, Sacramento Bee

OAKLAND – The spirit of big-league baseball is alive in this cavernous space, even if it sometimes doesn't look or feel that way.

On Wednesday, I spent much of the A's 5-4 win over the Kansas City Royals sitting among fans who care deeply about their team – even if team owners have let a proud baseball legacy wither slowly.

Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig is complicit in this crime of neglect. The A's owners want to move to a lucrative San Jose market but are blocked by the Giants and a dithering Selig, who has "studied" the territorial dispute for years without resolving it.

Meanwhile, the fans at Wednesday's game were given no reason to continue frequenting the place the A's wish to vacate – and yet they do.

There are similarities between this distressed property and the distressed property called the Sacramento Kings.

The common denominator is the ownership, though the situation in Oakland is more acute.

City officials here were never able to get a deal for a new facility as Sacramento officials did, while NBA Commissioner David Stern has committed to Sacramento in a way Selig never has for Oakland.

The result?

On Tuesday night in the rain, there were a few hundred fans in the seats – though the A's announced that 10,000 or so tickets had been sold. An old college friend who was here Tuesday night tweeted his own estimate of 375.

It seems hard to believe, considering what a vibrant place the former Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum used to be. From the early 1980s to the mid-1990s, this was the dominant spot for baseball in Northern California.

Last season, the A's had the lowest attendance in baseball. The rain-shortened loss to the Royals on Tuesday night seemed like a new low.

Though the announced attendance of 12,390 on Wednesday witnessed an unusual victory – Jonny Gomes was hit by a pitch from Jonathan Broxton with the bases loaded in the 12th inning, forcing Jemile Weeks home with the winning run – the crowd seemed much smaller than that.

Going to a big-league game is not supposed to be a lonely experience, but it can feel lonely down the lines or in the upper deck of the bleachers. In the concourse underneath the football seats in center field, stadium music rang out over a vast emptiness devoid of patrons. Concession stands were shuttered for lack of business.

From way out there, the game on the field seemed distant and remote.

Baseball is the ultimate American communal experience, and people in the left-field stands were banging drums and trying to fill the vast spaces with their enthusiasm, here to enjoy the game and their team.

It's still a joyous experience, despite A's management and Selig.

Ron Sharpe, 24, an A's fan from Sacramento, brought his drum and playfully taunted Royals outfielders while keeping his language clean.

"I come down here all the time," he said. "I go to Stockton for games and the River Cats, too."

Sally Small, who lives in Orinda but is originally from Walnut Grove, comes to several games a year with her husband, Sandy.

She is 72 now and still visits her 96-year-old mother in Walnut Grove every week. Here, she sits down the third-base line, always keeping score.

"Baseball is the best game," she said. "And it is kind of fun to watch the A's develop players."

The trouble is, the A's trade those players as soon as they are poised to receive big hikes in pay befitting baseball stars.

"As soon as they get out of puberty, we lose them," she said.

To draw big crowds, professional sports depend on luring casual fans with big names.

The A's have precious few personalities and have lacked them for years. To frequent this place is to accept loving the game over the talent – the uniform colors over the man wearing the uniform.

Small remembers when the A's were great in the late 1980s and early 1990s. She even published a short article about the A's in the New Yorker magazine in 1995. Back then, A's ownership invested in players and fans. "You see the last vestiges of that in the ushers and security guards here," she said.

It's true. Many longtime A's employees have remained. Even in the loneliest parts of the park, they are there to serve people with pride and caring for the A's logo.

Despite everything, that spirit hasn't been broken. The love for the game still lives in Oakland, no matter the size of the crowds.

Oakland steals wacky win from Kansas City in the 12th inning

Sam McPherson, examiner.com

Last night, the Oakland Athletics managed one hit in seven innings on their way to a 3-0 loss.

Today, against the same Kansas City Royals, the A's didn't need a hit to score two runs in the bottom of the 12th inning to win the game, 5-4.

Go figure.

After Oakland's bullpen gave up two-out, back-to-back hits to Eric Hosmer and Billy Butler in the top of the inning to fall behind, 4-3, Kansas City reliever Jonathan Broxton came in for the save chance.

The A's rallied as, in order, Daric Barton struck out, Seth Smith reached on an error, Jemile Weeks walked, Eric Sogard walked, Coco Crisp grounded out to score Smith, Yoenis Cespedes was hit by a pitch, and finally, Jonny Gomes was also hit by a pitch -- to force in the winning run.

And just like that, Oakland took the series two games to one, and they head off on their first real road trip of the year with some momentum.

However, all the 12th-inning drama was only made possible when A's lefty Brian Fuentes surrendered a leadoff home run in the seventh inning to Alex Gordon, thus blowing starter Brandon McCarthy's chance at a win in the blink of an eye.

McCarthy was solid in his six innings of work, giving up two runs on six hits and two walks while striking out four. He remains winless after three starts despite his stellar 2.50 ERA on the year so far.

For the Oakland offense, Barton and Cespedes each had two hits in a game where the whole A's offense managed just six base knocks in 12 innings. Oakland hitters went 0-for-9 with runners in scoring position, but the A's still managed a win due to Kansas City's gift-giving mood.

Yet all teams have to be ready to accept those gifts and cash them in -- and that's what Oakland did today, by drawing five walks, getting hit by pitches three times, stealing three bases (including Cespedes' first major-league swipe) and taking advantage of two Royals errors.

The A's were opportunistic today, and they got a win out of it -- and their first series win of the year, which is a must-have when you're playing at home.

It may not always be pretty, but this Oakland team certainly is entertaining to watch, if the first five home games of the season are any indication.

A's get first series win on walk-off hit by pitch

Rael Enteen, csnbayarea.com

OAKLAND -- Yoenis Cespedes has been hit by a pitch three times in his first seven Major League Baseball games, but the latest one doesn't sting quite as bad.

Kansas City Royals closer Jonathan Broxton nailed Cespedes to load the bases in the bottom of the twelfth inning, then hit designated hitter Jonny Gomes just below the waist for the A's first walk-off hit by pitch since 2002.

"Today was a good character check for the team and luckily we came out on top," Gomes said.

With the 5-4 extra innings win, the A's took the series from the Royals and improved to 3-4 on the young season.

"The difference between 3-4 and 2-5 is big," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "It gets us that much closer to .500 so that was a big win for us ... You like to see early in the season some tenacity in coming back."

The A's were two outs away from a 2-5 record and a series loss after the Royals took a 4-3 lead in the top of the twelfth inning on Billy Butler's RBI double off Andrew Carignan. But Broxton's inability to find the strike zone let the A's off the hook.

Broxton started off on the right track, with a strikeout of Daric Barton, but things started to unravel after pinch-hitter Seth Smith reached first on an error by shortstop Alcides Escobar. Back-to-back walks to Jemile Weeks and Eric Sogard loaded the bases and set the stage for Coco Crisp's RBI fielder's choice and the consecutive hit by pitches that dropped the curtain on Wednesday's matinee game.

After standing in the box to watch a tape-measure shot off the Mariners' Jason Vargas on April 6, Cespedes was drilled by Seattle ace Felix Hernandez in the next game and said he was positive that Hernandez hit him intentionally.

Despite giving Broxton a long stare down before trotting to first base, Cespedes said after Wednesday's game that the latest bean ball, which hit his left wrist, didn't offend him.

"You can see he was wild," Cespedes said through his translator.

When asked if he thought the ending to the series was a little abnormal, Cespedes' response needed no translation: "Si. Mucho."

While Cespedes had no beef with Broxton, Brandon McCarthy, Wednesday's starting pitcher, said the A's might have to send a message in order to protect their Cuban slugger.

"Whether or not they're intentional, you still want to do something that just lets you know 'we're here too' and you can't just get comfortable throwing at our guys and throwing in," McCarthy said after allowing two runs in six innings of work.

Cespedes co-signed that mentality, saying that if the A's don't return the favor at some point, opponents "will continue to do it."

Gomes is also no stranger to the bean ball. He was hit 14 times as a rookie in 2005 and ranks second all-time in Tampa Bay's franchise history with 35. He also was the last player to win a game with a hit by pitch when then-Phillies reliever Brad Lidge hit Gomes, a Washington National at the time, on Aug. 21, 2011.

"It's a lot easier than hitting 98 [MPH]," Gomes said of absorbing Broxton's game-ending four-seam fastball. "You can hit me four times; if we win I'm fine with it."

Gomes didn't just contribute by sacrificing his body. His fourth inning home run after a Cespedes walk gave the A's a 3-2 lead just after the Royals had jumped ahead 2-1 in the top of the frame.

It was Gomes' second home run as an Athletic, the first coming in Japan, and he said he benefited from Cespedes distracting Royals starter Bruce Chen.

"After five or so pick off attempts, I was hoping his arm angle would be different and luckily it was and he left a fastball up," Gomes said.

Chen was right to pay close attention to Cespedes after he single-handedly put the A's on the board in the second inning. He doubled to lead off the inning, then took off for third for his first big-league stolen base attempt. When Royals catcher Brayan Pena's throw sailed into left field, Cespedes came home for the game's first run.

While the A's were happy to put five runs on the board after combining for just one in the series' first two games, they are aware that they can't depend on hit batsmen for runs.

"We expect to swing the bat better," Melvin said. "When you're not getting big hits it gets contagious. But a comeback win should help."

The A's were 0-for-9 with runners in scoring position and struck out 12 times in the series finale.

If not for Brian Fuentes, the A's would've been able to start planning for Thursday's day off a lot sooner. Fuentes, who Melvin said before the game would be his first option to close if Grant Balfour was unavailable at any point this season, served up a seventh inning home run to Alex Gordon that led to extra innings.

The day off before the start of a three-game series in Seattle couldn't come at a better time for the A's. In addition to playing extra frames Wednesday, two A's players had to leave the game with injuries.

Cliff Pennington was replaced by Sogard in the top of the seventh inning after fouling a ball off the inside of his left knee cap. In the bottom of the eighth, Josh Reddick absorbed a pitch off his shoulder, which then ricocheted off his jaw, and had to be helped off by a trainer.

"I opened my eyes and saw spotty light," Reddick said, before adding that he passed all tests and expects to play Friday.

Mevin said both Reddick and Pennington are day-to-day and should benefit from the day off.

The A's are back at it Friday in Seattle, with Bartolo Colon starting opposite Hernandez.

In their eighth game of the year, the A's will face the Mariners' ace for the third time already this season, but that doesn't faze Melvin.

"We scored some runs on him last time, we just didn't prevent them from scoring enough," Melvin said. "We're used to Felix."

Odds and ends: Cespedes has reached base and struck out in all seven A's games this season ... Royals right fielder Jeff Francoeur bought 20 personal pizzas for the fans in section 149 after getting involved in their 'Bacon Tuesday' tradition, which started last year ... The last A's walk-off hit by pitch came on July 20, 2002, when Dave Burba beamed Olmedo Saenz to give Oakland a 6-5 victory over the Rangers.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Rosales Leads River Cats To Fifth-Straight Win

Sacramento River Cats

Tucson, Ariz. - A two-out, two-strike, two-run single by Adam Rosales in the ninth inning was the difference Wednesday night at Kino Stadium, as the River Cats topped Tucson, 3-2, to win their fifth-straight game and guarantee a series victory over the T-Pads.

Tucson jumped ahead for the second-straight night, this time taking a 2-0 lead into the seventh inning. The River Cats scored a single run in the seventh-also on a Rosales RBI base hit-before taking the lead for the first time in the final frame.

In the ninth, Michael Taylor led off with a double-his third two-bagger of the game-before Wes Timmons reached base on a hit by pitch. That set the stage for Rosales, who fell behind 1-2 against Padres closer Bradley Boxberger before lining a base hit to right, driving in the eventual game-winning runs.

Boxberger (0-1) suffered the defeat for Tucson, allowing both runs in the ninth on a pair of base hits.

A's top prospect Jarrod Parker started and tossed the first six innings for Sacramento, but did not figure in the decision. Parker struck out six and walked one while holding the T-Pads to just one earned run. Erick Threets (1-0) picked up the win, and Jim Miller earned the save with a perfect ninth.

Rosales (two-for-four, three RBIs) and Taylor (three-for-four, three doubles) were the stars offensively for the Cats, while Derek Norris chipped in with a single and a double.

The River Cats head into Thursday's matchup with a chance to sweep Tucson and finish the season-opening road trip with a 7-1 record. They will send RHP Tyson Ross (0-0, 2.25 ERA) to the mound against Tucson RHP Josh Geer (0-1, 6.75 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.

PORTS WON'T LET WEATHER DAMPEN MOOD

By Jason Anderson, Stockton Record

STOCKTON - Weather permitting, the Ports will begin a seven-game homestand when they play their home opener against the Modesto Nuts at 7:05 p.m. today at Stockton Ballpark after spending the first week of the season on the road.

Wednesday's game at Bakersfield was rained out and forecasts call for more rain today in Stockton, but that didn't dampen the spirits of team officials who spent the day preparing the ballpark for the home opener.

Stockton (4-2) is seeking its 12th California League championship after coming up short in 2011, when the Ports beat the San Jose Giants in the North Division finals before falling in four games to the Lake Elsinore Storm in the California League Championship Series. The Ports, now in their eighth season as a Single-A affiliate of the Oakland Athletics, last won the California League in 2008.

"We're off to a good start and seem to have picked up where we left off last season," Ports general manager Luke Reiff said. "We've been assured by the A's that we'll have a talented team. Looking at it on paper, we've got a strong pitching staff and some solid hitters, so we're excited."

The roster includes a host of newcomers and a number of returning players who will again report to manager Webster Garrison, pitching coach Craig Lefferts and hitting coach Brian McArn.

Some of the team's top prospects include pitchers A.J. Cole, Blake Hasebrock, T.J. Walz and Jose Guzman, catcher Max Stassi, second baseman Michael Gilmartin, first baseman Miles Head and outfielders Josh Whitaker and Myrio Richard.

Stassi, a fourth-round draft pick in 2009, hit .231 in four games with the Ports last spring before missing the rest of the season with a shoulder injury that required surgery. He left Tuesday's game with an ankle injury and was placed on the seven-day disabled list Wednesday.

Gilmartin, a 27th-round draft pick in 2009, hit .294 for the Ports and was named a California League All-Star last season.

One of the top newcomers is Head, who hit .299 with 22 home runs and 82 RBI last season for the Greenville (S.C.) Drive of the South Atlantic League and the Salem (Va.) Red Sox of the Carolina League. He was selected by the Boston Red Sox in the 26th round in 2009 and acquired by the A's in the trade that sent Andrew Bailey and Ryan Sweeney to the Red Sox.

"He was one of the Red Sox top prospects last year and a guy who hit a few home runs in their organization, so we're happy to have him," Reiff said. "He's not somebody we were counting on at the end of last season because he wasn't part of the organization, so it's nice knowing we're going to have him to lean on at least for the first part of the season."

Whitaker hit .326 with 17 home runs and 68 RBI in 113 games for the low-A Burlington (Iowa) Bees last season while Richard hit .292 for the Ports.

Cole, Hassebrock and Walz will anchor the starting rotation. Cole, a fourth-round draft pick in 2010 acquired by the A's in the 2011 trade that sent pitcher Gio Gonzalez to the Washington Nationals, was ranked No. 88 among the Top 100 Prospects by MLB.com entering the season. Hassebrock posted a 2.64 ERA with Burlington last season. Walz went 4-1 with a 1.99 ERA in 21 appearances for Burlington and the Vermont Lake Monsters of the New York-Penn League.

The bullpen will feature Guzman, who recorded 20 saves for the Ports last season, and Sean Doolittle, a former Port now trying to make his way in the A's organization as a pitcher after injuries forced him to convert from first base.

Bees Win the Rubber Match

By Daniel Trivinos / Burlington Bees

BURLINGTON, Iowa - The Burlington Bees won the rubber match of a three game series with the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers with a 3-2 score. The Bees scored early and the bullpen dominated the rest of the way.

The Timber Rattlers lead-off hitter, Chadwin Stang tripled to right-center to start the game. Greg Hopkins hit a sacrifice fly to left field that allowed Stang to score. After that, Bees starter Drew Granier settled down on the mound and got through the three innings unscathed. He would later give up a home run to Yadiel Rivera with one out in the fifth inning. Granier went five innings and give up four hits, one walk, two earned runs and struck out three.

The Bees were able to score early; once in the first, then again in the third and fourth inning. Chad Oberacker continued to hit well in the lead off spot. He started the Bees half of the first with a double to left field and later advanced to third base by stealing third with B.A. Vollmuth at the plate. Later in the inning, Dusty Robinson managed to drive in a two-out run when he hit a ground ball up the middle for a base hit. Oberacker Scored on the play.

The Bees scored again when Chad Oberacker hit a deep home run that easily cleared the tall wall in right field. Oberacker finished the night with three hits in three at bats and falling just short of hitting for the cycle. Oberacker also earned another walk on the season.

The Bees scored once more after Nick Rickles hit his second double of the game and Royce Consigli hit an RBI double later in the fourth.

Seth Frankoff and Drew Tyson also pitched two innings for the Bees and combined for three strike outs and only giving up a hit. Frankoff got his first hold of the season and Tyson earned his second save.

The first Thirsty Thursday arrives when the Bees take on the Kane County Cougars for the first game of a four-game series. Jonathan Joseph will toss the first pitch, which 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.