

Bartolo Colon, Oakland A's shut down Seattle Mariners

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Watching Bartolo Colon pitch can be yawn-inducing, and his nonchalant body language on the mound suggests he might just doze off himself.

But the A's found his performance Friday quite inspiring.

The right-hander blanked the Seattle Mariners over seven innings as the A's began a seven-game trip with a 4-0 victory at Safeco Field, spoiling the Mariners' home opener before a sellout crowd of 46,026.

Colon gave up just three hits, walked one and retired his final 10 batters in a row. Consistent with his laid-back demeanor, Colon never showed a trace of getting flustered, a mentality that might be rubbing off on his teammates.

"I love the way he's loosened up the clubhouse," reliever Ryan Cook said. "No matter what the situation, he's always loose and having fun. Guys feed off that.

"He threw the hell out of it tonight."

Because of the scheduling quirk of the A's-Mariners season-opening series in Japan, Colon (2-1) became the first pitcher in Oakland history to make three consecutive starts against the same opponent without skipping a turn in the rotation.

He held the Mariners to one run over eight innings in Japan but was tagged for seven runs in 41/3 innings Saturday. He switched things up Friday, veering away from his fastball early and using more breaking balls.

"It's not easy to face a team three times in a row," Colon said through translator Ariel Prieto. "I tried to use different pitches, more change-ups and sliders."

His only real jam came in the bottom of the fourth with the A's up 2-0. He put runners on the corners with two outs but rang up Michael Saunders looking to end the threat. As Colon walked slowly off the mound, cameras caught him glancing into the crowd, seemingly amused at the booing fans.

Friday also marked the third time the A's faced Mariners ace Felix Hernandez (1-1) in the first eight games, and they finally beat him.

They scored twice in the third on an RBI double from Cliff Pennington and a run-scoring single from Coco Crisp.

Hernandez left after seven, and the A's added some cushion on Kurt Suzuki's sacrifice fly in the eighth and Jemile Weeks' homer off Charlie Furbush in the ninth.

Seattle, trailing 3-0, looked ready to jump back in the game after Cook, a rookie, walked two batters to open the eighth. But Cook helped himself in a big way, starting a 1-6-3 double play that doused the rally.

A's catcher Suzuki is off to a great start throwing out runners, nailing four of nine would-be base stealers through seven games entering Friday. As a point of reference, he threw out just 23 of 121 attempted base stealers in all of 2011, a 19 percent success rate that ranked fourth-lowest in the American League.

Suzuki attributes the improvement to work he did in spring training with manager Bob Melvin and Triple-A Sacramento manager Darren Bush.

"I changed it up a little bit," Suzuki said before a game against the Mariners. "More footwork stuff, more transfer stuff, using my legs. It's been going good so far. The main thing is keeping it going for the entire season when I get tired."

That's where Suzuki hopes some added strength pays off. He put on 15 pounds in the offseason, thinking it will help his endurance as the season wears on.

Yoenis Cespedes went 0 for 4, the first time in eight games he didn't reach base. He did turn in a diving catch in center to rob Kyle Seager in the seventh, and right fielder Josh Reddick robbed Jesus Montero right after that. Replays showed that Cespedes might have trapped the ball.

It was during a series last August at Safeco Field, site of this weekend's series, that Pennington was diagnosed with Bell's palsy, a nerve condition that causes partial facial paralysis.

Pennington left an Aug. 1 game in the sixth inning because he had trouble closing his left eye and could not see well. Then he missed the next two games while taking medication to ease the symptoms.

But Pennington's case was mild. Bell's palsy afflicts some people for months at a time or longer. He's had no recurring effects and didn't require any follow-up treatment. Looking back, he said he feels grateful.

"Very much so," Pennington said. "My wife brings it up from time to time and will remind me of it. But I try not to think about it."

Melvin isn't revealing who his starting pitcher will be Tuesday, the first day the A's need a fifth starter. But the signs point to right-hander Tyson Ross being called up from Triple-A Sacramento to face the Angels.

Ross pitched five innings Thursday against Tucson, giving up three runs but not issuing a walk. He would be on turn to next pitch Tuesday, making him a logical candidate.

Because of a conflict with the Sharks' playoff broadcast, Saturday's 6:10 p.m. game will air on Comcast Sports Net Plus.
 The Mariners held a pregame tribute and moment of silence for longtime scout Frank Mattox -- who starred at Acalanes High in Lafayette and Cal -- and outfielder Greg Halman. Mattox died in February and Halman in November.

Inside the Oakland A's: Emerald City rematch for Bartolo Colon and Felix Hernandez

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 4/13/2012, 6:03pm

Greetings from the press box at Safeco Field, the only location in the majors where it's cold enough to hang meat ...

So the A's and Mariners engage in yet another "opening night." First there was the regular-season opener in Tokyo, then the A's home opener last week, and now the Mariners' home opener to begin this three-game series. Word is that a sellout crowd is expected tonight, as Bartolo Colon and Felix Hernandez square off for the second time in less than a week. This is the third start of the season for each pitcher, and they've faced the same opponent every time. That is N-U-T-T-Y, any way you slice it.

Josh Reddick and Cliff Pennington are back in the A's lineup after leaving Wednesday's game with minor injuries, so it's a pretty standard Oakland starting nine ...

A's: Weeks 2B, Crisp LF, Reddick RF, Cespedes CF, Smith DH, Suzuki C, Barton 1B, Donaldson 3B, Pennington SS; Colon RHP.

Mariners: Figgins LF, Ackley 2B, Ichiro RF, Smoak 1B, Seager 3B, Montero DH, Saunders CF, Olivo C, Ryan SS; Hernandez RHP.

A's manager Bob Melvin is still mum on his starting pitcher for Tuesday, the first day the A's need a fifth starter. Things point toward Tyson Ross getting the call though. He had a pretty good outing Thursday for Triple-A Sacramento, going five innings and allowing three runs on five hits. Most importantly, he didn't walk anybody, and commanding the strike zone is the biggest key for Ross as far as the A's brass is concerned. He would be on turn to pitch Tuesday, and that's a big key here. Jarrod Parker also has been solid in two starts for the River Cats (3.00 ERA, 10 Ks, 2 BB in 12 IP), but Melvin's comments suggest Ross is the guy. "I think over the course of the season all of those guys are still in play," Melvin said, presumably lumping Brad Peacock into the mix as well. "I think scheduling, for this turn, may factor into it."

--I'm being dramatic, it's not really that cold here at Safeco. I'm sure writers in Minnesota have it much worse this time of year. But they lull you into a false sense of security here, leaving the windows closed and then throwing them open shortly before the game starts. The roof is open tonight, and it's windy. Time to channel my inner Candlestick toughness. ...

Seattle-stopper Colon starts A's road repairs

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Technically, Friday was Oakland's first road game of the season. Even though the A's played their first series in Tokyo, those were "home" games.

Oakland would like to be better away from the Coliseum this year after some poor road work last year, and in the Seattle home opener at Safeco Field, the A's had a notable start - they beat Felix Hernandez and the Mariners 4-0.

"Opening night for them, Felix on the mound, we look at him again - if you ever want to break the ice ... it ended up being a good night for us," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said.

The A's were facing Hernandez - All-Star, Cy Young winner - for the third time in eight games. But Oakland had its own special, stem-cell-enhanced weapon: Bartolo Colon, who pitched seven scoreless innings Friday, allowing three hits and one walk.

"He threw the hell out of it tonight, for sure," A's reliever Ryan Cook said.

Colon, who has faced the Mariners three consecutive starts, is now the active winningest pitcher against them, with 16 victories. He is 10-1 with a 1.91 ERA in Seattle.

"It's not easy to face the same team three times," Colon said, with coach Ariel Prieto interpreting. "I tried to use different pitches, changeups, sliders. ... Whatever I wanted to do happened - mix pitches, put it in the zone. It worked today."

Hernandez got off to a rip-roaring start, striking out three of the first four batters, and he retired the side in order in the first on only nine pitches, all strikes, but the A's scored twice off him in the third..

Daric Barton started it with a leadoff broken-bat single to right. Josh Donaldson moved him to second with a groundout before Cliff Pennington doubled Barton in with Oakland's first run.

After Jemile Weeks walked, Coco Crisp's single to left scored Pennington.

Reddick singled in the eighth, stole second, went to third on a passed ball and scored on a sacrifice fly by Kurt Suzuki.

Jemile Weeks homered in the ninth. The A's second baseman has four homers overall in his past 15 games dating back to last year after going without a homer in the first 90 games of his career.

"Last year, it seemed like he wasn't ever going to hit a home run," Melvin said. "Now he's more confident, driving the ball. He'll hit some home runs. We don't want him thinking those things, but he has a little juice in his bat."

Last season, the A's went 31-50 away from home, the team's fifth consecutive losing record on the road and its worst road mark since 1997, when Oakland was 30-51 away from the Coliseum.

"You'd like to think early on you could create some momentum," Melvin said, pointing out that the team played better on the road toward the end of last season. "Getting off to a good start on the road is one way to create momentum."

A's seem to lean toward Tyson Ross as 5th starter

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Manager **Bob Melvin** wouldn't officially name a fifth starter Friday night, but he said the schedule is likely to have a say in things, which points again to right-hander **Tyson Ross**.

The A's need a starter for Tuesday's game at Anaheim, and that's Ross' day to pitch. Melvin said that Ross had pitched better Thursday night for Triple-A Sacramento than he did in his first start for the River Cats; Ross allowed five hits and three runs in five innings, and, more important, he struck out four and walked none.

Jarrod Parker remains in the picture for a starting spot, however, and he has been pitching well at Sacramento, with 10 strikeouts and two walks in two starts. He probably will be an option should Ross or fourth starter **Graham Godfrey** stumble - and because he started Wednesday for the River Cats, he conceivably could pitch Tuesday on an extra day's rest.

Over the course of the season, Melvin said, it's likely that several pitchers will work in the fifth spot. Another possibility: **Brad Peacock**.

A's D: Yoenis Céspedes was credited with a diving catch in the seventh inning on a sinking liner by **Kyle Seager**. Replays indicated that Céspedes trapped the ball, but the out was called.

Josh Reddick also made several good catches, including a running grab in the corner in right on a drive by **Jesus Montero**.

Reliever **Ryan Cook** made a good play to help himself: He walked the first two batters in the eighth, then got **Chone Figgins** to hit a come-backer, which Cook fielded neatly and threw to second to start a 1-6-3 double play.

Céspedes failed to reach base for the first time this season, going 0-for-4 with two strikeouts, and has struck out in every game so far. His 13 strikeouts lead the league.

Briefly: Felix Hernandez's five-game home winning streak against the A's was snapped. He had not lost to Oakland at Safeco since April 27, 2008. ... **Jonny Gomes** jokingly said he planned to put his walk-off hit-by-pitches record out of reach. (He has two, including the game-winner Wednesday.) Gomes said he's also won games by walk, error and home run. ...

Manny Ramirez remains at extended spring training, where he is continuing to work out as he awaits the OK to play in minor-league games.

A's on deck

Saturday

at Mariners

6:10 p.m. **CSN+**

Milone (1-0) vs. Noesi (0-1)

Sunday

at Mariners

1:10 p.m. **CSNCA**

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

Monday

at Angels

7:05 p.m. **CSN+**

McCarthy (0-1) vs. Weaver (1-0)

Leading off

Saving face: Josh Reddick is wearing a mouth guard because a filling came loose while he was in Japan, and he had the guard in when he was hit in the jaw by a Jose Mijares curveball Wednesday. "Lucky I didn't call the dentist yet," he said.

The Drumbeat: Seven scoreless for Bartolo Colon in A's win at Seattle

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Safeco Field, 4/13/2012, 10:15pm

The A's have faced Felix Hernandez three times in the span of eight games, which seems sort of unfair, but on Friday, they scored two runs off him in his seven innings of work, and that was enough for Oakland to win a game started by Hernandez for the first time this season.

The A's beat the Mariners 4-0, snapping Hernandez's five-game home winning streak against them. His last loss to Oakland at Safeco Field came on April 27, 2008.

"Opening night for them, Felix on the mound, we look at him again – if you ever want to break the ice....it ended up being a good night for us," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said.

The last time Oakland saw Hernandez, Saturday at the Coliseum, they'd managed to score six runs off him, but they lost that game. This time, though, Bartolo Colon was the antidote – he's a real weapon at Safeco Field. He's 10-1 lifetime in Seattle now, and overall, his 16 career victories against the Mariners are the most among active pitchers.

Colon has won his past eight decisions here, putting up a 1.66 ERA in the process. On Friday night, he mixed things up from his last time out, throwing more sliders and changeups early and getting the Mariners off balance, and he went back to primarily fastballs later in the game.

"It's not easy to face the same team three times," Colon said, with coach Ariel Prieto interpreting. "I tried to use different pitches, changeups, sliders. Whatever I wanted to do happened – mix pitches, put it in the zone – it worked today."

Colon allowed three hits and one walk in his seven scoreless innings of work, he struck out five (including Michael Saunders three times, twice looking and not too happy about it). He also got some spiffy work from his outfielders, particularly Yoenis Cespedes and Josh Reddick, who both made several nice running catches. Cespedes made what looked to be a terrific diving, rolling grab of a sinking liner by Kyle Seager in the seventh, and while replays appeared to show that he trapped the ball, the out was recorded.

Cespedes did not reach base for the first time in his big-league career, and he struck out twice. His 13 strikeouts overall in eight games lead the league.

The A's got an RBI double from Cliff Pennington off Hernandez in the third, and a run-scoring single from Coco Crisp that same inning. Kurt Suzuki sent Reddick in from third with a sacrifice fly in the eighth, and Jemile Weeks homered in the ninth.

For the first 90 games of his career, Weeks went without a homer. In his past 15 games, dating back to last year, he has four homers.

"Last year, it seemed like he wasn't ever going to hit a home run," Melvin said. "Now he's more confident, driving the ball. He'll hit some home runs. We don't want him thinking those things, but he has a little juice in his bat."

The Drumbeat: Tyson Ross still lined up for Tuesday start; A's prepare for Felix again

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Safeco Field, 4/13/2012, 5:54pm

I asked manager Bob Melvin about the fifth starter spot before the game, and he said he's still not ready to say officially, but he said the schedule will have a lot to do with it.

That means it's Tyson Ross on Tuesday at Anaheim, because it's his day to pitch, and – this is my speculation only – it probably means that Ross probably is not set in stone beyond Tuesday. Jarrod Parker has been pitching well at Triple-A Sacramento and I wouldn't be stunned to see him later this month or early next month. Ross needs to put up some strong starts to stick, and I'd say the same is true of Graham Godfrey, the No. 4 starter (so far so good on that front).

Melvin mentioned that Ross pitched better last night for Sacramento; Ross allowed five hits and three runs in five innings, and more important, he didn't walk a man and he struck out four. The K's and BB's are looked at closely.

Overall, Ross is 0-1 with a 4.00 ERA and he's walked three and struck out four. Parker has a 3.00 ERA in two starts, and he has walked two and struck out 10.

Josh Reddick is back in the lineup after being hit by a Jose Mijares curveball and leaving the game on Wednesday. Reddick said that even though the ball hit his shoulder and jaw, he had no resulting stiffness in his shoulder or neck. Cliff Pennington, who left Wednesday's game after fouling a ball off his knee, is also back in, and he said there's just a little bruising, no big deal.

This will be the third time the A's see Felix Hernandez, and the lineup looks a little different, with two men who haven't been in against Felix the past two times, first baseman Daric Barton and third baseman Josh Donaldson. Barton wasn't on the roster for the previous two games, and Eric Sogard started at third those games.

"I'm excited to get out there," Donaldson told me before batting practice. "Obviously, he's got great stuff, but the last time, the guys hung in there the whole game and he relaxed a little bit. He won't do that again, so we've got to get him early tonight."

I asked Melvin about putting Donaldson in rather than Sogard this time, and he said, "Early on, we were trying to ease Donaldson into the starting role, but if Donaldson is going to be the everyday third baseman, he's going to have to face everyone."

Melvin said he'd like to get Sogard a favorable matchup against a starting pitcher the next time he's in the lineup. He also said that because Donaldson has some pop and might run into a pitch, he could be a good option against Hernandez. Melvin said a team isn't going to bat .500 against Hernandez, but if he leaves one pitch in a bad spot, Donaldson is the kind of guy who could take advantage of it.

When I walked into the clubhouse today, Jonny Gomes asked me who has more walkoff hit-by-pitches than he does. I thought for a second and said, "No one?" And that turns out to be the correct answer. If you could revel in game-winning hit-by-pitches, he is. Gomes, grinning, said he plans to put the mark out of reach, maybe even starting tonight. He also told me he has a walkoff walk, a walkoff error on a ball he hit, and a walkoff homer. ... So he did actually swing the bat twice in there.

Oops, forgot the lineup. Here it is! Weeks 2B, Crisp LF, Reddick RF, Cespedes CF, Smith DH, Suzuki C, Barton 1B, Donaldson 3B, Pennington SS. Colon P.

Colon reigns supreme in duel with King Felix

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- Maybe this is what it takes to beat Felix Hernandez.

Face the guy not once, not twice, but three times in the first eight games of the season. The third time surely proved the charm for the A's, who squeaked out a 4-0 victory over Felix and Co. in Seattle on Friday while finding the .500 mark again.

Oakland had beaten Hernandez just two other times at Safeco Field, the last win coming April 27, 2008, the first way back in April 2006. Friday's was one to savor as the A's played the spoiler role during Seattle's home opener while at the same time providing themselves with a needed dose of momentum to jumpstart a seven-game road swing.

"It's a good start," manager Bob Melvin said. "For it to be Opening Night for them, with Felix on the mound, for us to break through ..."

"Definitely," said Seth Smith. "Any win is going to give you some momentum."

But surely the A's most recent victory was all the sweeter by night's end, upon realizing that it will be months, rather than days, before they see Hernandez again.

"We've seen plenty of him, there's no doubt about that," Melvin said, smiling.

The Mariners are probably saying the same of Bartolo Colon, who allowed just three hits over seven shutout innings for his second victory of the season. The A's righty, who has pitched at least seven innings in two of his three starts, all against the Mariners, effortlessly made his way through a lineup that went down in order five times.

Colon struck out five in the 106-pitch effort, walking just one along the way and retiring his final 10 batters with an effective mix of sliders and changeups that allowed him to rest a fastball seen plenty by Seattle in his other two starts.

"When you're facing a team three times in a row, it's tough," A's pitching coach Curt Young said. "I don't care what kind of stuff you have. Bartolo, after the first time through, you saw a definite mix of some changeups and breaking balls. It was effective for him."

Added Mariners manager Eric Wedge: "He threw really good over in Japan and he threw really good again today. He did a good job moving left to right on the plate, had a good two-seamer going and he could straighten it out away from left-handers when he wanted to. He mixed in his secondary stuff and had a really good feel for the baseball tonight."

It marked Colon's 16th career victory against the Mariners, the most wins vs. Seattle by any active pitcher. Moreover, the veteran righty has been perfect in Safeco Field since 2003, compiling an 8-0 record and 1.66 ERA during that span.

Already the A's are acquainting themselves with a pitcher who exudes as calm a demeanor as any in the game, a characteristic that Smith noted can serve a player well, or not so well. In Colon's case, it's easily the former.

"He's super loose," Smith said, "and he's super good."

"Not only does it serve him well, but it serves us well because we feel calm behind him," Melvin said. "If you have someone out there that's pacing around and nervous and fidgety and so forth, the rest of the team feels it. And he's anything but. He's pitching like he's pitching on the back field in a [Spring Training 'B'] game, and our guys feel pretty calm behind him."

So do the pitchers that follow him. Right-hander Ryan Cook, who entered the day having not allowed a baserunner in 3 1/3 innings this season, immediately allowed two via free passes in the eighth. But he just as quickly erased them, garnering a double-play ball from Chone Figgins that he fielded before getting Dustin Ackley to end the inning with a groundout.

"I was thinking double play, nothing else," Cook said.

"There are going to be key moments for him," Melvin said. "The stuff's there. With young players, there are going to be a lot of firsts to get through and overcome and build some confidence from, and I think that was one of those outings for him."

Meanwhile, Hernandez allowed two runs on seven hits with three walks and six strikeouts in seven innings. And it was his third inning that enabled the A's to take a lead they never gave back.

Daric Barton led off the inning with a base hit and, one out later, Cliff Pennington easily drove him in with an RBI double. Pennington, too, scored courtesy of a single off the bat of Coco Crisp, and by the end of the frame Hernandez's pitch count read 49.

With the righty gone by the eighth inning, the A's extended their lead to three in the inning on Kurt Suzuki's sacrifice fly. Jemile Weeks capped the scoring with a solo homer in the ninth, his second of the season and fourth in 15 games dating back to last season.

Milone, Noesi coming off very different debuts

By Zack Meisel / MLB.com

Jesus Montero was the prized gem the Mariners received from the Yankees over the winter in exchange for right-handed pitching phenom Michael Pineda. Seattle also acquired 24-year-old starter Hector Noesi, for whom the Mariners have high hopes.

Noesi's first start with Seattle, however, was one he hopes to forget.

The right-handed native of the Dominican Republic surrendered seven runs on six hits and three walks, lasting just three-plus innings in an 11-5 loss to Texas.

"I was missing my spots," Noesi said after his season debut. "I just have to concentrate for the next time. If I keep my ball down, I can get better."

Manager Eric Wedge agrees.

"His [third] career start in a very different atmosphere than he's accustomed to, I think all in all he handled himself well," Wedge said. "He just had a few pitches that were right into what they wanted and it hurt him."

When Noesi toes the rubber Saturday against Oakland, he'll be opposed by another starter short on experience.

Athletics southpaw Tom Milone, however, dazzled in his season debut, holding the Royals scoreless on three hits in eight innings. He earned his second career victory in his sixth career start in Oakland's 1-0 triumph.

"He pitched great," catcher Kurt Suzuki said. "Not the best command he would have liked [while walking three], but he found the way. Him being a young guy able to do that at this level is awesome."

Athletics: Injured duo returns to lineup

- Josh Reddick and Cliff Pennington both departed Wednesday's 5-4 win over the Royals, but both were back in the lineup Friday against Seattle.

Reddick left Wednesday's contest after being hit by a pitch that bounced off his right shoulder and caromed into the back of his jaw. Pennington took a foul pitch off his left knee cap.

Mariners: Cameron retires a Mariner

- Mike Cameron signed a one-day employment agreement to officially retire with the Mariners on Friday. A few hours later, the 39-year-old threw out the first pitch at Seattle's home opener at Safeco Field.

"This is probably the one place I feel like is home for me," Cameron said. "I feel like it's a place where, it's a long way from home for me, but it's also been a special home for me. I felt like it was only fitting for me to slide my way into the Mariner family for the rest of my life."

Cameron spent four seasons with Seattle, where he won two Gold Glove Awards (2001, 2003), was elected to his only All-Star Game (2001) and became one of 15 players to ever hit four home runs in one game. He came to the Mariners as part of the trade that sent Ken Griffey Jr. to Cincinnati.

- Seattle recalled southpaw Charlie Furbush from Triple-A Tacoma on Friday after placing George Sherrill on the 15-day disabled list with a sore elbow.

"George has been struggling a little physically and having trouble getting over the hump. So we're going to get him looked at and put him on the DL," Wedge said. "Charlie was the next guy up. He did everything he could to make this team to begin with, but we just weren't able to make it work numbers-wise. So we've got him back up here."

Worth noting

- Oakland has tallied fewer than 10 hits in each of its first eight games, the longest streak to start a season since another eight-game drought in 2001. The club record, recorded in 1978, is 10 games.
- Mariners ace Felix Hernandez has made a league-high three starts (tied with Oakland's Bartolo Colon), all against the Athletics.

Ross in line to take fifth spot in A's rotation

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- It doesn't take a math major to figure this one out.

Righty Tyson Ross, who last pitched for Triple-A Sacramento on Thursday, is scheduled to make his next start on Tuesday -- the same day the A's just so happen to need a fifth starter in Anaheim.

A's manager Bob Melvin wouldn't officially announce Friday who that will be, but he tipped his hand by saying that scheduling will likely dictate his decision.

The choice would be a natural one, as Ross barely missed the cut on the Opening Day roster, when the A's opted for Graham Godfrey's services in the rotation instead. In two starts with the River Cats, Ross is 0-1 with a 4.00 ERA, having surrendered four runs with three walks and four strikeouts in nine innings.

Oakland's other top candidates, right-handers Jarrod Parker and Brad Peacock, are likely primed for more seasoning before earning a promotion this year.

Reddick, Pennington in lineup despite injuries

SEATTLE -- The banged-up duo of Josh Reddick and Cliff Pennington, both of whom exited Wednesday's game early due to injuries, were back in the lineup for Friday's series opener in Seattle.

Reddick was forced to exit the club's 5-4 win over the Royals in the bottom of the eighth inning after getting hit by a pitch that bounced off his right shoulder and caromed into the back of his jaw. The A's outfielder was seeing spots after the incident, but all tests indicated he was OK to go Friday.

Pennington, meanwhile, was lost in the bottom of the sixth when he took a foul pitch off his left knee cap. But the A's shortstop was plugged back into a lineup, geared for a third meeting with Seattle righty Felix Hernandez.

Pennington is a career .258 hitter against the 2010 Cy Young Award winner, the best mark of any A's player not named Kurt Suzuki, who has hit Hernandez to the tune of a .313 average with one home run in 32 at-bats.

Elsewhere in the lineup, third baseman Josh Donaldson received his first career start vs. Hernandez. Eric Sogard started the

other pair of contests with the right-hander on the mound, but manager Bob Melvin said, "If he's going to be the everyday third baseman, he's going to have to face everybody."

"Certainly he has some power and can run into one," Melvin said of Donaldson. "Against Felix, you don't expect as a team to hit .500 off him, but if you can get one pitch in one spot and take advantage of it, that could be big."

Donaldson collected just one hit in 15 at-bats with seven strikeouts on the last homestand after going 1-for-3 in one game in Tokyo.

A's aim for more success on road in 2012

SEATTLE -- Had the A's strictly played in the confines of the Oakland Coliseum last year, their final record likely would have read quite differently. But playing on the road proved a constant challenge, something manager Bob Melvin is hoping to avoid this season.

Melvin and Co. embarked on their first road trip of the year Friday, beginning with a three-game stint in Seattle that will be followed by a four-game set in Anaheim.

"I'd like to think, early on, we can create a little bit of momentum," Melvin said. "Getting off to a good start on the road would be one way to create that. I really don't know why that is sometimes, struggling on the road, why it can be so extreme. But I've always enjoyed playing on the road."

Last year the A's compiled a 43-38 record in Oakland, compared to a dismal 31-50 mark on the road, their fifth consecutive season with a losing record away from home. It tied for fourth worst in the American League and was seventh worst in Oakland history.

It's worth noting that the A's road schedule wasn't the easiest, though. Oakland paid visits to the rowdy cities of Boston and New York twice, whereas this year the club makes those trips just once. In non-divisional play, they'll head to Minnesota, Kansas City, Baltimore and Tampa two times this season, the other A.L. cities once.

Worth noting

- The A's have tallied fewer than 10 hits in each of the first seven games, which ties for the third-longest streak in Oakland history to start a season and is the longest since an eight-game streak at the beginning of the 2001 campaign. The record, recorded in 1978, is 10 games. Overall, the club is batting just .195, the second-lowest average in the American League.
- Right-handed reliever Ryan Cook entered Friday having not allowed a base runner in three appearances spanning 3 1/3 innings.

Colon, A's ruin Seattle's home opener with 4-0 win

By TIM BOOTH, AP Sports Writer

SEATTLE (AP) What worked for Bartolo Colon in Japan got solved by the Mariners when they met again in Oakland.

So, like the savvy veteran he is, Colon threw Seattle a curve on Friday night. In fact, a lot of curves.

Relying more on off-speed pitches early before turning to his fastball, Colon allowed three hits in seven innings and the A's ruined Seattle's home opener with a 4-0 win.

Making his third start already this season against Seattle, Colon (2-1) rebounded from a shaky effort last time out against the Mariners and beat them for the second time in 2012. His first win over Seattle came during the season-opening, two-game series played in Tokyo when Colon pitched an eight-inning gem. That was followed up by getting pounded for 10 hits and seven earned runs last Saturday by the Mariners.

Colon knew changes were needed.

"He gave a different look today. Like a veteran guy, he made some adjustments," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said. "He's calm on the mound and we feel calm around him. If you have someone out there who's nervous and fidgety, the rest of the team feels it."

Colon improved to 10-1 with a 1.91 ERA at Safeco Field in his career. He also picked up his 16th career victory against

Seattle, the most of any active pitcher in baseball.

Colon struck out five and walked one and was in control from the start. He retired nine of his first 11 batters, then after Seattle threatened in the fourth inning, set down the final 10 hitters he faced.

"Tried to mix better pitches. Tried to use different pitches - changeup, slider - some like that because it's not easy," Colon said through a translator.

Ryan Cook made things interesting for the A's, starting the eighth with consecutive walks. But he got Chone Figgins to ground into a double play to quell the threat.

While it seemed a good spot for Seattle to bunt and put both runners in scoring position, Mariners manager Eric Wedge was trying for a bigger inning.

"We still have to do more than that. We're not looking just to get back in it when we've only got a few outs left in the game," Wedge said. "You've got to create an inning in that situation."

Seattle's one threat against Colon came in the fourth. Ichiro Suzuki led off with a single and advanced to third on Jesus Montero's two-out hit, only to be stranded when Michael Saunders struck out looking.

Colon retired the side in order in the fifth and sixth, then got a break leading off the seventh. Kyle Seager lined the first pitch into center field. Yoenis Cespedes took a direct path to the sinking liner and made a great diving catch. But on slow-motion television replay, it appeared that Cespedes trapped the sinking liner.

"We have to play that way and they know that," Melvin said. "You've seen a couple of times this year where defensive plays not only make you feel good about yourself and what we've been working on defensively but can change the momentum."

Seattle starter Felix Hernandez was wiggling free of trouble most of the night. Cliff Pennington had an RBI double and Coco Crisp an RBI single in the third. Jemile Weeks hit a solo home run with two outs in the top of the ninth, his second homer of the season.

Hernandez (1-1) gave up just two runs in seven innings but got no help from Seattle's offense. It was the first loss for Hernandez against Oakland since September 18, 2008. He had won his previous six decisions against the A's.

Oakland's rally in the fourth started with a broken-bat single by Daric Barton that bounded into right field. He advanced to second on a weak groundout and then jogged home on Pennington's one-hop double off the wall in deep right-center.

Pennington scored when Crisp singled to left. Figgins bobbled the ball and that allowed Pennington to score when it appeared he was stopping at third. Figgins was not charged with an error.

Oakland added a run in the eighth off Seattle's bullpen on Kurt Suzuki's sacrifice fly.

NOTES: Former Seattle CF Mike Cameron threw out the ceremonial first pitch and announced before the game he was retiring as a Mariner. Cameron played for Seattle from 2000-03 and signed a ceremonial one-day contract on Friday so that he could retire with the Mariners. ... Colon and Hernandez became the first pitchers since Kevin Brown in 2004 to start the season with three starts against the same team. ... Seattle announced a sellout of more than 46,000 for the opener but empty seats were noticeable in the outfield bleachers and in the 300 level above right field.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

River Cats Fall In Home Opener, 2-0

Sacramento River Cats

West Sacramento, Calif. - The Sacramento River Cats couldn't take advantage of a quality start from right-handed pitcher Brad Peacock as they were shut out for the second night in a row, losing to the Reno Aces 2-0.

Shortstop Cody Ransom led off the second inning with a walk and reached second on a wild pitch by Peacock. After a walk and a fly out, catcher Derek Norris attempted to pick Randy Ruiz off first but his throw was off the mark, allowing Ransom to advance to third base. Ransom later scored on a sacrifice fly from Aces catcher Konrad Schmidt, giving the Aces a 1-0 lead they would not relinquish.

The River Cats threatened in the seventh when Grant Green singled to load the bases with two outs. The next batter, first

baseman Chris Carter, hit a chopper up the middle and was thrown out by a step, ending the threat.

Sacramento again made things interesting in the bottom of the ninth. Wes Timmons drew a one-out walk, and after Norris struck out, outfielder Jeff Fiorentino drew a two-out walk. Outfielder Grant Green came to the plate representing the go-ahead run. Green, who entered the at-bat having gone 3-for-3 with a walk, watched a wild pitch sail by, moving both runners into scoring position. Green hit a dribbler to Aces pitcher Brian Woodall, who tossed the ball to first baseman Randy Ruiz, sealing the victory for the Aces.

Peacock suffered the loss but ended the game allowing just one hit, two walks and one unearned run with eight strikeouts in six innings pitched. Sacramento's bullpen allowed one run in three innings with two strikeouts.

Green finished 3-for-4 with a walk, collecting the majority of his team's four hits. Carter was the only other River Cat to get a hit.

Reno left-handed pitcher Zach Kroenke struck out five in six innings, allowing three hits and three walks, earning the win. Woodall was awarded the save with .1 inning pitched.

The two teams return to Raley Field on Saturday where Sacramento left-hander Fabio Castro (0-0, 4.50 ERA) will face Reno lefty Tom Layne (0-1, 7.36 ERA). First pitch is set for 7:05.

Signs Point To Ross Joining A's Rotation

Chris Biderman, OaklandClubhouse.com

Apr 13, 2012

WEST SACRAMENTO - Thanks to an unusual early season schedule, the Oakland A's will go through two turns of their starting rotation before they need a fifth starter. On Tuesday, however, the schedule will finally require Oakland to add a fifth man to the rotation. Sacramento River Cats' right-hander Tyson Ross, at the moment, looks poised to be the one who gets the call.

After the start of the year required the Oakland A's to carry only four starting pitchers, the club is likely set to recall Tyson Ross to pitch in Anaheim on Tuesday.

Ross made his second start of the season for Triple-A Sacramento on Thursday, throwing 76 pitches in five innings. On three days rest, the hard-throwing right-hander allowed five hits and three runs, but threw better the numbers indicated, according to River Cats' manager Darren Bush.

"He threw the ball outstanding. He was down in the zone, he moved the ball around and had good action on his pitches. He looked good," Bush said.

In his two starts with the River Cats, Ross has thrown nine innings, allowing 10 hits and four earned runs. He walked four with three strikeouts.

A's staff ace Brandon McCarthy will be on regular rest to start Monday, while No. 2 starter Bartolo Colon wouldn't get his four days of rest until Wednesday. Ross would be on full rest for a potential Tuesday start for Oakland.

Last year, Ross' season in Oakland ended in May when he strained his oblique in a start against the Minnesota Twins. He threw well with the team to that point, going 3-3 with a 2.75 ERA in nine appearances, six of which were starts.

He spent more than a month away from pitching before making three minor league starts. With High-A Stockton on July 10, Ross suffered a setback in his rehab, re-tweaking his injured oblique. He waited two weeks before he resumed throwing. When he did, he had a hard time finding any consistency and went to the Arizona Fall League for the first time to work things out.

"I think the biggest difference it made for me is getting back on track after struggling last year. Coming into [last year's off-season] I felt kind of lost but I was able to work out the kinks in the Fall League," Ross said Friday.

Now fully healthy, Ross says he is able to throw all four of his pitches - fastball, sinker, slider and change-up - without restriction.

Ross and Bush said that they weren't aware of Oakland's potential plans for the Tuesday start.

The Cal alum didn't post great numbers for the Phoenix Desert Dogs in the fall, going 1-3 with a 5.94 ERA in seven starts.

The important thing for Ross, however, is being in the strike zone after struggling with his location and feel during the regular season. He had only five walks in 16.2 innings after averaging well over five per nine innings during his rehab with Sacramento.

Green Adjusting To Triple-A

Chris Biderman, OaklandClubhouse.com

Apr 14, 2012

WEST SACRAMENTO - The 2012 season figures to be one of adjustments for Oakland A's 2009 top pick Grant Green. The USC alum is embarking on his first season at the Triple-A level and his first full season as an outfielder. He is also focused on adding power to his otherwise well-rounded offensive game.

His hitting line might not jump off the page yet, but Grant Green is making strides in his first April at the Triple-A level.

With a line of .226/.242/.419 in his first seven games headed into Friday, Green has gotten off to a slow start. But two of his seven hits have been home runs and he's second on team in RBIs with eight. Only Michael Taylor has more with 11, good for second in the Pacific Coast League.

"He's handled every situation I've thrown at him so far," River Cats manager Darren Bush said.

"I've moved him around in the batting order. We just need to have him prepared for anything that comes up. He's played left field and did a really good job out there too."

Green made his debut in Triple-A last September, and he hit .296/.333/.370 in seven playoff games for the River Cats. He was promoted just two months after switching from shortstop to the outfield. His athleticism serves him well in the outfield, but he still has a long way to go to be considered a major league-caliber defensively.

Despite having already made a brief stint with Sacramento, he still found himself dealing with some early-season anxiety during his first batch of games in 2012.

"I don't want to say I was in awe of the Triple-A experience. But I was kind of rattled a little bit, to say the least," Green said.

"I wasn't hitting like I wanted to. The last couple games in Tucson felt a lot better."

Green's only went 2-for-13 in the series against the T-Padres, with both his coming in the same game. One was a grand slam, the other was a two-run single.

The former first-round pick in 2009 has all the makings of a major league player, with good athleticism, a quick bat and solid approach at the plate. He turned heads in 2010 with High-A Stockton by hitting 20 home runs with a .318/.363/.520 line, but wasn't able to replicate those power numbers last year with Midland. There, his 750 OPS was 133 points lower than the previous year with Stockton and he only hit nine homers.

It's possible Green was asked to move to the outfield in order to add bulk to his frame that would result in more power, something that would hinder his defense at shortstop.

"We're just working on having a quality at-bats. His power is his power. If he hits the ball hard in the air, it's going to go out of the park," Bush said.

Bush indicated that the neither he or the club's hitting instructors have worked with Green to improve his power specifically, but it's something that has been on the 24-year-old's mind.

"It's always something people have said will come as I start to fill out. I'm still skinny as hell," Green said.

"But it's something I've always wanted to add to my game. It's something they really want to see as well. It's never going to be [Yoenis] Cespedes-type numbers. But if I can get 15 to 20, I'm happy with that and I know the organization will be happy with that too."

The 190-pounder said he said he's hoping to add another 15 to 20 pounds of muscle to his lanky frame. He said he's as strong as he's ever been now, while eating healthier than he has in the past in order to "feel stronger."

While Green's best power season came with 20 home runs, another infielder-turned-outfielder put up similar numbers in the

minor leagues. National League MVP Ryan Braun made the switch from third base to the outfield – the two have similar builds and athleticism. Braun followed up a 22 home run-season in 2006 in the minors with a 10-homer season in 2007.

Green has a long way to go as a hitter before he could ever be mentioned in the same breath as an MVP, but Braun's ride up big league ladder could provide the blueprint for the A's prospect.

It's unlikely Green will jump up to the majors at any point before September without any injuries to A's outfielders. The club hopes he can flourish both offensively and defensively without the possibility of the major leagues weighing him down. But a good year in 2012 vault Green into the big league conversation next spring, especially if his power numbers improve.

Pena Outduels Gray in 4-2 Loss

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

You Knew It Wasn't The RockHounds Night ...

... when starter Sonny Gray took a no-hitter into the sixth inning, and trailed, 2-0. In fact, both starting pitchers took no-hitters into the fifth.

A pair of second-inning walks, compounded by a wild pitch, put the RockHounds in a 2-0 hole, despite not allowing Arkansas a hit through the first five innings.

The Travelers scored two more in the sixth, again compounded by a 'Hounds miscue, this one a throwing error by first baseman Anthony Aliotti on a potential double play ball. Instead of bases empty and two out, the error opened the door for the two runs that would provide the final margin of victory for the visitors.

Ironically, Aliotti later hit a two-run home run in the last of the seventh. Without the error, that swing would have tied the game. Anthony also made a run-saving defensive play to end an Arkansas rally in the eighth, and he collected two of the 'Hounds' three hits.

Ariel Peña was strong through 6.2 innings and got critical relief help from lefty Andrew Taylor, who struck out Jeremy Barfield to end the home half of the seventh with the tying run at the plate. Taylor retired all four batters he faced, and Matt Oye whiffed Aliotti to end the game, again with the batter representing the tying run.

- The Travelers evened the three-game series at a game apiece.
- The 'Hounds and Arkansas conclude their series Saturday, with the Springfield Cardinals coming to Citibank ballpark to begin a three-game set Sunday afternoon.
- Saturday ... The RockHounds will be wearing specially designed Japanese jerseys that will be auctioned off to benefit earthquake and tsunami victims in Japan. Saturday's game will be followed by the season's first post-game fireworks show.

Blame It On The Rain: Nuts Beat Ports 9-4

STOCKTON, Calif. - Before the tarp was pulled in the bottom of the third inning on Friday night at Banner Island Ballpark, the Stockton Ports seemed to be having their way with the Modesto Nuts. Three of the first four hitters in the inning had doubled when the umpires called for the tarp to be put on the field in the midst of steady rain. Following the 20 minute rain delay, the Ports mustered just two more hits the entire game as the Nuts scored seven unanswered runs, handing Stockton a 9-4 loss.

Stockton opened the scoring in the contest with a run in the first on an RBI double from Miles Head off Nuts starter Josh Mueller (1-0). The head was short-lived, however, as the Nuts got a pair of runs in the second off Ports starter A.J. Cole. Bryce Massanari led off with a solo home run, and Corey Dickerson scored later in the inning on a passed ball to give the Nuts their first lead at 2-1.

The Ports were quick to tie it in the bottom of the inning. With one out, Nino Leyja drove his first home run of the season out to left to tie it at 2-2.

In the bottom of the third, the Ports got back-to-back doubles from Josh Whitaker and Head, with Head's scoring Whitaker to give the Ports a 3-2 advantage. Two batters later, Rashun Dixon doubled to left to score Head and give the Ports a two run lead. It was at that point, as the rain was coming down, that the umpires asked the tarp to be put on the field, resulting in a 20 minute rain delay.

Coming out of the rain delay, Mueller was able to retire two batters in a row to escape the third. Modesto's offense found their stride in the fourth. After a one-out single from Massanari, Dickerson homered to right-center to tie the score at 4-4. Cole would be lifted after the fourth inning and would receive a no-decision, allowing four runs on five hits while striking out two.

Modesto's largest inning of the night came in the sixth with Jake Brown (0-1) on the mound for Stockton. With the bases loaded and nobody out after a walk and two singles, Chandler Laurent broke the tie with a sac-fly to center, putting the Nuts up 5-4. Dustin Garneau followed with an RBI double to left, knocking Brown from the game. Sean Doolittle took over and, with two outs, Christian Adames hit a slow roller to second that went off the glove of a charging Leyja, ruled an infield single. On the play, Jared Clark scored, and Garneau, once the ball went off Leyja's glove, rounded third and tried to score. Catcher Petey Paramore took the throw from Leyja and then was run into by Garneau as he blocked the plate. Paramore would hang on and after being slow to get up, would remain in the game.

Brown took the loss for Stockton after allowing three runs on four hits in 1.1 innings of work. Doolittle pitched 1.2 innings and allowed an unearned run in the seventh while racking up four strikeouts.

The Nuts added a run in the eighth off Ports reliever Jose Guzman to make it a 9-4 lead. It was the only run allowed by Guzman in two innings of work.

Mueller would earn his first win of the season for the Nuts, going five innings and allowing four runs on seven hits.

The Ports and Nuts will play the third game of their four-game set on Saturday night at Banner Island Ballpark. T.J. Walz (1-0, 2.84 ERA) will head to the mound for the Ports, opposed by Nuts right-hander Christian Bergman (0-1, 11.25 ERA). First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

Oh So Close

By Daniel Trivinos / Burlington Bees

BURLINGTON, Iowa - The Bees fell just short of another impressive comeback and lost 11-9 to the Kane County Cougars. The Bees ninth inning comeback ended when Bobby Crocker struck out with the bases loaded.

The first inning looked good for right-handed starter, Jose Macias, but somehow the outing looked worse than Jonathan Joseph's start the night before. Macias gave up a run in the top of the second and heading into the top of the third, the score was tied at one run apiece.

The inning started with a throwing error by shortstop, Sean Jamieson and quickly unraveled into a mess of runs. Three straight hits followed the error and the score was 4-1 in the Cougars' favor. With the bases loaded and two outs, Macias served up a grand slam to Tim Ferguson. Macias actually struck out three batters in the inning, but surrendered seven runs. Macias pitched four innings and gave up 10 hits and eight runs (three earned). The Bees went down 8-1 heading into the bottom of the third.

Max Perlman started the fifth inning on the mound for the Bees and got two outs before giving up a run. In 3.1 innings pitched, the Cougars had two hits and one run.

But the Bees could not maintain the four run deficit for long. The Bees committed an error with two outs in the top of the ninth and pitcher Ryan Doolittle gave up two runs. Trailing 11-5 in the bottom of the ninth, the Bees mounted a comeback with two outs.

Thursday night's hero, Wade Kirkland smacked a base hit and scored when Nester hit a double off the centerfield wall. Douglas Landaeta hit a two-run homerun. Royce Consigli hit for Chad Oberacker and lined a base hit to left, and later scored on B.A. Vollmuth's rope to left. But with the bases loaded and two outs, Bobby Crocker struck out swinging and the Bees took the 11-9 loss.

Raul Alcantara makes his second start for the Bees on Saturday night. For tickets to game three with Kane County visit www.gobees.com or call (319) 754-5705 during normal business hours.