

Oakland A's drop series in 5-3 loss to Seattle Mariners

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

A weekend filled with promise took a sour turn for the A's, and there was plenty of blame to spread around.

They battled back from a three-run deficit Sunday only to see their defense malfunction in the fifth inning of a 5-3 loss to the Seattle Mariners.

After beating one of the major leagues' top pitchers in Felix Hernandez on Friday, the A's could not build on the good vibes, dropping the final two of a three-game series.

Now they will be challenged to reverse their fortunes during a four-game set in Anaheim against the Angels, considered one of the American League's heavyweights.

"It's frustrating," A's second baseman Jemile Weeks said. "We feel like we've been in a lot of games. It's just a matter of putting it all together. In those tight games, everything's got to be crisp -- defense, offense and pitching."

The A's certainly weren't clicking in all three facets at Safeco Field.

There is team-wide optimism that their bats might be coming around, but the A's managed just 21 hits and seven runs over the three-game series.

Though Josh Reddick was robbed on a ball he smoked when Mariners second baseman Dustin Ackley made a leaping grab in the fourth, the A's also benefited from bloopers that fell for three of their seven hits Sunday.

Oakland did get a lift from an unlikely source. No. 9 hitter Eric Sogard, spelling Josh Donaldson at third base, hit a three-run homer off Blake Beavan that pulled the A's into a 3-3 tie in the top of the fifth.

But the Mariners struck back in the bottom half with assistance from the A's defense.

With a runner on first and one out, Weeks fielded Ackley's grounder but made an errant and ill-advised flip to second. The A's should have gotten at least one out on the play.

Ichiro Suzuki followed with a go-ahead RBI double to right.

"He's got to make sure he can get the out there," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "If not, you go to first base."

Weeks took full responsibility.

"I tried to force the issue, and obviously it was the wrong decision," he said.

Suzuki's double left runners on second and third. Justin Smoak followed with a comebacker to A's pitcher Graham Godfrey, who would have had a play on Ackley trying to score from third.

But Godfrey couldn't field the ball cleanly and had to go to first, allowing Ackley to score for a 5-3 Seattle lead.

"I was a little disappointed in myself," Godfrey said. "The offense showed some life and got momentum, and I gave it right back to them."

The A's advanced just one runner into scoring position over the final four innings.

Godfrey's pitch count rose early, and he lasted just five innings. He surrendered a two-run homer to Brendan Ryan in the second, then caught too much of the plate with a 3-2 change-up that Smoak hit over the right-field wall in the third.

Sogard went 2 for 4 and lined out to end the game. Melvin said the left-handed hitter is likely to start again Monday against Angels right-hander Jered Weaver.

Donaldson is just 3 for 25 this season.

The Angels, who shelled out \$331 million last winter to sign first baseman Albert Pujols and left-hander C.J. Wilson to multiyear contracts, are expected to battle the Texas Rangers for A.L. West supremacy.

A's right-hander Brandon McCarthy, who starts Monday's series opener, said his team must establish that it can compete with the Angels despite their high-profile additions.

"It's extremely important (that) this team starts entering into other teams' thoughts: 'We're playing the A's now. This isn't going to be an easy series,' " McCarthy said.

Melvin is well-aware of how dangerous Pujols is despite the fact he is hitting .243 with no homers.

"They do have some guys around him to insulate him," Melvin said of the Angels' lineup. "(But) with every team, there's always one guy you don't want to beat you."

A's center fielder Yoenis Cespedes went 1 for 11 with four strikeouts in the Seattle series. Mariners reliever Tom Wilhelmson struck him out swinging on a 96 mph fastball in the eighth Sunday.

Although Cespedes is seeing a steady diet of breaking balls, teams are switching things up by challenging him with fastballs on occasion.

"That's what longevity is all about, making adjustments," Melvin said. "I think the fact that they are continually having to make adjustments means he is as well."

Melvin said Tyson Ross will be called up from Triple-A Sacramento to make Tuesday's start, when the A's need a fifth starter for the first time.

First baseman Kila Ka'aihue, who went 3 for 4 Sunday but otherwise hasn't played since Daric Barton was activated from the disabled list, is a candidate to be bumped from the roster to make room for Ross.

Ka'aihue is out of options and would need to clear waivers before being sent to the minors.

Inside the Oakland A's: Will getaway day bring the A's a getaway victory?

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

It's only the 10th game out of 162, but A's manager Bob Melvin considers today's contest a big one. I can see why. A win gives the A's a series victory, which would be good considering Seattle took three of four to begin this season. It would pull the A's to .500 and give them some momentum going into a four-game series against the Angels. "I'm not gonna lie to you, it would be nice to win a series," Melvin said. "Today is an important game."

In an effort to shake up the offense, Melvin dropped Josh Reddick to the fifth spot and is batting Seth Smith third. Kurt Suzuki gets the day off – that's more because Melvin likes pairing starting pitcher Graham Godfrey with Anthony Recker – and Josh Donaldson also is out of the lineup, with Eric Sogard at third. Donaldson is struggling with the bat, but you had to like a couple of the plays he made defensively last night. Pretty good hands ...

The lineups:

A's – Weeks 2B, Crisp LF, Smith DH, Cespedes CF, Reddick RF, Pennington SS, Ka'aihue 1B, Recker C, Sogard 3B; Godfrey RHP.

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

–Here's your unsolicited restaurant recommendation for Seattle: [Anthony's Pier 66](#), located right on the waterfront. It's a great location, and on a sunny day, grab a seat out on the deck. I'm a big fan of the seafood marinara ...

A's: Good riddance to Mariners, hello to Pujols

[Susan Slusser](#), San Francisco Chronicle

The A's are so happy not to see the Mariners again for a while, they were practically breaking into song.

"Done with these guys!" one Oakland player announced with a gleeful tone before Sunday's game started.

The A's played seven of their first 10 games against Seattle, thanks to the season-opening trip to Tokyo, and they won only two of them.

Next up is another AL West opponent, and one of the division favorites: the Angels. This will be Oakland's first regular-season look at the team's big free-agent signing, **Albert Pujols**, in an Angels uniform.

"Obviously, I've seen 1,000 home run highlights, but I've never played against him," said Monday night's starter, **Brandon McCarthy**, who only has a scouting report and video to go on. "There's a lot you don't know until someone steps in the box and you face him; everyone's approach is a little different. Until he's there and it's a reality, you don't really know."

McCarthy will not let the Angels' status as a likely playoff club even enter into his thinking, nor their addition of Pujols except as merely another batter for whom he must prepare.

"They're a major-league baseball team, their hitters wear jerseys, it's another group of guys," McCarthy said. "You try to make sure you're sharp.

"They're better than most lineups we'll face, but it doesn't change my approach. It doesn't matter if it's a lineup of Hall of Famers or the worst lineup in the league, you have to execute your game plan. Usually, if you do that, it works out well."

Manager **Bob Melvin** noted that the Angels have a deep rotation, speed at the top and bottom of the lineup, and - of course - that power in the middle of the order.

"There's no doubt about the fact they're one of the better teams in the American League," he said. "We'll have to play well."

Briefly: All three of **Eric Sogard's** career homers have come on the road. ... The A's have dropped four of their past six season series to Seattle. ... Reliever **Tom Wilhelmson** has worked in five games against Oakland this year, going 1-0 with a 1.50 ERA and seven strikeouts in six innings.

A'S ON DECK

Monday

at Angels

7:05 p.m. **CSN+2**

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

Tuesday

at Angels

7:05 p.m. **CSNCA**

Ross (0-0) vs. Haren (0-1)

Wednesday

at Angels

7:05 p.m. **CSNCA**

Colon (2-1) vs. Santana (0-2)

A'S ON DECK

Ross on Tuesday: The A's finally need a fifth starter for the second game at Anaheim, and as expected, it's Tyson Ross. The Cal alum's control has been something of an issue, but he threw 50 strikes in a 76-pitch outing for Triple-A Sacramento on Thursday.

Mariners overpower A's 5-3, win series

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Seattle -- Oakland really needed to get its offense churning Sunday and to start scoring some runs.

Eric Sogard provided some of those with a three-run homer in the fifth inning at Safeco Field, ending the A's scoreless streak at 13 innings, but the team was lacking elsewhere in a 5-3 loss to the Mariners. Seattle took the series two games to one.

Defensively, Oakland was not sharp, and it has become increasingly clear in the first few weeks of the season that this is not a club that can get by without playing well in the field - the offense and the pitching aren't consistently excellent enough to allow for defensive lapses.

After Sogard's homer tied the game, the Mariners scored two runs off Graham Godfrey in the bottom of the inning, thanks in part to a poor decision by Jemile Weeks.

Weeks has been perhaps the A's top defensive player this season, and he made a nice stop on a short hop to field a grounder by Dustin Ackley, but instead of choosing to get the easy out at first, he tried to get Chone Figgins at second with a backhanded flip.

The toss was not a good one, and instead of having one on and two outs, Godfrey had a two-on, one-out situation and Ichiro Suzuki at the plate.

"My thought process is always to get two, but it should have been to get one, because that play didn't dictate to try to get two," Weeks said, explaining that he was too far from second base to make a backhanded flip.

Suzuki banged an RBI double, and Justin Smoak sent in another run with a comebacker. Godfrey bobbled the ball and had to go to first to get Smoak rather than trying to get Ackley at home.

"If he fields it cleanly, there's definitely a play at the plate," A's manager Bob Melvin said.

Godfrey said he was not in a good position to field the ball, especially one with that type of spin on it, and he lost sight of it for a second. "I have to do a better job after throwing the ball of becoming the ninth fielder," he said.

Godfrey started that inning with a four-pitch walk to Figgins, and though both runs in the fifth were unearned, he was kicking himself after the game.

"On the personal side, I'm disappointed in myself," he said. "Our offense shows life and we get momentum going, and I hand it right back to them."

The Mariners homered twice off Godfrey; Brendan Ryan hit a two-run shot in the second with two outs and a 2-2 count, and Smoak hit a solo shot on a 3-2 changeup in the third.

Sogard, who also singled in the seventh, played third base in place of Josh Donaldson, and Melvin said Sogard will be back in the lineup again Monday night at Anaheim.

Kila Ka'aihue, who is a possibility to come off the roster when the A's call up a fifth starter Tuesday, had three hits, matching his career high, and he scored a run. He's 6-for-12.

The A's failed to record 10 hits again Sunday, the 10th time in a row they have not reached double digits in hits, matching the Oakland record to start the season set by the 1978 club that went 69-93.

First baseman Daric Barton and catcher Kurt Suzuki had scheduled days off Sunday. Anthony Recker has caught both of Godfrey's starts.

The Drumbeat: Blah A's fall again at Seattle, lose series

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Safeco Field, 4/15/2012, 3:46pm

After from Eric Sogard, the A's had few noteworthy happenings on Sunday in Seattle, where they fell 5-3 and dropped the series two games to one.

Sogard provided all of Oakland's runs with a homer in the fifth, and otherwise, the A's didn't do much offensively, defensively or on the mound, where starter Graham Godfrey allowed homers by Brendan Ryan and Justin Smoak.

The A's fielding was also a factor. Sogard's homer tied the game, but in the bottom of the same inning, Jemile Weeks' poor decision on a grounder by Dustin Ackley cost Oakland. Weeks made a nice stop, but he decided to flip with a backhanded motion toward second to try to get Chone Figgins, the throw was not on the bag, and everyone was safe on the error.

Weeks said that he just flat made the wrong decision – it wasn't that he lost the grip on the toss or anything, he simply should have done to first instead. It was too far a distance to second for a backhanded flip.

The Mariners scored two unearned runs as a result, one on Ichiro Suzuki's double to right and the other on a comebacker by Justin Smoak. Godfrey bobbled the ball, which didn't look great, but it's unclear if he'd have gotten the runner at the plate, anyway, with no force play on.

After the game, manager Bob Melvin said that Godfrey would have had a play at the plate – that was the idea, anyway. Godfrey (0-2) was mad at himself, saying he wasn't in a good enough position to field the ball, which had a lot of spin on it.

"I have to do a better job after throwing the ball of becoming the ninth fielder," Godfrey said.

Godfrey took blame for that entire inning, saying, "On the personal side, I'm disappointed in myself. The offense shows some life and we get momentum going, and I give it right back to them."

Not a good series, as it turns out, for Oakland. The A's beat Felix Hernandez to take the first game, then they fell to Hector Noesi and Blake Beavan. You'd think sneaking away with a win against Hernandez might give a team some momentum, but that was not the case.

Melvin said that Sogard, who also had a single in the seventh, will get another start tonight at Anaheim.

I thought Melvin might be on to something saying that he always thinks Coco Crisp is about to bust loose, but Crisp went 0-for-3 with a walk today, and his average is down to .162. I don't see that continuing long, but the A's really do need him to get going.

Kila Ka'aihue, a candidate to come off the roster when the A's call up a fifth starter Tuesday, had three hits today and he's batting .500. You can't say he didn't do everything possible to stick.

The A's matched the Oakland record for starting off the season with consecutive games without recording double-digit hits. They're up to 10 in a row with nine hits or fewer, matching the 1978 team.

Melvin announced that, as expected, Tyson Ross will start Tuesday at Anaheim.

A's unable to sustain momentum in loss to M's

By Jane Lee / MLB.com | 4/15/2012 8:30 PM ET

SEATTLE -- The A's were looking for a dose of momentum in Sunday's series finale, enough to tuck away in their pockets before embarking on a three-hour flight from Seattle to Anaheim, where they'll open a four-game set with the Angels on Monday.

It took five innings, but they got it. Unfortunately, the A's lost it minutes later, unable to ever reel it in again in a 5-3 Jackie Robinson Day loss to the Mariners, their second in as many days following an exciting victory over King Felix and Co. on Friday.

Third baseman Eric Sogard's game-tying, three-run shot in the fifth -- which halted Oakland's 13-inning scoreless streak -- was just what a sluggish A's offense needed. But the team's defense proved faulty in the bottom half of the frame, allowing Seattle to score two unearned runs.

The A's never recovered and, as a result, departed Seattle with a 2-5 season record against a Mariners team they can finally wave goodbye to until June.

"A lot of times, games will have momentum shifts -- and there were a couple today," manager Bob Melvin said. "We didn't do anything offensively early on, and then we get a couple guys on and Sogard hits a homer, and we didn't have a good defensive inning after that."

"That was unfortunate," Sogard said.

Oakland starter Graham Godfrey was around for all five of Seattle's runs, going six innings and allowing six hits -- two of them home runs -- with one walk and three strikeouts. Brendan Ryan's two-run homer in the second gave the Mariners a two-run advantage, and Justin Smoak's solo shot in the third extended their lead to three.

The A's, meanwhile, stayed quiet against right-hander Blake Beavan through the first four frames, reaching base just three times, before Sogard's home run -- his first of the season -- knotted the game at 3.

Godfrey, looking to keep his team in the game, issued a one-out walk to Chone Figgins in the bottom of the fifth to bring up Dustin Ackley. The Mariners' second baseman grounded a ball to Jemile Weeks, who made a poor flip to second rather than opting for an easy out No. 2 at first, as both runners were safe with just one out.

"I just made a decision to try to get it to second," said Weeks, who was tagged with an error. "I probably should have gone to first. I saw him cross me, and my thought process is always to go [for] two. But the ball didn't really dictate two and I tried to force the issue, ended up being the wrong decision."

"He's gotta make sure he can get the out there," Melvin said. "If not, you go to first base. I think he felt like he could get the out. He knows you have to get one out at the very least there, and that didn't happen."

Ichiro Suzuki took advantage of the miscue, lining an RBI double down the right-field line seconds later, forcing Godfrey's inning to continue with runners on second and third. The A's righty, desperately in need of a ground ball, got just that from Smoak right in front of him. But he bobbled it and couldn't make the play at the plate on a running Ackley, instead having to throw to first for the out.

"It was spinning real hard," Godfrey said. "I lost it for a second, and I wasn't really in a great position to field it. I think that's what it comes down to. I figured he was probably going on contact, so I was trying to tell myself, 'Field the ball first,' but it didn't work out."

Though the run ultimately represented nothing more than insurance, it was one Melvin believed his club shouldn't have allowed.

"That was the intent, was to go home," Melvin said. "It looked to me like if he fields that thing cleanly, there was a definite play at the plate."

The A's couldn't get anything going the rest of the way and, for the first time since 1978, have tallied fewer than 10 hits in each of their first 10 games. Sogard, having done his part, is expected to remain in the lineup for Monday's opener in Southern California against righty Jered Weaver.

The A's entered Sunday with a .200 average, a number that was raised -- barely -- to .201 by game's end.

"I think we're getting close offensively," Melvin said. "It looks like our at-bats are getting better, so I'm hopeful we're breaking out of it."

Added Weeks: "It's frustrating. We feel like we've been in a lot of games. It's just about trying to pull it all together, offensively and defensively. Everything has to be crisp."

Ross tapped to be A's fifth starter

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- As expected, right-hander Tyson Ross was named the fifth starter on Sunday, two days before he's scheduled to make his season debut with the A's in Anaheim.

Ross, who will turn 25 in a week, last pitched on Thursday for Triple-A Sacramento. In two starts with the River Cats, he was 0-1 with a 4.00 ERA. He surrendered four runs with three walks and four strikeouts in nine innings.

The A's are not expected to officially promote Ross until Tuesday, at which point they will have to make a corresponding move on their 25-man roster. The decision won't be an easy one.

Oakland has two left-handed-hitting first basemen in tow, so it might make sense for the A's to cut ties with Kila Ka'aihue -- at least it did before Sunday. Ka'aihue collected three hits and raised his average to .500 (6-for-12) in four games.

It's also possible that the A's might option Collin Cowgill, since they have five other outfielders on their roster. But manager Bob Melvin likes having a true fourth outfielder, since Jonny Gomes and Seth Smith have solely been used as designated hitters up to this point.

Weaver takes lead as Angels welcome A's

By Quinn Roberts / MLB.com | 4/16/2012 1:45 AM ET

After facing the Seattle Mariners for seven of their first 10 regular-season games, the Oakland A's will be happy to make the trek to Anaheim on Monday to face off against the Angels in the opener of a four-game set.

However, the team knows getting wins won't be an easy task against a potent Angels lineup and strong rotation.

"You see the lineup -- they're deep in the rotation, got some speed at the top and bottom and some power in the middle," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "They haven't played great to this point, but I don't think there's any doubt about the fact that they're probably one of the better teams in the American League. We're going to have to play well."

Playing the Halos tough last year, the A's compiled an 11-8 record. The team will rely of the arm of Brandon McCarthy on Monday to get the team's first win against the Angels this season.

He got the no-decision on Wednesday against the Royals, tossing six innings and giving up two runs on six hits, while allowing just two walks.

The right-hander will have some stiff competition in Angels ace Jered Weaver, who'll be looking to improve after his last start.

Against the Twins on Wednesday, Weaver allowed five runs on seven hits in six innings of work. He went into the seventh inning with a 5-3 lead and having thrown 97 pitches. But he gave up back-to-back singles and wound up with the no-decision.

"I felt good, just left a couple pitches up and fell behind," Weaver said after the start. "Anytime you do that in a big league game, it's going to affect you."

After the bullpen tossed 5 1/3 innings in Sunday's 11-5 loss to the Yankees, the Angels will need the Weaver they saw on Opening Day that threw eight shutout innings.

A's: Melvin juggles lineup on Sunday

The A's put out their eighth different lineup on Sunday, with Melvin hoping it would provide a spark for his team's struggling offense. However, Oakland wound up losing, 5-3, to the Mariners.

Josh Reddick was bumped into the No. 5 spot, while Seth Smith got his first start in the three-hole.

"I always feel like everyone's on the verge of swinging well," Melvin said. "And I really do think it's something where we get a nice game early on, string some hits together, you can gain some momentum from that. That'll be the key for us, to relax a bit. Everyone wants to be that guy right now to get us out of the little funk we're in."

Angels: Scioscia continues to mix up lineup

For Sunday's game against the Yankees, manager Mike Scioscia featured a different starting lineup, his eighth of the nine games the Angels have played this season.

Maicer Izturis got his first start at third base, while Mark Trumbo was penciled in as the Angels' designated hitter for only the second time. Bobby Abreu also played left field, while Kendrys Morales and Peter Bourjos got the night off.

"You can wish all you want about the lineup," Scioscia said, "but you have to just take a pragmatic approach and look at it [with] what's good on this day and what's good with the long term, as to how you're matching up and what you're doing.

- The club was 8-11 against Oakland during the 2011 season, marking just the second series loss to the A's since the 2003 season, when the team went 9-10.

However, the Angels are 11-5 in the last 16 meetings at Angel Stadium against the A's. Los Angeles is 3-6 in its last nine games in Oakland.

Worth noting

- Weaver has made 20 career starts against the A's, compiling a 6-7 record with one shutout and a 2.85 ERA.
- The A's have tallied fewer than 10 hits in each of their first 10 games, tying the record from the team's 1978 campaign.

A's let momentum slip away

Weeks' error allows Seattle to retake lead after Sogard's three-run home run

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEATTLE — Just when Oakland got an unlikely home run from Eric Sogard, the Athletics' defense let them down.

Sogard's three-run shot gave the A's a spark, but an error by second baseman Jemile Weeks led to two unearned runs that were the difference in a 5-3 loss to Seattle on Sunday.

Brendan Ryan and Justin Smoak both homered off Oakland starter Graham Godfrey. But it was Weeks' risky decision to try for a difficult double play that led to Ichiro Suzuki's tiebreaking double.

"My thought process is always to turn two. In that situation it should have been to go one since the ball didn't dictate that we could get two," Weeks said. "But I tried to force the issue and obviously it was the wrong decision."

The A's dropped two of three in Seattle. The teams now get a break from seeing each other — they began the season with two games in Japan, then played a pair of games in Oakland.

And the A's break away from Seattle with questions still lingering about their hitters. After getting shut out on Saturday night, the A's managed just seven hits Sunday and all their runs came on one swing.

Seattle starter Blake Beavan (1-1) was cruising into the fifth when Kai Ka'aihue led off with a single. Anthony Recker's jersey was brushed by Beavan's inside pitch, putting two runners on with no outs.

Sogard, who had just one hit in his first 11 at-bats this season, then sent his third career homer into the seats in right field and pulled the A's even at 3-3.

But Sogard's homer was immediately followed by Weeks' mistake in the bottom half.

"A lot of times a game will have momentum shifts and there were a couple today," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "We didn't do much offensively early on and then Sogard hits the homer, then we didn't have a good defensive inning after that."

Chone Figgins walked with one out and Dustin Ackley followed with a chopper to second. Instead of making a pivot and overhand throw, Weeks tried to make a back-handed flip and was well wide of the bag.

Suzuki followed with a double off the wall in right for a 4-3 lead and Smoak got himself another RBI when his tapper back to the mound was initially bobbled by Godfrey, allowing Ackley to score from third without a play at the plate.

"It was spinning hard and I lost it for a second," Godfrey said of Smoak's tapper. "I wasn't in a good position to field the ball. I have to do a better job after I threw the ball of becoming the ninth fielder."

Godfrey (0-2) pitched five innings, giving up six hits and three earned runs. But snapping streaks was the tone of the afternoon for the Mariners. Ryan hit his first homer before the home crowd after all three of his homers last season came on the road. Then Smoak snapped a skid of 11 straight at-bats without a hit when he lined a solo homer to right field with two outs in the third off Godfrey.

Ryan, who fouled off three two-strike pitches before homering, never once thought his ball was going to leave the yard.

"Never here. No, not ever. Not even from second base. No. No. So, yeah, that's it. Just no," Ryan said.

After the homer, Beavan was terrific. He retired the next three and 9 of the final 10 batters before the Mariners went to their bullpen. Brandon League closed out his fourth save in as many chances working the ninth. Beavan went seven innings, giving up just six hits and striking out four.

The A's have yet to record 10 hits in any of their first 10 games this year. That matches the longest streak in Oakland history to begin a season.

Minor League News

River Cats Ride Pitching to 3-1 Win Over Aces

West Sacramento, Calif. - The Sacramento River Cats held the Reno Aces in check, allowing just one run to cross the plate en route to a 3-1 victory.

The first three innings of the game went by without a run scored as each starting pitcher kept the opposing offenses at bay. Reno broke the silence in the top of the fourth when catcher Ryan Budde hit a sacrifice fly to center fielder Grant Green, scoring first baseman Randy Ruiz. The River Cats pitching staff quickly got back on track, as they did not allow another run.

Aces right-handed starter Barry Enright held the River Cats scoreless through six innings but lost the shutout in the seventh when Sacramento third baseman Stephen Parker shot a line-drive by the first baseman, scoring outfielder Brandon Moss and advancing shortstop Adam Rosales to third. The next batter, first baseman Wes Timmons, drove in the go-ahead run with a sacrifice fly to right field.

Sacramento Catcher Petey Paramore, playing the first Triple-A game of his career, added an insurance run with a solo home run in the eighth. Right-handed reliever Merkin Valdez came on in the ninth and retired the Aces in order, earning his second save of the year.

Right-handed starter Travis Banwart went five innings for the River Cats striking out four with four hits, three walks and one earned run. The Sacramento bullpen pitched four shutout innings and lefty Erick Threets earned the win with two innings of work. Valdez went one perfect inning, striking out one to earn the save.

The Cats recorded six hits highlighted by Paramore's home run. Green went 1-for-4 and now has hit safely in four-straight games.

Enright suffered the loss, going seven innings for the Aces allowing two runs, five hits and one walk with five strikeouts.

The two teams will meet again at Raley Field on Monday at 7:05 p.m. River Cats right-handed pitcher Jarrod Parker (0-0, 3.00 ERA) will take on Reno righty Chris Jakubauskas (1-1, 5.91 ERA).

To purchase 2012 Sacramento River Cats Season Tickets, Mini-Plans and group outings, call the River Cats Ticket Hotline at (916) 371-HITS (4487) or visit www.rivercats.com. In their first 12 seasons, the River Cats have won two Triple-A championships, four Pacific Coast League championships and 10 Pacific South Division championships. No other major American sports team has won 10 division titles in that span.

Offensive Explosion

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

Entering Sunday's series opener with the Springfield Cardinals, the Rockhounds were hitting .215 as a team in the first nine games of the season. Thanks to the league's second-best on base percentage, the 'Hounds had still managed to score four-and-a-half runs per game, but the bats had largely been quiet. On Sunday ... they made some serious "noise."

The RockHounds scored 14 runs in three innings, seven of those in the fourth inning, and went on to defeat Springfield, 18-4.

The 'Hounds banged out 22 hits, hitting .500 as a team for the game (22-for-44) and raising their team average by nearly 40 points in one game (.215 to .254).

Ironically, a walk opened the door to the offensive eruption. The 'Hounds led by just a 3-1 score with the bases empty and two out in the third inning. Michael Spina, mired in a major slump (he's 2-for-39), resisted the temptation to swing at a 3-2 pitch, instead drawing his second walk. Anthony Aliotti then ripped an RBI double ... Jeremy Barfield's flair to left went in-and-out of Adam Melker's glove for an RBI double ... Ryan Ortiz tripled in the gap to right-center driving in a run ... and Dusty Coleman capped the inning with an RBI single to left. The four-run rally, triggered by the walk, made the lead 7-1.

The 'Hounds then exploded for seven runs in fourth, highlighted by Barfield's three-run home run. The 'Hounds' right-fielder hit a grand slam in the home opener last Thursday, and drove in six runs in Sunday's onslaught. He also made a tremendous catch in foul territory down the line in right in the ninth inning, a sliding grab against the wall on a wind-blown fly ball.

Gary Daley, Jr. improved to 2-0, pitching into the seventh inning. Springfield's first batter of the game doubled and scored, but Daley would give up another run until the bullpen allowed a two-run single in the seventh, scoring two "inherited" runners left by Daley.

Highlights from the offensive uprising:

- Jeremy Barfield 4-for-5, home run, two doubles, four runs, six RBI
- Shane Peterson 4-for-6, double, two runs, two RBI
- Anthony Aliotti 3-for-5, two doubles, three runs, two RBI
- Josh Horton 3-for-6, two doubles, one run, two RBI
- Michael Choice 3-for-6, two runs, two RBI
- Ryan Ortiz 2-for-4, triple, three runs, two walks, RBI
- Dusty Coleman 2-for-4, two runs, two RBI

Frisco (7-3) rallied to beat Arkansas, 4-3, so the RockHounds (6-4) remain one game back of the division-leading RoughRiders.

Sunday Best: Ports Walk-Off Winners On Pineda's Blast

STOCKTON, Calif. - In a game that saw many bizarre moments, including a swarm of bees that stopped play for approximately three minutes, Ryan Pineda provided the signature moment of the afternoon. Trailing by two runs in the bottom of the ninth, Pineda came up with two on and nobody out and launched his first home run of the season over the left field fence, lifting the Stockton Ports past the Modesto Nuts by a final of 10-9.

The Ports got the first run of the game in the second on an RBI groundout from Eliezer Mesa, taking advantage of the first of three Modesto errors on the afternoon.

Modesto tied it in the fourth on an RBI double from Chandler Laurent, scoring Bryce Massanari who opened the inning with a single. After Ports starter Blake Hassebrock struck out Dallas Tarleton in the fourth, players on the field simultaneously laid face-down on the field as a swarm of bees passed by, delaying play for nearly three minutes in a bizarre scene.

Modesto opened up their offensive attack in the fifth. With one on and one out, Brett Tanos, Juan Crousset and Massanari each doubled to give the Nuts a 4-1 lead. Massanari's double went to the gap in left-center field, and in pursuit of the fly ball,

Ports center fielder Myrio Richard slammed full-speed into the wall, taking nearly five minutes to get up and get his bearings. Richard would stay in the game and go 3-for-4 at the plate.

Hassebrock was knocked from the game in the middle of the fifth, giving way to Arnold Leon. Leon would allow a run of his own in the frame. In total, the Nuts scored six runs on seven hits in the fifth to take a 7-1 lead. Hassebrock would receive a no-decision, going 4.1 innings and allowing six runs on nine hits while striking out four.

The Ports would get a run back in the bottom of the inning as Juan Nunez, who singled to open the inning, scored on a wild pitch to make it 7-2.

Modesto, however, would get a second run off Leon in the sixth. Corey Dickerson hit a two-out single to center, scoring Tanos who'd walked to open the inning and making it a six-run deficit again at 8-2. Leon allowed two runs on six hits while striking out three in two innings of work.

A.J. Kirby-Jones would help the Ports chip away at the deficit in the bottom of the sixth when he hit his first home run of the season, a solo shot off Nuts starter Juan Gonzalez to make it 8-3.

Gonzalez would receive a no-decision, allowing three runs (one earned) on four hits while striking out five in six innings of work.

The Ports cut into the deficit in a big way in the seventh. With Kraig Sitton on the mound for the Nuts, the Ports scored four runs on three hits and took advantage of three Modesto wild pitches and a Nuts error. Richard contributed an RBI double in the inning, and Josh Whitaker an RBI groundout. The Ports caught a break when Pineda hit a grounder to third and Tanos, Modesto's third baseman, bounced the throw to first with Massanari unable to handle it. The play resulted in the continuation of the inning and a run. An ensuing wild pitch that brought home Kirby-Jones made it an 8-7 game.

In the eighth, Modesto padded their lead once again with a run off Ports reliever Connor Hoehn. Hoehn walked Tanos to start the inning, and he eventually scored on a wild pitch to bring the Modesto lead to 9-7.

Nuts reliever Kurt Yacko (0-1), after recording the final out of the eighth, came out for the ninth in his 2012 debut with Modesto. Yacko, with a two-run lead, allowed back-to-back singles to Head and Kirby-Jones. Pineda followed with his first home run of the year, a three-run blast into the Nuts bullpen to win the game for Stockton.

Jose Guzman (2-0), who pitched a scoreless top of the ninth, was credited with the win for the Ports.

After taking three of four from Modesto, the Ports will welcome the Lake Elsinore Storm to town for a three-game set. Right-hander Josh Bowman (0-1, 16.20 ERA) will get the start for the Ports, opposed by Storm left-hander Mark Hardy (0-2, 7.20 ERA). First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

Bees Lose the Series Finale

By Daniel Trivinos / Burlington Bees

BURLINGTON, Iowa - The Burlington Bees suffered a 10-7 loss to the Kane County Cougars on Sunday afternoon. The Bees' record is now even at five wins and five losses.

Sean Murphy started for the Bees and looked good through his first inning of work. Murphy struck out the first two batters and finished the facing the minimum. But the top of the second was not as kind to the big right-hander. The weather on Sunday played a role in several moments of the game.

Not only was there rain, but also the wind pushed any decently hit fly ball towards the fences. Jorge Bonifacio led off the top of the second with a skyscraper to centerfield that floated over the wall. Bees' centerfielder, Bobby Crocker could only wait and watch the long fly ball go for a solo home run. Unfortunately the inning only got worse. Orlando Calixte hit a home run after Bonifacio for the first back-to-back homers the Bees have surrendered this year.

The Bees also committed two errors in the top of the second and by the end of a long inning, the trailed 5-0 to the Cougars. The one bad inning on the mound returned for the Bees pitching staff and Murphy's line in the box score never recovered. Murphy pitched 4.1 innings and gave up six hits, six runs (three earned), and took the loss.

The Bees scored once in the bottom of the second and trailed 7-1 at the start of the bottom of the fifth. Over the next two innings, both Douglas Landaeta and Dusty Robinson hit lead off home runs, but the Bees could not put more on the board despite the good starts.

The Cougars scored two in the top of the fifth off both Murphy and Seth Frankoff, and scored again off Frankoff in the sixth. Frankoff pitched 3.2 innings and allowed four runs on five hits. Both Frankoff and Murphy gave up home runs.

The Bees comeback in the bottom of the third fell short when John Nester tried to steal second base with B.A. Vollmuth standing at third and Royce Consigli at the plate. The Cougars' catcher, Edul Escobar threw Nester out and the game was over. The Bees had scored three runs in the inning before the game ended with the tying run at home plate.

The Bees travel to Wisconsin for a three game series before returning to Burlington. For tickets, call (319)_754-5705 or visit www.gobees.com for more information.