

Oakland A's shut out by Los Angeles Angels

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

When a team is struggling to score runs, small deficits seem insurmountable.

The A's fell into an early three-run hole Monday night, and it might as well have been double digits. They managed just six hits in a 6-0 loss to the Los Angeles Angels, the third time they have been shut out in 11 games this season. This time they were silenced by right-hander Jered Weaver, who struck out six over 62/3 innings. The problem for the A's is the road doesn't get any easier, as they face Dan Haren, Ervin Santana and C.J. Wilson to finish out this four-game series at Angels Stadium.

"It's still early. There's no need to push the panic button right now," A's right fielder Josh Reddick said. "We can't get that hit with runners on. Someone's got to get hot and carry this team on their back."

The A's have lost three in a row, and as they try to right the ship on the field, there remains plenty of uncertainty off of it. There was buzz Monday that the A's might try to get their unsettled ballpark situation onto the agenda at next month's owners' meetings in New York, with the thought that they might be able to force a vote on whether they can move to San Jose.

A source with knowledge of the situation indicated to this newspaper, however, that the A's stadium issue will not be added to the agenda during those meetings.

It has been more than three years since baseball commissioner Bud Selig formed a committee to research the A's stadium possibilities in the Bay Area. The A's want to build a ballpark in downtown San Jose, but the Giants own the territorial rights there and are strongly opposed to the A's moving to the South Bay.

The A's would need 75 percent of the owners to vote to overturn the Giants' territorial rights.

At the last round of owners' meetings in January, the A's stadium issue was not on the agenda, but it was still discussed by Major League Baseball's executive committee.

A's co-owner Lew Wolff declined to discuss the topic Monday.

"We're just doing our normal thing, supplying information when (MLB) wants it," Wolff said in a phone interview. —... This will get resolved somehow."

Right now the A's would like to resolve their offensive woes. They are hitting a ghastly .198, lowest in the American League, and they have scored a league-low 28 runs.

The Angels jumped on Brandon McCarthy early. Howie Kendrick/ and Albert Pujols singled with one out in the first inning, and Kendrys Morales belted an 0-2 pitch for a three-run homer to left-center.

It was Morales' first homer since May 29, 2010, when he hit a game-ending grand slam and then broke his leg in the celebration at home plate, sidelining him for 11/2 seasons.

McCarthy steadied himself after the first. He lasted seven innings but was disgusted with his command. He was asked about the need to be near-perfect based on how few runs the A's are scoring.

"It makes it kind of feel like we're getting our (butts) kicked," McCarthy said. "It doesn't feel like we're putting up a fight. And you feel like you're not doing your part individually."

Contrast that with Weaver's night. He allowed five hits over 62/3 innings and recorded his 1,000th career strikeout when he rang up Reddick in the sixth.

A's reliever Andrew Carignan relieved McCarthy in the eighth with the score 4-0. He walked three, forcing in a run, and let another score on a wild pitch. Afterward, A's manager Bob Melvin said Carignan will be sent to the minors and that another reliever will be recalled Tuesday.

A's center fielder Yoenis Cespedes hopes to chat up a couple of players during this series.

One is Morales, who, like Cespedes, defected from Cuba and made it to the major leagues.

Cespedes also wants to meet Pujols.

"Everybody knows the kind of baseball player he is," Cespedes said through translator Ariel Prieto. "I'm going to ask him about some concepts, because I'm new in (the majors)."

Cespedes is 3 for 20 with no RBIs over his past six games and received his first day off Monday.

That allowed left fielder Coco Crisp to shift back to his old position for a night.

In the fifth, Crisp made a leaping grab at the wall in left-center to rob Morales.

The outfield defense was a bright spot for the A's, as Reddick threw out Morales as he tried to stretch a single into a double in the third.

Melvin said Cespedes will return to center Tuesday.

Right-hander Tyson Ross, who will officially be called up Tuesday to start against the Angels, said he sharpened his slider and change-up during two starts with Triple-A Sacramento.

First baseman Kila Ka'aihue appears to be the most likely candidate to be removed from the roster to make room for Ross. The A's seem to be committed to Daric Barton at first for the time being.

Longtime A's minor league roving instructor Ron Plaza died Sunday night at age 77. This season marked Plaza's 30th with the organization and his 61st in professional baseball as a player, coach and manager, according to an A's news release.

Inside the Oakland A's: Postgame notes and quotes from A's 6-0 loss to Angels

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 4/16/2012, 11:41pm

There wasn't much for the A's — or their fans — to be excited about after Monday's 6-0 drubbing by the Angels. A bit of news — reliever Andrew Carignan will be sent to the minors and another reliever will be called up Tuesday, manager Bob Melvin said. Here's some postgame reaction from the clubhouse:

—"We'll keep grinding through it," Melvin said of his offense. "It's my belief that one big hit leads to another big hit and it gets contagious. But right now it's a bit of a struggle for us."

—From right fielder Josh Reddick: "It's still early. There's no need to push the panic button right now. We (just) can't get that hit with runners on. Someone's got to get hot and carry this team on their back."

—Losing pitcher Brandon McCarthy was pretty upset with himself for what he called poor command all night. And he didn't sugarcoat things when asked about pitching when his team is scoring so few runs. "It makes it kind of feel like we're getting our (butts) kicked," he said. "It doesn't feel like we're putting up a fight. You feel like you're not doing your part individually."

—If there was a silver lining for the A's, you can point to some nice defensive plays by their outfield. Coco Crisp, spelling Yoenis Cespedes in center, made a leaping catch at the wall to rob Kendrys Morales, and Reddick threw out Morales trying to stretch a single into a double.

Were some of you wondering if Cespedes would have made that catch on Morales' drive? Crisp certainly makes plays look easier in center, but there's a drawback too. He doesn't have nearly the arm Cespedes has, and opponents are more likely to run on him.

Melvin said Cespedes would return to center on Tuesday after getting a night off.

Inside the Oakland A's: Yoenis Cespedes sits as A's begin four-gamer against Angels

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 4/16/2012, 6:53pm

Coming at ya from Angels Stadium, where it's just a bit balmy than it was in Seattle ... These are the conditions that baseball was meant to be played in. It's a beautiful night ...

The A's catch an Angels team that is 3-6 and coming off a cross-country flight after getting spanked by the New York Yankees on national television last night. Good or bad for the A's? They could be playing this team at the right time, or perhaps they'll encounter one angry bunch looking to take out some frustrations. Maybe the point is moot. The A's need to find a way to score some runs in this four-game series, and they'll have to do it, in order, against Jered Weaver, Dan Haren, Ervin Santana and C.J. Wilson — one of the toughest starting pitching foursomes in the majors.

The lineups:

A's — Weeks 2B, Crisp CF, Reddick RF, Smith LF, Suzuki C, Barton 1B, Pennington SS, Ka'aihue DH, Sogard 3B; McCarthy RHP.

Angels — Aybar SS, Kendrick 2B, Pujols 1B, Morales DH, Hunter RF, Wells LF, Izturis 3B, Iannetta C, Bourjos CF; Weaver RHP.

—Yoenis Cespedes gets his first day off, with Coco Crisp returning to center field for a day. A's manager Bob Melvin said it was just time to rest Cespedes since the other starting outfielders have gotten a day off already. But it seems the timing is right for Cespedes based on how he's been going at the plate lately. He was 1 for 11 in the Seattle series, and maybe watching a game from the dugout will serve him well. Not that he was ready for it himself. "It feels a little weird because in Cuba it never was like that. I never had a day off," Cespedes said through interpreter Ariel Prieto. "It's gonna feel a little boring today." I did see Cespedes getting some instruction in center from outfield coach Tye Waller during batting practice, and I wouldn't be surprised if we saw him pinch-hit tonight.

—Seth Smith gets his first defensive start, so it's worth watching how he looks in left field.

A's shut out for 2nd time in 3 games

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Anaheim -- Yoenis Céspedes got the night off in the A's 6-0 loss to the Angels on Monday, and manager Bob Melvin said it was because the rookie is the only one of the outfielders who had not had a game off.

Melvin said he doesn't want to run down Céspedes too much. Melvin noted that the Cuban winter league has a much shorter season. Céspedes entered Monday batting .212 but with a team-high three homers and seven RBIs.

Coco Crisp was in center field, where he made several excellent catches, including one to rob Kendrys Morales of extra bases in the sixth inning.

Josh Reddick also had a strong night in the field, including throwing out Morales trying to stretch a single into a double.

Reddick had two of the A's six hits.

The A's were shut out for the second time in three games and the third time this season. They have scored in only one of the past 27 innings.

The Angels took a red-eye from New York on Sunday, but it did not seem to affect Morales much. He hit a three-run homer off Brandon McCarthy in the first inning and doubled in a run in the eighth. Andrew Carignan walked three consecutive hitters that inning, forcing in another run, and a wild pitch brought in one more.

The A's failure to reach the 10-hit mark in any of the first 11 games is an Oakland record.

A'S ON DECK

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)

Thursday

at Angels

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

Milone (1-1) vs. Wilson (2-0)

A'S LEADING OFF

Carignan sent down: The A's sent reliever Andrew Carignan to Triple-A Sacramento after his poor outing Monday. They will call up a reliever and starter Tyson Ross on Tuesday. "It's up to me to pitch well enough to force them to keep me and I haven't done that," Carignan said.

- *Susan Slusser*

Ron Plaza, 1934-2012

Longtime A's minor-league instructor Ron Plaza died at the age of 77 Sunday in St. Petersburg, Fla. Mr. Plaza, who spent 30 years with the organization and 61 years in professional baseball, was integral in establishing the A's academy in the Dominican Republic and in mentoring many of the A's Latin American players over the years.

"I was lucky to know Ron Plaza; he always made sure you did everything the right way," said former A's shortstop Miguel Tejada, the 2002 AL MVP. "He was great. This is really bad news. A lot of Latin players feel the same way."

A's coach Ariel Prieto knew Mr. Plaza both as an instructor and as a fellow coach over the past 17 years. Prieto said he plans to carry on Mr. Plaza's work in helping to develop players.

"I am never going to forget Ron, never, ever," Prieto said. "I will never forget what I learned from him. He helped so many people. I love him."

A's pushing San Jose move onto owners' agenda

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

After more than three years of waiting to get a decision on their quest for a new stadium, the A's are making noises about trying to get the issue onto the agenda for the owners' meetings next month in New York in order to hasten the proceedings.

According to two major-league sources, the team plans to file paperwork to get onto the agenda before the end of the month, within the prescribed time frame for such proposals.

That will not ensure that the matter will become part of the agenda, however, according to those with knowledge of the inner workings of the owners' meetings. In fact, the A's desire to move to San Jose is not expected to be addressed during the May 16-17 event at the league offices.

On Monday, A's officials would not discuss any hopes of getting onto the May agenda, but they also did not deny such hopes.

"Absolutely no comment. I am following the process," owner Lew Wolff said, referring to the commissioner's request not to discuss the stadium situation until it is resolved.

Commissioner Bud Selig determines the agenda, and at the last owners' meeting, in February, he said that the A's stadium issue is "on the front burner."

Selig typically wants a consensus before any owners' vote, and it is possible that he does not have such a consensus - or that he prefers to have the A's and Giants continue negotiations about the rights to San Jose, currently held by the Giants. The general perception in the A's organization, however, is that the Giants are not willing to part with the rights, and the A's do not want the matter to drag on indefinitely because it makes other business decisions difficult. With no end in sight to its wait, the team might believe that forcing a vote is the best means of getting a decision.

The A's would need a 75 percent vote of the owners to overturn the Giants' territorial rights, or Selig could use the "best interests of baseball" powers to do so.

Selig recently has appeared to have some sympathy with the A's situation, telling FoxSports.com's Tracy Ringolsby, "It is different because in 1990 when Bob Lurie wanted to move the Giants to San Jose, Walter Haas, the wonderful owner of the Oakland club, who did things in the best interest of baseball, granted permission. What got lost there is they didn't feel it was permission in perpetuity.

"He gave Bob permission to go down there. Unfortunately or fortunately, it never got changed. We are dealing with a lot of history here."

Should the A's fail to get permission to move to San Jose, it is possible the city of San Jose would pursue a lawsuit challenging MLB's antitrust exemption.

The Drumbeat: A's offense nonexistent again, this time at Anaheim; Carignan sent out

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Angel Stadium, 4/16/ 2012, 9:56pm

For the second time in three games, the A's were shut out, this time 6-0 by the Angels. The game was for all intents and purposes over in the first inning, when Kendry Morales hit a three-run homer off Brandon McCarthy. McCarthy gave up nothing more until the eighth, and he was helped out by some terrific defense from Coco Crisp and Josh Reddick, but Oakland never found a way to solve Jered Weaver.

The A's have scored in just one of the past 27 innings.

Manager Bob Melvin changed up the lineup about as much as possible; he gave Yoenis Cespedes his first evening off, he gave Seth Smith his first start in the outfield, he kept in the (relatively) hot bats of Eric Sogard and Kila Ka'aihue, who are both backup players. Because Weaver in past years has had slightly better numbers against right-handed hitters, the A's bench Monday night consisted of five right-handed hitter.

None of that mattered. None of the A's got a hit until Josh Reddick's two-out single in the fourth.

Reddick also doubled in the eighth, and he threw out Morales trying to stretch a base hit to right into a double. For all the pub about Cespedes – who is a tremendous talent, no doubt about it – right now, Reddick might be the A's best all-around player. He's shown a great arm in right, and he consistently hits the ball hard.

Crisp robbed Morales of, at the least, extra bases with a leaping catch in left center in the sixth. McCarthy said after the game that Crisp said the Morales homer tipped off his glove, so he was awfully close to catching that one, too. Melvin said that Cespedes will be back in center on Tuesday.

The Morales homer – his first in nearly two years, since May 29, 2010 – came on an 0-2 pitch, a real rarity for control master McCarthy. McCarthy said it wasn't just that one pitch that was off tonight, though, he felt as if it was more like 1,000.

If that's the case, he made the most of what he had – he didn't pitch like a man fighting his stuff all night. He didn't walk a man, and he worked into the eighth inning, though he did allow 11 hits and the five runs. He has allowed 10 or more hits three times in his career, and all three times have been at Anaheim. He's 1-3 with a 5.03 ERA lifetime vs. the Angels.

Albert Pujols and Morales opened the eighth with back-to-back doubles off McCarthy, and he exited. Andrew Carignan took over, and he got Torii Hunter to line out – then he walked three men in a row to force in one run, and a wild pitch sent in another.

UPDATE: Carignan was sent down to Triple-A Sacramento after the game, so today the A's will call up another reliever along with Tyson Ross. That means that someone else still will have to come off the roster for Ross, and it still looks like probably Kila Ka'aihue or, less likely, Collin Cowgill, but nothing would surprise me at this point.

Carignan took his demotion in mature fashion, saying he has some mechanical issues to sort out, and, he said, "It's up to me to pitch well enough to force them to keep me here and I haven't done that."

Melvin said he believes Carignan will be back after he irons things out and he will be a reliever the A's need this year.

The top relief candidates at Sacramento who are currently on the 40-man roster are Pedro Figueroa and Neil Wagner, and both have been pitching pretty well (Figueroa hasn't allowed a run; Wagner's ERA isn't great, but he has eight strikeouts and zero walks). If the A's were to designate whoever comes off the roster tomorrow, they could add someone who is not on the 40-man, and Jim Miller and Justin Souza also have had good outings.

Weaver went 6 2/3 innings and allowed five hits and a walk while striking out six. His sixth strikeout, Reddick in the sixth inning, was career K No. 1,000 for the right-hander, and he got a good ovation from the crowd when the number was flashed on the big screen.

Melvin said he feels as if his team had some decent at-bats, but when a club that is struggling offensively hits the ball hard a few times with nothing to show for it, it compounds the frustration level.

"We'll keep grinding through it," he said. He thinks the team just needs to get a hit or two with men in scoring position and it will turn the tap on.

He doesn't accept the idea that facing Weaver, plus seeing Felix Hernandez three times in eight games, has thrown his team into a funk.

"This is the big leagues, you're always going to face good pitching," he said. "No excuses."

The Drumbeat: A's to put stadium issue on agenda for May owners' meetings

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser 4/16/2012, 12:19pm

The Chronicle has learned that the A's plan to put their stadium issue onto the agenda for next month's owners meetings in New York.

A major-league source said the team is placing the stadium issue on the agenda in the hopes that a vote will be taken on the A's desire to move to San Jose. The A's have been waiting for more than three years for the issue to be resolved.

Owner Lew Wolff was not immediately available to speak to The Chronicle. A's general manager Billy Beane, reached by phone, said, "I have no comment."

The Giants oppose any A's move to San Jose, which is considered part of the Giants' territory.

Commissioner Bud Selig made [some interesting statements to Tracy Ringolsby](#) of FoxSports.com last month, telling Ringolsby, "Both sides are deeply positioned and I am in the middle of trying to fashion some type of an agreement. It is very complicated."

Indications throughout have been that the Giants will not change their stance on the territorial rights, nor will they negotiate the rights to Santa Clara County away, so it's likely that the A's believe an up-and-down vote of owners might be their best bet for a quicker resolution to the issue. It would take a 75 percent vote of the owners in order to overturn the Giants'

territorial rights, or the commissioner also could choose to use the "best interests of baseball" powers in order to allow the A's to move to a site in downtown San Jose.

Should the A's fail to get enough votes to override the Giants' territorial rights, it is possible that San Jose will consider filing a lawsuit against Major League Baseball, challenging its anti-trust exemption.

Selig, in his discussion with Ringolsby, appeared to have some sympathy for the A's arguments, saying, "It is different because in 1990 when Bob Lurie wanted to move the Giants to San Jose, Walter Haas, the wonderful owner of the Oakland club, who did things in the best interest of baseball, granted permission. What got lost there is they didn't feel it was permission in perpetuity. He gave Bob permission to go down there. Unfortunately or fortunately, it never got changed. We are dealing with a lot of history here."

The Drumbeat: A's lineup changes include days off for Suzuki, Donaldson

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Sluser at Safeco Field, 4/15/2012, 12:20pm

With a day game after a night game, the A's lineup Sunday looks quite a bit different, with a scheduled day off for Kurt Suzuki and Josh Donaldson. Manager Bob Melvin wants to keep infielder Eric Sogard fresh, so he's at third today, and Anthony Recker, who is catching, has worked a lot with Graham Godfrey, today's starter, in the minors.

Here's the lineup: Weeks 2B, Crisp LF, Smith DH, Cespedes CF, Reddick RF, Pennington SS, Ka'aihue 1B, Recker C, Sogard 3B.

Melvin swapped Smith and Reddick just to mix things up a little he said. but he feels either man can hit in either spot. He'd just like to get the lineup going; the A's have yet to hit double digits in hits in a game this season, and last night they were held to five hits and they didn't score.

I asked if there's anyone in particular he feels is on the verge of busting out (a quick look at the A's averages will show that no one is really swinging the bat that well), and Melvin said he's the worst guy to ask that question to because he always feels everyone is on the edge of getting it going. He did point to some good swings by Cliff Pennington and Jemile Weeks last night, and, Melvin said, Coco Crisp is always a guy he believes is capable of breaking out big, and of coming through in a big situation.

Crisp would be a key player to keep an eye on when it comes to the A's offense; he's often the sparkplug and when he gets hot, he can carry a team for a week or two. He's batting .176 right now, and that's not really him, he's usually someone who gets off to good starts. Facing Felix Hernandez three times in the first eight games, though, can throw anyone off. So I'd expect that Crisp will start to pick up the pace here soon.

Melvin says he'll announce the fifth starter after the game. The A's need one Tuesday, and it is still expected to be Tyson Ross. As I [wrote in this morning's Chronicle](#), the most likely possibilities to come off the roster when Ross is activated are first baseman Kila Ka'aihue or outfielder Collin Cowgill. Usually, you'd expect the sixth outfielder to be the man sent out, especially considering Cowgill has options left, but Melvin likes Cowgill's energy and he has said he likes having the six outfielders. Ka'aihue is out of options, but Daric Barton is back at first base fulltime, and he and Ka'aihue are both left-handed hitters.

Barton will need some days off, though, as he comes back from shoulder surgery, and Ka'aihue certainly is well regarded in the organization. So this will be an interesting decision. I could see it going either way, and with Ka'aihue in the lineup today, he could help himself with a big day, especially given the current lifeless state of the A's offense.

A's bats come up empty vs. Weaver, Halos

By Jane Lee / MLB.com | 4/17/2012 2:21 AM ET

ANAHEIM -- The cure for contagious offensive slumps has yet to be discovered. And if by slim chance it ever is, Jered Weaver likely won't be involved.

A desperate group of A's hitters, entering Monday batting an American League-low .201, is in search for all the help they can get right now. They didn't get it from Weaver.

Not that they expected it, given the Angels right-hander's storied success against the A's. But on this night, not even a single run was to be had, as the A's were shut out, 6-0, for the third time this season.

As a result, their season run total didn't budge, remaining at 28. That's now the lowest mark in the AL and runner-up for lowest in the Majors, second only to Pittsburgh's 19. And the goings won't get any easier, as the A's face Dan Haren, Ervin Santana and C.J. Wilson -- together, owners of a combined 20-10 record and 3.17 ERA against Oakland -- in the final three games.

"They have four guys they probably feel can pitch at the top of the rotation," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "Certainly Weaver is one of the elite pitchers in the game, and we saw Felix [Hernandez] three times, but that's really no excuse. We're still just continuing to press a little bit."

"It's still early," outfielder Josh Reddick said. "There's no need to push a panic button right now. We just gotta find that one thing that makes us click. We just can't seem to get that hit with runners on, and somebody's going to have to step up and take charge of things, put the team on their back until everyone else can get hot."

Weaver, improving to 7-7 with a 2.71 ERA in 21 career starts vs. the A's, held Oakland scoreless for 6 2/3 innings, before handing the ball over to an Angels bullpen that finished the job with ease, despite having allowed 15 earned runs in its previous 25 1/3 innings.

Overall, the A's collected just six hits in the four-game series opener, two of which didn't even leave the infield. Their first, a Reddick line-drive single to right field, didn't come until there were two outs in the fourth inning, and only once did an Oakland runner reach third base.

It made for a tough task for starter Brandon McCarthy, who endured his own share of struggles from the get-go. The A's right-hander allowed three consecutive one-out hits, the last a three-run shot to Kendrys Morales that quickly handed the Halos an advantage they never gave back.

McCarthy threw an 0-2 pitch to 214 batters before Monday night, and never once was one hit out.

"I was trying to elevate a fastball, and it was just indicative of the whole night -- if I wanted to throw the ball somewhere, it just didn't go there," he said. "A bunch of other ones I got away with, but that one was the big one that really hurt."

Weaver, of course, didn't mind watching it.

"Three runs at the beginning of the game was awesome," he said. "That put me a little bit at ease. I was able to fill up the zone there a little bit."

McCarthy didn't allow another run until the eighth, when Morales created some more damage by way of an RBI double, and he boarded at least one baserunner in all but one of his seven-plus innings, as a feisty Angels offense managed 11 hits off the hurler, who remains winless this season.

Strangely, McCarthy has allowed 10 or more hits just three times in his career -- all three times against the Angels, all three times in Anaheim, all three times in April.

With four runs already attached to his name by the time he departed with a runner on second, a fifth was added shortly after, as righty Andrew Carignan issued three straight free passes and a wild pitch that extended Los Angeles' lead to six. Carignan threw just 10 of his 25 pitches for strikes and was sent out after the game.

"His command was off," Melvin said. "He's a guy that has a plus-fastball, needs to get better command of his breaking ball and less predictable."

Meanwhile, the A's loaded the bases against LaTroy Hawkins in the ninth, via a pair of Angels errors and a walk, but Jemile Weeks' swinging strikeout put the game to rest.

"We had some decent at-bats, certainly not early in the game but later on, but the frustration really mounts when you hit some balls hard and right at people," Melvin said. "I know all teams do that, but when you're struggling in the fashion we are offensively right now, it becomes doubly frustrating.

"We'll keep grinding through it. My big belief is that one big hit leads to another one and it'll be contagious and we'll be off and rolling, but right now it's a bit of a struggle."

As a result, A's pitchers are feeling like their own are magnified.

"You feel like you're not doing your part even more so, and I don't really like that feeling at all," McCarthy said. "So much of this game is individual, and when I'm not pitching well during a time when we're struggling as a whole, I feel like it all falls on me."

A's plan two-day celebration of '72 title team

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- In less than a week, the A's will celebrate the 40th anniversary of their 1972 World Series title, bringing in several of the championship team's players to the Coliseum.

A two-night celebration, scheduled for Friday and Saturday when the Indians are in town, will feature appearances by Hall of Famer Rollie Fingers, Cy Young winner and American League MVP Vida Blue, World Series MVP Gene Tenace and All-Stars Bert Campaneris, Joe Rudi and Ken Holtzman, among others.

On Friday, members of the '72 team, who brought home the first world championship by any major professional sports team in Bay Area history, will sign autographs for fans in the Eastside Club, with proceeds benefiting the Jim "Catfish" Hunter ALS Foundation.

Autograph tickets are \$20 per station during each session, with four sessions, each featuring two stations, scheduled.

Tickets will go on sale outside the Eastside Club North doors, near Section 234, at 5:35 p.m. PT, and the sessions will run from 6:15 to 8:30 p.m.

A pregame on-field reunion honoring the '72 team will highlight the schedule on Saturday, when the first 10,000 fans through the gate will receive a Rollie Fingers bobblehead. Fingers will throw out the ceremonial first pitch.

The '72 championship, claimed in a memorable seven-game series over the Reds, marked the first of three straight World Series titles by Oakland.

A's to option struggling reliever Carignan

ANAHEIM -- After Oakland's 6-0 loss in Anaheim on Monday night, reliever Andrew Carignan was sent out to find command that betrayed him in a three-walk outing.

The right-hander threw just 10 of 25 pitches for a strike against the Halos, allowing an inherited runner to score, along with one of his own. Overall, he was 1-1 with a 6.23 ERA in five appearances.

The A's will officially option Carignan on Tuesday, when they'll not only announce a corresponding roster move for his demotion but another one in wake of Tyson Ross' callup.

"Andrew's a guy that made a lot of strides last year and had a good spring early on, too," manager Bob Melvin said. "He's a guy that we really feel good about in this organization. He's just hit a little speed bump right now, so he needs to go down and iron some things out."

Entering Monday, Carignan had not allowed a run over his past three games after surrendering two in one-third of an inning in the club's March 28 opener against Seattle in Tokyo. In seven Spring Training appearances, he posted a 2.16 ERA with no walks and nine strikeouts.

"I thought I threw really well in Spring Training, and ever since then, I've been reeling," Carignan said Monday night. "It's up to me to pitch well enough to force them to keep me here, and I haven't done that."

The top candidates already on the 40-man roster to fill Carignan's spot in the bullpen are lefty Pedro Figueroa and right-hander Neil Wagner. Figueroa has compiled six scoreless innings with seven strikeouts in four games for Triple-A Sacramento, while Wagner, despite having allowed three runs in 5 1/3 innings, has previous experience with the A's.

Cespedes receives first day off of season

ANAHEIM -- Yoenis Cespedes appears to be human after all.

The A's outfielder, just like his teammates, needs rest sometimes, and that's exactly what manager Bob Melvin gave him Monday. Cespedes, having played the first 10 games, got the day off, allowing Coco Crisp to play in his natural center-field position for the club's four-game series opener in Anaheim.

"All the other outfielders have had one," Melvin said.

With Crisp in center and Josh Reddick manning right field, the A's manager handed Seth Smith his first start in the outfield this season. Smith, who up to this point had started his first six games as designated hitter, was slotted into left field, where he played 25 games for the Rockies last season, compared with 107 in right.

Melvin said he will attempt to play Smith and Jonny Gomes in the outfield from time to time, which has been a hard task with Collin Cowgill also in the mix. At the very least, it gives him plenty of options -- two right-handers and a left-hander -- when awarding off-days to his regulars, as he did to Cespedes, who is just 3-for-20 over his past six games after hitting .308 with three home runs in his first four.

Cespedes played in every game during his eighth and final season for Granma in the Cuban League in 2010, but those teams only have 90 games on their schedule, making the 162-game season quite an adjustment for him.

"I just don't want to have to correct something with him," Melvin said. "I don't want to run him down to where, all of a sudden, we have to fix it. We want to make sure he's healthy all along. He's not used to playing 162 games. So just like anybody else, he's going to need some days off."

Adding Ross creates tough decision for Melvin

ANAHEIM -- The good news is that the A's finally have a fifth starter in tow. The bad news is that his presence is going to bump a teammate off the roster come Tuesday.

But it's not yet known who Tyson Ross will replace on the 25-man roster, as manager Bob Melvin deems the looming decision a tough one.

"Very, to put it succinctly," he said Monday.

Considering the makeup of the roster, first baseman Kila Ka'aihue and outfielder Collin Cowgill appear to be the leading candidates to go, especially because Melvin plans on sticking with the group that currently makes up his seven-man bullpen. Ka'aihue is a strong possibility, despite being out of options and batting .500 in four games entering Monday. The A's already have a left-handed first baseman in Daric Barton, whom the organization views as the everyday guy moving forward. That means most of Ka'aihue's at-bats would come off the bench or at designated hitter, where he started Monday following Sunday's three-hit performance, but the A's already have two others who can fill both those roles in Seth Smith and Jonny Gomes.

It's also worth noting that Melvin said the choice will not strictly be based on performance.

"How much playing time a certain guy will get, that goes into it," he said. "The decision still hasn't been made, and that's how tough this next one will be."

Cowgill, meanwhile, has received just one start, with two overall appearances through the first 10 games. Yet he represents a true fourth outfielder, and Melvin has repeatedly said he likes the speedster's all-out style of play.

"It's difficult to keep him current, yet I need to," Melvin said. "He's a hard-working kid, always prepared."

Worth noting

- Lefty Tommy Milone, scheduled to pitch Thursday against C.J. Wilson and Co. in Anaheim, was not feeling well Monday afternoon after experiencing food poisoning and was sent back to the team hotel before game time to rest.
- Right-hander Ryan Cook, who has not allowed a hit in four appearances this season, is looking forward to pitching at Angel Stadium, where he frequently visited with friends while attending the University of Southern California. Cook said several friends, along with his Northern California-based parents, would be in attendance throughout the week for the four-game set.
- A's closer Grant Balfour entered Monday having not allowed a run in six games. The six appearances are tied for third most in the Majors.

Longtime A's instructor Plaza dies at 77

By Doug Miller / MLB.com

Ron Plaza, a Minor League roving instructor for the Oakland A's, died Sunday night, the team announced Monday. Plaza, who was entering his 30th season in the role and his 61st in professional baseball as a player, coach and manager, passed away at the age of 77 in St. Petersburg, Fla., where he had recently suffered a series of small strokes and was being treated at a rehab nursing home.

"On behalf of the A's, I send my deepest condolences out to the Plaza family," A's general manager Billy Beane said in a statement. "Ron was a great baseball man and a wonderful person. His love of the game and dedication to teaching were unmatched during his 30 years with the A's. All of us -- front office, staff, and players -- are richer for having been around Ron for so long. He will be missed by everyone in the organization."

In addition to his instructor role, Plaza played an integral part in helping establish the A's training complex in the Dominican Republic and was given credit for aiding in the development of Latin American players such as shortstop Miguel Tejada and catcher Miguel Olivo, both of whom signed as amateur free agents with Oakland in the 1990s.

Plaza joined the Oakland organization in 1983 after 14 years with the Reds. He served as the Reds' Minor League roving instructor from 1970-77 before serving on the Major League coaching staff for six seasons (1978-83).

He also managed at various levels in the Cardinals' organization from 1963-68, and was named Florida State League Manager of the Year in 1967. Plaza was an infielder in the Cardinals' Minor League system for 12 years (1951-62), including six seasons at the Triple-A level.

"Ron had a pure love of baseball and demonstrated it as a passionate teacher and contributor to the game," A's director of player development Keith Lieppman said. "He left an important legacy, not only with the A's organization, but with the impact he had on the many lives he touched throughout his career. He elevated players and staff through his knowledge and his ability to get the most out of them. The game has lost one of its great teachers."

A's shut out for third time in six games

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ANAHEIM — Brandon McCarthy (0-2) yielded 11 hits and five runs while failing in his fourth attempt to get his first win of the season Monday night in the Athletics' 6-0 loss to the Angels.

The A's never climbed out of the hole he created with wayward pitches to Pujols and Morales in the first inning.

"It was pretty indicative of the whole night," McCarthy said. "Every time I really wanted to throw something somewhere, I didn't throw it. I got away with a few of them, but not that one (to Morales). Just not enough quality pitches."

Oakland was shut out for the third time in six games when Jemile Weeks struck out with the bases loaded in the ninth. The A's have managed just 14 runs in their seven losses — half of those in an 8-7 loss to Seattle.

"We had some decent at-bats, better as we went along, and then the frustration mounts when you hit the ball right at people," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said. "We'll keep going through it."

Kendrys Morales hit his first homer in nearly two years and drove in four runs, and Jared Weaver recorded his 1,000th career strikeout while pitching five-hit ball into the seventh inning.

Morales' three-run homer in the first inning landed in nearly the same spot as his fateful game-ending grand slam on May 29, 2010 — right in front of the fake rock pile beyond the Big A's center field fence. That homer nearly wrecked his career when he jumped on home plate to celebrate it, severely breaking his ankle and keeping him out of baseball for nearly two full seasons.

"It had been a long time," the Cuban slugger said through a translator. "I never lost faith. I knew I could do it. I just need to keep working and do it better."

Morales touched home plate with his left foot before accepting congratulations from Howie Kendrick and Albert Pujols, who singled in front of him. Morales finally returned to the Angels midway through spring training and got off to a strong start before going 1 for 18 on last week's road trip — a slump erased by his three-hit performance against Oakland.

"I was happy he got around the bases in one piece," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said.

Morales staked Weaver (2-0) to a healthy lead, and the AL Cy Young runner-up retired his first 11 batters. Weaver struck out six, rolling his career total into quadruple digits when he fanned Josh Reddick in the sixth inning.

Weaver acknowledged the milestone grudgingly, saying he's "got a little bit more to go to catch the great ones." Still, he was grateful to do it in the presence of his father, who attends every home start — and yells loudly enough for Jered to hear him on the mound.

"I've got them all in an Angel uniform, which is pretty great," Weaver said. "Any time you can stop a little bad run and mix in a win, it's good."

Morales added an eighth-inning double to score Pujols, who went 2 for 4 with a double. Pujols still hasn't homered in 10 games with the Angels, but his new cleanup hitter provided plenty of power as Los Angeles opened a weeklong homestand with just its second win in six games.

Reddick had two hits and McCarthy pitched into the eighth inning for the A's, who have lost three straight.

Pujols has a hit in eight of his first 10 games with the Angels, but they still haven't seen the fabled power they spent \$240 million to acquire. Of course, Pujols had just one homer in his first 12 games in St. Louis last spring, and his season turned out splendidly.

The Angels returned shortly before dawn from a 2-4 road trip that left them at 3-6 in their hugely anticipated season.

After their fast start, they added three more runs in the eighth. After Morales' RBI double, Chris Iannetta drew a bases-loaded walk from Andrew Carignan, who then allowed another run with a wild pitch.

Los Angeles' bullpen struggled mightily on the road, but three relievers capably finished up the shutout even after the Angels infield made back-to-back, two-out errors in the ninth.

NOTES: Melvin said Carignan will be sent out Tuesday, and the A's plan a second roster move as well. ... Oakland CF Yoenis Cespedes got his first day off of the season. ... Weaver is the eighth Angels pitcher with 1,000 strikeouts. He and his older brother, Jeff, became the sixth set of brothers in the big leagues with 1,000 strikeouts apiece. ... Angels LHP Scott Downs pitched the eighth inning in his first appearance since Denard Span stepped on his right ankle last week, forcing him out of a game at Minnesota.

A's And Giants Reports

By Dan Eaton, Martinez News-Gazette

Oakland Athletics: Early Season Report

Just about every pundit that makes predictions on major league baseball picked the A's to not only finish at the bottom of the American League Western division, they also said they would be hard pressed not to lose 100 games. With the West getting another influx of talent for the top two teams in Albert Pujols, Jered Weaver, and Yu Darvish just to name a few, the A's and their newcomers were supposed to stand a chance.

Although they have yet to play either the Rangers or Angels, the A's have already begun to surprise some people. They played their first two "home games" in Japan against the Seattle Mariners, which they split. Then they played two more

games in Oakland, and they lost both. After getting an off day on Sunday because of the altered schedule, they just concluded a three-game set with the Royals, which they won two out of three to give them a record of 3-4.

That may not sound very good, especially considering the competition they've faced off against, but more than the wins, it seems this team is performing in areas that they haven't in many years. The first area that you take notice is in the homerun department. They have brought in new bodies and bats again this year, and the biggest name has yet to appear in a regular season contest, Manny Ramirez.

Yoenis Cespedes, who was brought in by Billy Beane to give the A's the power bat from the right side that they've been lacking, was thought to have this ability but didn't think it would surface so soon. Cespedes homered in three of his first four MLB games. On top of his three homeruns, Cespedes is hitting for a decent .273 average, and he's knocked in seven runs to go along with the five runs he's scored himself.

Manager Bob Melvin, not wanting to overwhelm his young promising super star, slotted him in the six and seven holes in Japan, but has quickly elevated him in the lineup to the number four spot, and he hasn't disappointed one bit.

Another newcomer is right fielder Josh Reddick who came over in the Andrew Bailey deal with the Boston Red Sox. He's played pretty good defense to go along with a good stick. He's more of a gap-to-gap type hitter, but can muscle up occasionally and put one over the fence.

Petaluma native, Jonny Gomes has also flexed his might homering twice already in limited playing time. Once Ramirez comes back from his league-mandated suspension at the end of May, which happens to be on his 40th birthday, the lineup and at-bats should become clearer from that point on.

Another great find by Beane came in the Gio Gonzalez trade to the Washington Nationals. The deal was done after the Nat's accepted putting starting pitcher Tom Milone in the trade. Milone made good on his chance as he earned a spot in the rotation in spring training and in his first game for the A's threw eight shutout innings and recorded the win against the Royals on Monday night.

Grant Balfour is getting his first opportunity as the main man in the ninth inning at 34 years old and so far he's making the most of it getting two save chances and nailing down both of them.

If the A's can just keep things together over the first two months of the season and not lose contact with the teams ahead of them until Ramirez comes back, they could end up being a surprise team deep into the season. If that doesn't come to fruition, then the A's can always deal Manny if he is playing up to form.

Youth is a constant for the A's as they are continually rolling back the ages of their players as they ship out proven players for prospects.

San Francisco Giants: Early Season Report

Madison Bumgarner was throwing a no-hitter into the sixth inning Thursday at Coors Field in Denver, Colorado, and not only did he lose the no hit bid, but he lost the shutout as well. While the Giants did end up victorious over the Rockies 4-2, unfortunately for them it was only their second win in six tries so far this year.

Normally early in the season a record like this wouldn't or shouldn't be a worry to anyone, but this season hasn't started anywhere near how the front office or the players had anticipated. Training camp was a horrible struggle for Tim Lincecum, and his troubles continue as he drags them with him into the regular season. Lincecum has started only two games so far this year, the opener and Wednesday, but it still seems like he's pitching as if he were still in spring training.

With Lincecum it all comes down to the speed differential between his fastball and change-up. When he's throwing his fastball at 92 MPH and above that allows his change-up that comes in around the mid 80s to have enough change of pace to fool the hitters. This season his fastball has topped out at 90 MPH and that is not enough of a change to fool major league

hitters and his numbers prove it. Before yesterday the only game that the Giants had won was another bizarre pitching performance. This one saw Barry Zito throw a four hit shutout against the very same Rockies that blistered Lincecum.

In two starts Lincecum only went 7.2 innings, he's given up 14 hits and 11 runs, all of them earned. The only thing that remains the same is his K/BB ratio as he's given up only three walks compared to 10 strikeouts.

What really jumps out is that through two starts he only managed to get through 7 2/3 innings. For a guy who won two back-to-back CY Young awards his first few years in the league this should be startling news.

Other news that hasn't been good news for the Giants is that their new center fielder that was supposed to bolster the top of the order, Angel Pagan is scuffling through his first few games. He's hitting a robust .111 with only two hits in 18 at bats. He's being pushed for playing time already by rookie Hector Sanchez. Brandon Belt was already benched for "pressing" too much early on, as he's managed only one hit so far. Aubrey Huff was supposed to be primed for a rebound year after having such a poor season in 2011, and he has joined the group that has stalled coming out of the gate. He's batting just .200 after six games and most of his time has come playing left field so that Belt could play first base.

Lincecum isn't the only pitcher trying to find his groove as closer Brian "The Beard" Wilson, who is no stranger to causing angina for his manager when closing out the ninth inning, hasn't been his usual self as of yet. Wilson got credit for the save Thursday, but not before allowing a run to score after loading the bases and putting the winning run on base before he got Marco Scutaro to end it.

Trainers did come out to check on him after he said he tweaked his ankle. It looked like he also tweaked something in his arm, as he couldn't get the speed gun to crack 90 MPH.

Another possible worry is catcher Buster Posey and his mindset on the defensive side of things. No worries about his bat, as he is hitting like normal with a .308 average so far, but it's his catching that could be worrisome.

On his first real test at the plate since the injury that ended his season last year, Posey seemed to be more concerned for his health than making the play.

There was a force play at the plate in a bases loaded situation when Sandoval threw a strike to the plate but Posey never had his feet in the proper position on the plate to make the force play and pulled his leg away just as the player was sliding into home. He definitely didn't want to be anywhere near the plate when the runner came barreling down the line. Putting on my amateur psychologist's hat, I'd say that he's still not over the incident of last year with Scott Cousins.

The Giants were supposed to be challenging the Arizona Diamondbacks for supremacy of the National League West but instead they are sitting at 2-4 and getting cozy dwelling in the cellar with the San Diego Padres. I know there are still over 150 games left and plenty of time to turn things around, but this is obviously not the start that the Giants and their fans wanted or needed this year.

Minor League News

Oakland A's MLN: Extended Spring Rosters

Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Apr 16, 2012

In this edition of our Oakland A's Minor League Notebook, we take a look at the A's extended spring training rosters, as well as other news and notes from around the organization.

Oakland A's Extended Spring Training Rosters

In addition to the 100 minor leaguers currently competing for the Oakland A's on the rosters of their four full-season minor league affiliates, the A's have more than 50 players at their minor league complex at Papago Park participating in extended spring training either as a member of the team's active extended spring roster or as a rehabbing player.

The A's extended spring team is taking on teams from the Colorado Rockies, Milwaukee Brewers, Arizona Diamondbacks, San Francisco Giants, Los Angeles Angels and Chicago Cubs organizations.

Below is the complete list of the A's extended spring training rosters.

Active Extended Spring Roster

Pitchers

Rony Acevedo, RHP
Andres Avila, RHP
Drew Bailey, RHP
Logan Chitwood, RHP
Nate Eppley, RHP
Drew Gagnier, RHP
Ryan Hughes, LHP
Deyvi Jimenez, RHP
Chris Lamb, LHP
J.C. Menna, RHP
David Mota, RHP
Argenis Paez, RHP
Tanner Peters, RHP
Eric Potter, RHP
Cecil Tanner, RHP
Pedro Vidal, RHP
Kurt Wunderlich, RHP
Michael Ynoa, RHP

Catchers

Seong-Min Kim
Diomedes Lopez
Reynaldo Mateo
Rhett Stafford

Infielders

Luis Baez
Austin Booker
Shane Boras
Chris Bostick
Franklin Contreras
Miguel Marte
Hiram Martinez
Renato Nunez
Jensi Peralta
Wilfredo Solano
Sam Roberts
Jacob Tanis

Outfielders

Dayton Alexander
Vicmal De La Cruz
Shawn Duinker
Xavier Macklin
Rashad Ramsey
Kelvin Rojas
Jordan Tripp

Rehabbing or Disabled List Roster

Pitchers

Anthony Capra, RHP
Chris Mederos, RHP
Daniel Pettiti, RHP (note: Pettiti is converting from catcher to pitcher)
Julio Ramos, LHP
Travis Schlichting, RHP
Daniel Tenholder, RHP
Matt Thomson, RHP
Tyler Vail, RHP

Infielders

Yordy Cabrera

Outfielders

Manny Ramirez
Matt Sulentic

News and Notes

- Longtime Oakland A's minor league instructor Ron Plaza passed away at the age of 77, the A's announced on Monday. Plaza was instrumental in the development of generations of A's minor leaguers and was widely respected throughout baseball. He had a large role in the development of the A's Dominican Academy. Plaza spent more than 60 years in professional baseball and 30 of those years with the A's.

In a statement issued by the A's, GM Billy Beane said: "On behalf of the A's, I send my deepest condolences out to the Plaza family."

Ron was a great baseball man and a wonderful person. His love of the game and dedication to teaching were unmatched during his 30 years with the A's. All of us – front office, staff, and players – are richer for having been around Ron for so long. He will be missed by everyone in the organization.”

- Outfielder Aaron Shipman has been sent out from extended spring training to join the Low-A Burlington Bees' roster. No corresponding roster move has been announced by the Bees yet. Shipman had a minor injury towards the end of spring training that delayed his debut with the Bees, but he is expected to spend the season with Burlington.

- Right-hander A.J. Griffin was named the Texas League Pitcher of the Week for the first week of the season. Griffin made two starts during the timespan considered for the award. He didn't allow a run and gave-up only two hits and two walks while striking out 16. Griffin made his third start of the season on Monday night. He allowed his first two runs of the season with two outs in the sixth inning of his outing. He finished the outing with two runs allowed and nine strike-outs against one walk. Griffin's 25 strike-outs lead the Texas League. The Rockhounds would fall to the Springfield Cardinals by a score of 5-3.

- Right-hander Bruce Billings was promoted from Double-A Midland to Triple-A Sacramento on Monday. Billings had two wins for the Rockhounds in relief, allowing two runs on four hits in 5.2 innings.

- Sacramento right-hander Jarrod Parker turned in an impressive performance against his old organization on Monday night, earning the win in the River Cats' 2-1 victory over the Reno Aces. Parker lasted six innings versus the Arizona Diamondbacks' Triple-A club, allowing a run on Ryan Wheeler's solo homerun. He gave up six hits and two walks and he struck-out seven. The win was Parker's first of the year and he lowered his ERA to 2.50. Pedro Figueroa was impressive in relief, tossing two scoreless innings. He allowed only a walk and he struck-out three. Jim Miller worked a scoreless ninth to earn his second save. Sacramento managed only six hits - three from Michael Taylor - but had just enough offense to move to 9-3 on the year.

- The Stockton Ports fell in game one of their series against Lake Elsinore by a score of 4-0. Josh Bowman had a strong start for the Ports, allowing three runs (one earned) on six hits and two walks in six innings. He struck-out six. Reliever Sean Doolittle allowed his first run of the season, but had another strong outing overall. In two innings, he allowed a run on one hit and one walk with four strike-outs. He has 15 strike-outs in 7.1 innings and he has walked only one batter.

River Cats beat Aces 2-1, Win Third Straight Series

West Sacramento, Calif. - The Sacramento River Cats took advantage of a quality start from right-handed pitcher Jarrod Parker and defeated the Reno Aces by a score of 2-1 on Monday night. The win clinched a three-games-to-one series victory for the Cats, their third straight series win to open the 2012 season.

Reno scored early with a second-inning solo home run from third baseman Ryan Wheeler. The homer would be the only run given up by the River Cats pitching staff who allowed six hits and three walks while recording 11 strikeouts.

After giving up the home run to the Aces in the second, the Cats tied the game at one in the bottom of the third inning when a triple from outfielder Grant Green was followed by a throwing error from Wheeler, allowing Green to score. Sacramento's go-ahead run crossed the plate in the sixth inning when catcher Derek Norris drove in outfielder Brandon Moss with a sacrifice fly to right field.

Parker finished the game allowing six hits, two walks one earned run and seven strikeouts in six innings. The quality start lowered the top prospect's ERA to 2.50 on the season. The Sacramento bullpen combined to allow zero hits and one walk with four strikeouts in three innings pitched. Righty Jim Miller, who threw one perfect inning with one strikeout, notched his second save of the season.

The River Cats had six hits in all, highlighted by outfielder Michael Taylor who went 3-for-4. Green's triple was his only hit as he went 1-for-4 with a run scored.

Despite suffering the loss, Reno right-handed pitcher Chris Jakubauskas had a quality start of his own. He surrendered six hits, two runs, one earned and two walks with three strikeouts in seven innings. Outfielder David Winfree led all Aces hitters going 2-for-4. Wheeler's home run was his only hit as he finished 1-for-4 with a run and an RBI.

The River Cats welcome the Tacoma Rainiers for a four-game set starting Tuesday, April 17. Right-handed pitcher Mauricio Robles (0-0, 4.15 ERA) will start for Tacoma while Sacramento's starter is to be determined. First pitch is set for 7:05 at Raley Field.

TEXAS LEAGUE BASEBALL: Win not in the Cards for RockHounds

ODESSA AMERICAN SPORTS

MIDLAND A.J. Griffin had another strong start on the day he was named Texas League Pitcher of the Week, but it went for naught as the Midland RockHounds lost 5-3 against the Springfield Cardinals on Monday at Citibank Ballpark.

Griffin, who allowed two hits and no runs during his first two starts of the season, gave up two runs on seven hits with nine strikeouts and one walk in 5.2 innings against the Cardinals (5-6). Those two runs tied the game in the sixth, and Springfield added three runs against Midland's bullpen. The RockHounds (6-5) took a 2-0 lead in the fifth on a two-run double by Dusty Coleman and added a run in the ninth on Conner Crumbliss' bases-loaded single. Josh Horton then came up with a chance to tie or win the game, but Springfield reliever Kevin Butler induced a game-ending groundout. The teams' conclude their three-game series at 6:30 tonight. The RockHounds then begin an eight-game road trip Thursday at San Antonio.

Griffin Named Texas League Pitcher of the Week

By Greg Bergman / Midland RockHounds

A.J. Griffin was awarded Texas League Pitcher of the Week honors on Monday for his first two starts of the season. The University of San Diego alum will make his third start of the season against Springfield on Monday night.

Griffin was named Texas League Pitcher of the Week for the first time after posting an extraordinary pair of outings against Arkansas and Springfield last week. Despite two no decisions, the 6-05 right hander allowed just two hits in 11 innings, while striking out 16 batters in his two starts. Last Tuesday, the California native fired six innings of no hit ball against Springfield before being pulled due to an early season pitch count.

Griffin entered the season rated Oakland's #13 prospect (according to *Baseball America*). Last season he spent time at every level of the A's minor league system while posting a 2-3 record and 6.47 ERA with the RockHounds.

The RockHounds finish off their opening homestand on Monday and Tuesday against Springfield before heading back to the road on Thursday in San Antonio.

A pair of Corpus Christi Hooks (Brandon Barnes and Jake Goebbert) split the Texas League Player of the Week Award on Monday.

Ports Suffer First Shutout In 4-0 Loss To Storm

STOCKTON, Calif. - One night after a dramatic come-from-behind win capped off with a walk-off three-run homer, the Stockton Ports came out flat on Monday night at Banner Island Ballpark. The Boys of Banner Island mustered just three hits en route to a 4-0 loss to the Lake Elsinore Storm in the first of a three-game series.

The Ports and Storm played scoreless baseball through five innings. Ports starter Josh Bowman (0-2) scattered three hits over the first five frames, while Storm starter Mark Hardy (1-2) allowed just two hits in that same span. The Ports squandered a leadoff double in the bottom of the first from Nino Leyja in what would end up being their best scoring opportunity of the night.

Lake Elsinore took advantage of an error made by third baseman Tony Thompson to start the sixth. Michael Wing reached to start the inning when Thompson bobbled the ball and was unable to throw to first. Connor Powers doubled to left to put runners at second and third, and Luis Domoromo broke the scoreless tie with a single to left-center, giving the Storm a 1-0 lead. Rymer Liriano followed with an RBI single to right, and, after a wild pitch advanced runners to second and third, Everett Williams drove in another run with a sac-fly to right to give the Storm a 3-0 lead.

Bowman would pitch six strong innings but suffer the loss, allowing three runs (one earned) on six hits while striking out six. Hardy would also pitch six full innings for the Storm and earn the win, allowing just two hits while striking out a season-high seven.

Sean Doolittle took over in the seventh inning and set the side down in order in his first frame, including back-to-back strikeouts to end it. After striking out Powers to open the eighth, Doolittle walked his first batters of the season, Domoromo, with one out. Domoromo would steal second and score on an infield single from Liriano on which the ball caromed off the glove of Leyja on a diving attempt at second. It was the first earned run Doolittle has allowed on the season. He went two innings and allowed the one run on one hit while striking out four. Doolittle has now recorded 22 outs on the season, 15 of which have been strikeouts.

Matt Branham pitched a perfect seventh and eighth for the Storm, recording four strikeouts in the process. In the ninth, Jerry Sullivan came on and pitched around a two-out triple from Miles Head, getting Thompson to strike out and preserving the shutout for Lake Elsinore.

The Ports and Storm will play the second game of their three-game set on Tuesday night at Banner Island Ballpark. Left-hander Ian Krol (0-0, 13.50 ERA) will toe the slab for Stockton, opposed by right-hander Matt Jackson (1-1, 2.45 ERA) for Lake Elsinore. First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

Tonight's Game with Timber Rattlers Postponed

By Daniel Trivinos / Burlington Bees

The Bees traveled to Appleton, Wisconsin to start a three game series with the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers. But the weather did not cooperate. Tonight's game with the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers has been postponed until Tuesday night.

Bees fans are all too familiar with what the weather can do to the experience of taking in a baseball game. The last two games at Community Field were interrupted by rain delays - one of which last over an hour. The Wisconsin Timber Rattlers decided to delay the game as a preemptive move. The game time temperature looked like it would be around 40 degrees and windy. Folks in town are also expecting rain tonight.

The teams will play two seven-inning games on Tuesday night. The first game is scheduled for 5:05 p.m. and the second will follow. Game three is scheduled for 6:35 p.m.