



TEXASRANGERS.COM

Lewis outdueled as Texas stymied by Colon

By T.R. Sullivan

6/7/2012

OAKLAND -- The Rangers were held scoreless for eight innings on Monday night by Jarrod Parker, a 23-year-old rookie making his ninth Major League start.

On Wednesday night, it was Bartolo Colon doing the same thing in his 364th Major League start just two weeks after his 39th birthday. Two ends of the Major League pitching spectrum dominated the Rangers this week in Oakland and they have now lost six of their last eight games after a 2-0 loss to the Athletics at the o.Co Coliseum.

The Rangers, who were shut out for the first time this season, are hitting .259 with a .383 slugging percentage in their last eight games while scoring just 29 runs. Colon beat Colby Lewis, who allowed two runs in eight innings while pitching the Rangers' second complete game of the season.

"That was an amazing pitching performance and we wasted it because we couldn't put any runs on the board," Rangers manager Ron Washington said. "We still have some guys who are not playing up to their offensive capability right now. We're a little inconsistent on the offensive side. We've got to keep grinding it out and we'll get it together. There are nights we put it together and nights where we don't put it together. I guess you could say we're inconsistent."

The Rangers managed just five singles and a walk against Colon. He struck out five and retired the last 11 batters he faced before Brian Fuentes set down the side on order in the ninth. Colon is 5-6 with a 3.92 ERA on the season.

"You hate to not give a guy credit when he does that well, but you'd think as good as our offense is, we'd get something done," outfielder David Murphy said. "He didn't try to trick us. He threw all fastballs. He changed locations, so he mixed it up in that regard, but he beat us by throwing fastballs. Obviously we didn't have a great night offensively."

This was just Colon's third start and his first victory over the Rangers since 2007, but he is now 18-6 with a 3.61 ERA in 28 career starts against them. He is one of just seven pitchers with at least 18 wins against the Rangers. Bert Blyleven, Dennis Martinez and Jack Morris have 19 while Roger Clemens, Mike Mussina and Barry Zito have 18.

"I didn't do that well all the time against them," said Colon, who once won 12 straight starts against the Rangers. "This was one of the good games I pitched against them."

He may have a point. This was only the third of those 18 wins in which he did not allow a run.

"The guy has had a lot of success for a reason," designated hitter Michael Young said. "He knows how to pitch and he throws a ton of strikes. He knows what he's doing. We just have to stay with it and focus on what we need to do.

"Individual people can make adjustments, but as a team we've got to stay the course. We expect to score every night. You're going to run into some great pitching performances, but as an offense it's our responsibility to score. If we don't, we got to find a way to get better."

The Rangers had one chance to do some damage early against Colon and take the lead. Young reached on an infield single to lead off the second inning and, after Nelson Cruz flied to right, Murphy walked and Mike Napoli singled sharply to left to load the bases.

That brought up Mitch Moreland, and he said he had one goal in mind.

"Hit the ball hard," Moreland said.

Moreland hit it sharply but right at second baseman Jemile Weeks, who started an inning-ending double play. That was the only inning in which the Rangers had multiple baserunners.

"We've got to be more consistent, that's all there is to it," Cruz said. "We have to figure out a way to get in the zone again and do what we usually do."

There were only three extra-base hits in the game. Two of them were leadoff doubles that ended up scoring. The A's took a 1-0 lead in the second inning on a leadoff double by Yoenis Cespedes and a one-out single by Brandon Inge. In the fourth inning, Josh Reddick led off with a double and scored on a single by Cespedes.

That was it against Lewis, who pitched his first complete game of the season but is now 1-5 with a 4.37 ERA in his last seven starts. The Rangers' offense is averaging 3.42 runs per nine innings in those seven starts.

"It is what it is," Lewis said. "You go out there and try to keep your team in the game for as long as you can. It just didn't work out for us tonight."

Texas fills up on arms late in productive Draft

By Christian Corona

06/06/12

ARLINGTON -- It was a long three days for those in charge of handling the Rangers' Draft operations. But after 43 picks -- 26 pitchers and 17 position players -- they felt good about how those three days went.

"It's been a little hectic," said Kip Fagg, the Rangers' director of amateur scouting. "But we're finished and we're very happy."

After using their first five picks on high school players in the first two rounds, the Rangers selected only five high school players over the next 28 rounds. Outfielder Lewis Brinson was the Rangers' first selection (No. 29 overall), followed by a pair of compensation picks in third baseman Joey Gallo and right-handed pitcher Collin Wiles.

Fagg recaps day 2 of Draft
Rangers pick OF Brinson No. 29
Rangers draft 3B Gallo No. 39

Outfielders Jamie Jarmon and Nick Williams, both selected by the Rangers in the second round, were the last high school players taken by the team until the 14th round. That's when a pair of outfielders -- Kwinton Smith and Jameis Winston -- were picked by the Rangers in the 14th and 15th rounds. Both are expected to play college football in the fall but could spend time with the Rangers' organization in the offseason.

"We got probably five of our top 50 in this Draft," Fagg said. "We're identifying the players that we did the most work on and the highest level of athletes, baseball players, makeup, etc. Teams have boards set up differently, evaluate differently, but we were very happy with the way it ended up."

The other three high school players taken by the Rangers in the first 30 rounds were catcher Charles Moorman (17th round), right-handed pitcher Jacob Lemoine (21st round) and left-handed pitcher Chase Mullins (24th round). The Draft's final day began with a Puerto Rican second baseman and a high school catcher from California.

But the bulk of the Rangers' final 25 picks were spent on pitchers. After selecting Janluis Castro, a switch-hitting second baseman that can also play shortstop, in the 16th round and El Capitan High catcher Moorman in the 17th, the Rangers took 17 pitchers with their next 20 picks.

"Usually, the depth of any Draft is going to be pitching," Fagg said. "If you look at the board, that's where most of the magnets are. The guys that we evaluated the highest were the pitchers. We just went with the guys that we evaluated the best."

Seton Hall right-hander Ryan Harvey was the first of many hurlers picked by the Rangers during the final day. Harvey, the Rangers' 18th-round selection, went 6-4 with a 3.04 ERA and two saves this year, striking out 90 and walking 43 in 77 innings.

Another two college pitchers followed Harvey. University of South Carolina-Sumter right-hander James Smith was picked in the 19th round by the Rangers, who took Newberry (S.C.) College right-hander Joshua McElwee in the 20th round.

Smith went 10-1 with a 1.13 ERA as a sophomore this season, striking out 101 and walking 35 in 79 2/3 innings. McElwee, who redshirted before his junior year in 2010 after undergoing Tommy John surgery, was 5-4 with a 3.99 ERA as a senior at Newberry. He also batted .273 with 20 RBIs at the plate. McElwee's 307 career strikeouts are a school record.

Thirteen of the first 14 pitchers taken by the Rangers were right-handers. One of them, Kent State's Ryan Bores, was also picked by the Rangers last year. Bores was selected in the 27th round this year after being picked in the 26th round in 2011.

"Our scout, Roger Coryell, liked Ryan the year before we took him," Fagg said. "We couldn't reach an agreement. This year, being his junior year, he lost a little bit of leverage. He felt it was time for him to come out and we were able to reach an agreement."

Bores is part of a Kent State pitching staff that has helped the Golden Flashes reach their first NCAA Super Regional in school history. He is 9-2 with a 3.29 ERA as a senior, striking out 63 and walking 15 over 98 1/3 innings this year. Bores turned in a complete-game victory in a 7-3 win over Purdue in this year's NCAA Regional. Kent State faces Oregon in the Super Regional.

Bores' catcher at Kent State, David Lyon, was also drafted by the Rangers on Wednesday. Lyon, who is batting .284 with 10 home runs, 41 RBIs and a .523 slugging percentage, was taken in the 34th round. He was one of three catchers taken by the Rangers this year.

Several of the 20 pitchers selected by the Rangers on Wednesday are high school prospects who are committed to play for Division I schools next season. Three of them have signed up to play in the Big 12 in 2013. Alex Young is a left-handed pitcher committed to play for TCU. Another southpaw, Sterling Wynn, has pledged to play for Baylor while right-handed pitcher Matt Withrow has committed to Texas Tech.

"Anything's possible," Fagg said. "Obviously, taking those guys at that part of the Draft, it'll be a little tougher [to sign them]. We have until July 13th."

Darvish stands in way of series victory for A's

By Jon Star

6/7/2012

It's a familiar refrain for Yu Darvish -- face the Angels, then face the A's. Thursday will mark the second time in less than a month that Darvish sees his American League West rivals in back-to-back starts. This time, however, Darvish comes off his third loss of the season, though it was a quality start in which he allowed three earned runs on six hits over 6 1/3 innings.

It was against Oakland on May 16 when Darvish put together one of his best outings of the season, a one-run effort over 7 2/3 innings with seven strikeouts. Yet, it was after that outing that Darvish hit a measure of inconsistency. The adjustment? A return to his old, higher leg kick.

"That was my original delivery. I decided to try it out and see if my balance was better. I felt good with it," said Darvish, tied with nine others atop the AL with seven wins.

While Darvish continues to make changes, A's manager Bob Melvin acknowledged his lineup may need to just take the simple approach of jumping on Darvish's fastball as Oakland tries to take three of four games from first-place Texas.

"I don't know about facing him differently, but now we kind of know firsthand what he's got," Melvin said. "He comes as advertised. There are a lot of pitches. He's not afraid to throw them in different counts. He's got a plus fastball. You have to start to bat a little bit early. He's a good pitcher."

"I think everything plays off the fastball. I think that's what makes all the other pitches so good, and I think the unpredictability of having as many pitches as he has also plays into it. But he's good."

The A's will counter with Brandon McCarthy, who is riding a hot streak of his own. McCarthy has won four consecutive decisions (five starts) since April 27, and comes off a win over the Royals last Saturday -- his first start since coming off the disabled list. The right-hander has posted 2.52 ERA during his winning streak with 20 strikeouts, including a 10-strikeout performance on May 12.

Though McCarthy pitched well in his first outing back from injury, Melvin stated he will continue to monitor the right-hander's progress.

"He feels good," Melvin said. "We're trying to take care of him as far as pitch counts, trying not to overdo it. We feel like the 15-day DL was something that probably stemmed the tide a little bit. We monitor him each and every time -- his bullpens, his games. To this point he feels good."

Rangers: Nathan returning to old form

- Joe Nathan's save on Tuesday night was his first since May 28, but the veteran closer has nevertheless remained very effective regardless of the situation. Nathan has retired 27 of the last 31 batters he's faced, leading to 10 consecutive shutout innings. He has struck out 13 hitters in that span, and his 28-to-2 strikeout-to-walk ratio is a Major League-best among all relievers. Nathan has surrendered just one earned run over his last 19 2/3 innings.

A's: Cowgill riding a personal-best hit streak

- Collin Cowgill is in the midst of a career-high eight-game hitting streak. The outfielder is hitting .419 (13-for-31) during the streak, including his first home run of the season and four RBIs.

- Brandon Inge recorded his fifth four-RBI game of the season on Monday, which leads all of baseball. Inge has driven in 22 runs -- on 16 hits -- in 19 games with Oakland. His RBI total is the second highest in Oakland history through 19 games, trailing only Dave Kingman's 24 RBIs in 1984.

Worth noting

- The Rangers are the only team to boast three players with a qualifying batting average above .300 -- Josh Hamilton (.343), Elvis Andrus (.303) and Adrian Beltre (.301).

- A's outfielder Coco Crisp has successfully stolen 30 consecutive bases, which is the longest streak in franchise history.

Rotation uncertain for Rangers' series in SF

By T.R. Sullivan

06/06/12

OAKLAND -- Scott Feldman is scheduled to pitch Saturday for the Rangers. Derek Holland, who has been dealing with a stomach virus, is scheduled to pitch Sunday.

The Rangers just haven't etched either pitcher in stone. They seem to have batted around a few other possibilities, ranging from bringing Robbie Ross out of the bullpen to bringing up either Martin Perez or somebody else from Triple-A. Double-A pitchers Justin Grimm and Barret Loux have been "mentioned," although not seriously.

Right now it's still Feldman and Holland, although there is some uncertainty with the Rangers' rotation for the weekend against the Giants.

"We have not ruled Feldman out, we have not ruled Holland out, we have not ruled anybody out," Rangers manager Ron Washington said. "We just don't know what Holland's situation is. Names have been mentioned, but there has not been a lot of discussion. If we have to, we'll make a decision out of necessity."

Holland has been dealing with a stomach virus the past two weeks and it really zapped him in his last start on Tuesday against the A's. But he did go through a full work on Wednesday. The biggest concern is he has lost 15 pounds in the past two weeks and that has taken away some of his strength.

"It's a concern," Washington said. "We'll just wait and see how he comes around. If he's fine, he pitches."

Holland said he is feeling better and expects to pitch on Sunday. The Rangers may have him undergo further tests.

"I have to keep pushing and get my strength back," Holland said. "That's the main thing. That's what the real focus is, getting my strength back. I just want to be able to get rid of it. That's all I care about so I can be myself. I want to be out there and my team's not worried about how I feel."

Rangers reluctant to participate in Derby

OAKLAND -- Josh Hamilton does not want to compete in the State Farm Home Run Derby. He is not alone in the Rangers' clubhouse among those that who are leading their position in the fan voting and could be attractive candidates for the Derby.

Third baseman Adrian Beltre and catcher Mike Napoli both said they weren't interested in competing.

"I don't like it ... I don't think I'm good enough for it," Beltre said.

Napoli said he was in two such contests while in the Minor Leagues. He didn't win and he struggled at the plate afterward.

"I did it a couple of times and I preceded to go 9-for-90 after that," Napoli said. "I'll be happy just to play in the game."

Nelson Cruz was in the Home Run Derby in 2009 and finished second. Cruz, who was third among outfielders in the latest balloting, is reluctant to do it again.

"I don't know, I'd have to think about it," Cruz said. "I just have to wait and see what happens. It was a different situation then, my team was in a different situation. We'll see."

Hamilton said he has been asked by the American League and decided against it because he was concerned about getting hurt. Manager Ron Washington is in complete agreement, although he did not try to influence Hamilton's decision.

"He mentioned it to me," Washington said. "I didn't help him with that decision, it's not up to me, but I'm happy he's not doing it. If he takes a swing and misses and hurts something, there's not another team in baseball that's going to care. That was Hamilton's decision."

Asked his reaction when Hamilton told him, Washington said, "I gave him a hug."

Worth noting

- The A's called up outfielder Brandon Moss on Wednesday and put him at first base. It was only his second career start at first base. Moss was best friends with David Murphy while in the Red Sox farm system. Said Murphy, "I sent him saying I might have to drag a bunt down his way."
- Josh Hamilton is on the cover of Sports Illustrated this week.
- The Rangers have released Minor League pitcher Corey Young.

Rangers pick Stafford eager for second chance

By Christian Corona

06/06/12

ARLINGTON -- Sam Stafford spent his sophomore season, and the beginning of his junior year, mostly as a midweek starter at the University of Texas.

By the end of 2011, Stafford had established himself as a solid No. 2 option behind national player of the year Taylor Jungmann, the Brewers' first-round pick a year ago. The Longhorns made their record 34th appearance at the College World Series, as Stafford solidified his spot as the team's ace in 2012.

But a shoulder injury kept him from signing with the Yankees, who took him in the second round of the 2011 First-Year Player Draft. Two surgeries later, and Stafford was lost for his entire senior season. Texas went on to miss out on the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 1998.

"It was really difficult," Stafford said. "All I had on my mind was winning a national championship. Unfortunately, I didn't get a chance to do that [or] play with my teammates. It's definitely a humbling experience, because the game can be taken away from you at any time."

Stafford has yet to make a full recovery and is still nearly two months away from being able to throw. But the Longhorns left-hander was taken in the 13th round with the No. 426 overall pick by the Rangers on Tuesday. One of three players from the Lone Star State selected by the Rangers on Day 2 of the Draft, Stafford is eager to begin his professional career.

"I'm extremely excited," Stafford said. "In my opinion, as a pitcher, you can't have a better boss than Nolan Ryan. He's the best one to do it. It'll be a lot of fun. I'm a Texas guy, so I'm extremely excited to be staying with a Texas team."

Galveston Ball High outfielder Nick Williams, the second of two second-round picks made by the Rangers, and University of Texas-Arlington outfielder Preston Beck were the other two Texans taken by the Rangers on Tuesday. Beck, a Dallas native, batted .335 with 14 home runs and a school-record 71 RBIs this season.

"Being a local kid at UT-Arlington, we had a chance to scout [Beck] a lot," said Rangers director of amateur scouting Kip Fagg. "This guy is going to have a seamless transition at the next level with a wood bat. He should be a very good addition to the Texas Rangers organization. We like the kid, we like the makeup. It was an easy pick for us."

Several members of the Rangers' scouting department saw Stafford pitch before he suffered a season-ending shoulder injury, including crosscheckers John Booer and Randy Taylor and scout Jay Heafner.

"We have a history with him," said senior director of player personnel A.J. Preller. "We're confident with our medical staff and with his body type as a left-handed pitcher and the makeup of Sam -- he can pitch for us."

Stafford, who has family in the Metroplex area, is rehabbing five days a week and working with a doctor in Houston. He didn't expect to be taken near the second round, where he was picked last year. But Stafford does expect to be a successful pitcher again.

"I don't want to return to what I was. I want to come back better," Stafford said. "I'm fully confident that, in due time, I'll make a 100 percent recovery and I'm going to toe that rubber again."

As a junior in 2011, Stafford went 6-2 with a 1.77 ERA over 81 1/3 innings while striking out 91, walking 42 and holding opposing hitters to a .189 batting average.

"We look forward to him being a Texas Ranger," Fagg said. "We expect him to make a recovery and get on the mound here shortly. The timeframe of that we're not quite certain of at this point, but we're going to get our medical staff around him and see where we'll go moving forward."

Stafford was one of three players taken from the University of Texas on Tuesday, as teammates Jonathan Walsh, the Longhorns' left fielder, and left-handed pitcher Hoby Milner were taken by the Angels and Phillies, respectively.

FORT WORTH STAR TELEGRAM

Rangers suffer first shutout of season, lose 2-0 to A's

By Jeff Wilson

06/06/12

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Colby Lewis did his job Wednesday night, and the nine players who were supposed to back him with runs knew afterward that they hadn't come close to doing theirs.

That's become the norm when Lewis has been on the mound this season and has become a trend after six games on this 10-game West Coast road trip.

But the best hitting lineup in the season had its worst night of the season against Bartolo Colon, who scattered five hits in eight innings as the Rangers were shut out for the first time this season, 2-0.

The Rangers wasted a strong start by Lewis, who allowed two runs on six hits in his first complete game this year. He has drawn the short straw this season when it comes to run support. The Rangers have scored more than three runs only twice in his 12 starts.

"You've got to go out there and keep your team in the game," Lewis said. "You can't worry about that side of things. You have to go out there and do the best you can."

Yoenis Cespedes and Josh Reddick led off the second and fourth innings with first-pitch doubles. Brandon Inge brought home Cespedes, who later drove in Reddick as part of a 3-for-3 game.

Aside from a few flat sliders, including to Cespedes in the second, Lewis (4-4) liked the way he pitched, and with good reason. He needed only 101 pitches to record 24 outs, and he threw 77 strikes.

"That was an amazing pitching job that we wasted because we couldn't put any runs on the board," Rangers manager Ron Washington said.

Brian Fuentes worked a quick ninth inning to seal the first shutout against the Rangers since Sept. 16, 2011. They have scored two or fewer runs on four of the six games on this West Coast road trip.

The Rangers came away empty early in the game in what amounted to their only threat against the 39-year-old Colon, who entered the game as the major-league leader in hits allowed.

The Rangers had loaded the bases with one out for Mitch Moreland, who bounced into a double play to end the inning. Ian Kinsler started the third with a single, but he was erased as Elvis Andrus followed with a double-play grounder.

Moreland didn't have much to say, but Washington said that too many hitters in the lineup aren't producing. That includes several key players, such as Adrian Beltre (4 for 24), Josh Hamilton (4 for 24), Moreland (1 for 23) and David Murphy (13 for 63).

"We still have some guys in that lineup that are not playing up to their capability," Washington said. "Beltre was as hot as a firecracker before we left home, and he's cooled off. Hamilton has cooled off tremendously. We're just a little inconsistent on the offensive end. We've got to keep grinding out at-bats, and we'll get it together."

Said Michael Young, who had one of the five singles against Colon (5-6): "He's knows what he's doing when he's out there. He's a good pitcher. As far as the team goes, we have to stay the course and keep trusting ourselves. We expect to score every time we're on the field. In the big leagues, you're going to run into well-pitched games."

The game was played in a crisp 2 hours, 4 minutes.

No change of plans over Feldman's start

By Jeff Wilson

06/06/12

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Scott Feldman threw his regular bullpen session Wednesday afternoon and will likely be the Texas Rangers' starter Saturday, even though he has lost all three starts since replacing Neftali Feliz in the rotation. The Rangers, however, have mulled other possible starters. Minor-leaguers Michael Kirkman, Zach Jackson, Neil Ramirez, Justin Grimm and Barret Loux have been mentioned, but there is considerable doubt that they would have any more success than Feldman.

"I never said I was going to do anything with Feldman," manager Ron Washington said. "He's still on track. We've made no decision."

The Rangers could need as many as three more starts in the Feldman/Feliz spot before right-hander Roy Oswalt is ready to take over. Oswalt makes his second start tonight for Triple A Round Rock.

The Rangers aren't inclined to remove Robbie Ross from the bullpen, even though he was groomed as a starter in the minors. He has become too valuable as the lone left-handed reliever.

"He's never refused to take the baseball," Washington said. "He can live on the edges. He's got a good changeup, a good breaking ball, he can cut it, and he hides the ball well. He's got deception."

Feldman allowed eight runs in the second inning Monday night, and lasted only 1 2/3 innings as the Rangers were routed 12-1 by Oakland. He is 0-3 with a 12.65 ERA since Feliz was put on the disabled list with a sprained right elbow.

No Derby no problem

The person most pleased by Josh Hamilton's decision to skip the Home Run Derby is Ron Washington, who was informed Tuesday by the four-time All-Star and this week's Sports Illustrated cover boy.

"Hamilton has so much torque that if he swings at a pitch and misses, it could hurt him," Washington said. "If he gets hurt, we're hurt."

Washington said that he didn't forbid Hamilton from the competition and would never suggest that he back out. That would also apply to Nelson Cruz if he were asked to participate in the contest. Hamilton and Cruz were Derby runners-up in 2008 and 2009, respectively.

Texas Rangers' 2012 draft goes according to plan

By Drew Davison

06/06/12

With one of the deepest farm systems in baseball, it's a challenge for the Texas Rangers to make sure their position prospects get enough at-bats and their pitching prospects get enough innings. It's a good problem to have, of course, but one that the Rangers were aware of going into this year's MLB First-Year Player Draft. That's one of the reasons the Rangers focused on high-ceiling players with good character and makeup. They are pleased with the 2012 draft class, spending their first five picks on high school players with upside.

In all, the Rangers took 43 players over the three-day draft -- 26 pitchers (18 right-handers, eight left-handers); nine outfielders; five infielders; and three catchers. There were 25 college and 18 high school players.

"We're very happy with the group," said Kip Fagg, the Rangers' director of amateur scouting. "Every year you're happy and optimistic how it's going to turn out. The guys we got at the top were guys we did a lot of work on. They're guys we like as players and people with big, high ceilings and upside.

"The draft went the way we thought, and we were able to get a lot of the guys we earmarked in different rounds."

Day 3 saw the Rangers take a healthy dose of pitchers, selecting 18 with their 25 picks Wednesday.

Among the notable pitchers selected were right-hander Jacob Lemoine out of Bridge City High School in the 21st round. He is committed to play at the University of Houston, and Fagg said the team would follow through with him this summer to see if Lemoine would prefer beginning his professional career instead of going to college.

They also drafted right-hander Ryan Bores in the 27th round a year after taking him in the 26th round. In the 32nd round, they went with high school left-hander Alex Young, who has committed to TCU.

In the end, Fagg feels the Rangers had a nice mix of players, position- and experience-wise, even though he doesn't go into it thinking that way. He felt the strength of the draft was outfielders, and the Rangers were able to take five outfielders with their first nine picks.

13 area players drafted on Day 3

While there might not have been a first-round selection from the area, there were plenty of draftees taken later in the draft.

TCU had four players drafted on Wednesday: right-handers Kevin Allen, Tyler Duffie and Kaleb Merck and outfielder Jason Coats.

Two Texas A&M players with local ties were taken -- first baseman Jacob House, a Mansfield Timberview product, and right-hander Rafael Pineda, who played at Crowley. Weatherford College had two players selected as well in right-handers Cameron Cox and Jacob Stone.

Texas State lefty Colton Turner, a Joshua product, was taken in the 21st round; Mansfield Legacy right-hander Tejay Antone was taken in the 22nd round; Dallas Baptist left-hander Taylor Massey, a Weatherford product, was taken in the 29th round; and Howard College shortstop Paul Hendrix, who played at Birdville, was a 32nd round selection.

Finally, Cory Bafidis will try to become only the third Texas Wesleyan player to reach the big leagues, as the left-hander was taken by the Washington Nationals in the 35th round.

DALLAS MORNING NEWS

A few observations from the Rangers' 2-0 loss to Oakland

Evan Grant

06/07/12

OAKLAND, Calif. - A quick peak into the fun and games inside the Rangers clubhouse: After Wednesday's 2-0 loss to Oakland in which the Rangers were shutout for the first time this year and in which 1B Mitch Moreland hit into his fifth double play of the last 10 days, I tried to ask Moreland some questions about the situation.

Put it this way: Nobody will accuse Moreland of being verbose.

Obviously frustrated, Moreland crushed a plastic water bottle slow during our brief conversation.

About the double play epidemic he finds himself in: "It's part of the game. It's going to happen.

About the situation: "I was just trying to hit the ball hard."

About whether he was trying to get the ball in the air with one out and the bases loaded: "I was trying to hit ball hard. I didn't get the job done."

All of it was said politely, but Moreland's lips were clenched the entire time. It is clear that his latest slump has upped the frustration level greatly. And who could blame him? At the exact moment that it appeared Moreland emerged from a long, frustrating slump, he has dived right back into one.

On May 26, he went 3-for-4 against Toronto and raised his season average to .309. Exactly one month earlier, it had been .179. And since that night against Toronto, he's now 1-for-23 with five double plays and nine strikeouts. More than half of his plate appearances in the 10 days since that night have been "unproductive," as defined by the Rangers system. He's had 27 plate appearances; 14 of them have ended with a strikeout or double play.

"There are times when he tries to force the game a little," hitting instructor Scott Coolbaugh said. "But he's very capable of getting it done. He knows he's capable of doing better than he did. We will try to make sure he stays confident and positive."

Other observations

- From the department of completely random numbers, consider this: RHP Colby Lewis did not allow a home run for the second consecutive start on Wednesday. It was just the third time this season Lewis has not allowed a homer. The Rangers have lost all three games and Lewis is 0-2 despite a 1.69 ERA and .195 opponents average in those games.
- More Lewis weirdness: He pitched a complete game, allowed two runs ... and lost. It was the ninth time since 2000 a Rangers starter has allowed two runs or less in a complete game and lost. Lewis joins Ryan Drese, C.J. Wilson, Kevin Millwood (twice each), Doug Davis and Darren Oliver.
- In their four losses in June, the Rangers are 3-for-19 with runners in scoring position.
- Perfect moment to illustrate Rangers' recent futility came in the third: After 2B Ian Kinsler led off with a walk, the Rangers tried to stay out of the double play by putting him in motion on the first pitch to SS Elvis Andrus. Andrus bounced a ball up the middle, right to where SS Cliff Pennington had raced to cover the bag. Easy double play. Even when they take extra steps to stay out of the double play right now, the Rangers find them.

More frustrating: Due to some apparent confusion on the A's part, both 2B Jemile Weeks and Pennington raced to the bag. A ground ball to either side of the bag is a base hit and puts runners on the corners with no outs for Josh Hamilton. Andrus hit the ball to the ONLY possible spot in which the A's could turn a double play.

"That's why this game is so hard sometimes," Andrus said.

- At least this one didn't keep you up too late. It took 2:04, making it the shortest nine-inning game in the AL this season.
- And there is this: The Angels fell behind 2-0, rallied to take a 4-2 lead, but lost to Seattle 8-6. The Rangers retain their 4.5 game lead in the AL West.

Grant: Even Josh Hamilton caught up in Rangers' offensive struggles

By Evan Grant

06/06/12

OAKLAND, Calif. — Life for the Rangers' offense right now: They get a leadoff single, put on a hit-and-run to avoid a double play ... and the batter hits the ball right up the middle to the man who had moved to cover second base.

That's exactly what happened in the third inning of a 2-0 loss to Oakland on Wednesday, the first shutout loss for the Rangers this season.

Ian Kinsler led off with a single and took off for second on the first pitch of the at-bat to Elvis Andrus. Andrus, the Rangers' best contact hitter, bounced a ball right up the middle to shortstop Cliff Pennington, who was already standing on second. He had an easy throw to first to complete the double play.

"That's how it goes sometimes," Andrus said. "That's why baseball can be such a hard game sometimes."

And sometimes excruciatingly frustrating. Because as frustrating as the third-inning double play was for the Rangers' offense, it was only the second-most confounding moment of the game for the Rangers' suddenly soft offense.

The night's winner for most frustrating moment went to Mitch Moreland, a regular winner of the award lately. Moreland came to the plate with the bases loaded in the second, got ahead of wobbly Bartolo Colon 1-and-0 and then tried to hit a 91 mph "hard." The pitch rode in on his hands, jammed him and turned into a rather easy inning-ending double play grounder to second.

It was the sixth double play Moreland has hit into this season, but the fifth in his last five starts. In his last 10 games, Moreland, who briefly crested .300 with a May surge, Moreland is 1-for-23 with nine strikeouts and five double-play grounders.

"It's part of the game," Moreland said, lips pursed while he slowly crushed a plastic water bottle. "It's going to happen. I'm just trying to hit the ball hard there, and I didn't get the job done."

"We had an opportunity in the second inning, and we hit into a double play," manager Ron Washington said. "From that point on, Colon really got it going. We just couldn't muster any offense."

Moreland may be Exhibit A for the struggling Rangers lineup, but he is hardly the only evidence. Over a nine-game stretch dating even to when the Rangers pounded Seattle, 12-6, on May 27, the struggle has hit every corner of the lineup.

At the top, Ian Kinsler is 10-for-43 (.232). In the middle, Josh Hamilton is 7-for-37 (.189) and Adrian Beltre is 9-for-39 (.231). And at the bottom, there is Moreland.

"You are going to have periods where it is just tough to score runs," hitting instructor Scott Coolbaugh said. "We had a tough stretch last June where we really struggled for runs. All you can do is stay positive and keep preaching not trying to do too much. If they keep creating opportunities, they are going to start capitalizing and regaining confidence."

Right now, the Rangers aren't having too many problems creating the opportunities.

Cashing in: That is the frustrating part.

ESPNDALLAS.COM

Rangers at loss for lack of offense

By Jeff Fletcher

June 7, 2012

OAKLAND, Calif. — Even a team as powerful as the Texas Rangers is prone to be shut out every once in a while, particularly when the guy on the mound has a Cy Young on his resume.

But this particular Cy Young winner is 39 years old, so not everyone in the Rangers' clubhouse was ready to tip their proverbial caps to Bartolo Colon after he pitched eight scoreless innings in the A's 2-0 victory over the Rangers on Wednesday night.

"I hate to not give a credit when he does that well but you'd think as good as our offense is that we'd get something done," Rangers outfielder David Murphy said. "He didn't try to trick us. He threw all fastballs. He changed the location and mixed it up in that sense, but he basically beat us throwing all fastballs tonight."

The Rangers managed just five singles in eight innings against Colon, who won the Cy Young in 2005 but hasn't had a full season with an ERA under 4.00 since then.

"He still knows what he's doing," Rangers manager Ron Washington said. "He's a very smart guy. Some nights he gets away with it and some nights he doesn't. Tonight, he did."

What has happened to the Rangers offense?

Yes, they are leading the league in scoring. However, in the first six games of this trip they've been held to two runs or fewer four times. On Wednesday, they were shut out for the first time all season.

"We've got to be more consistent," Nelson Cruz said. "We need to figure out a way to get in the zone again and do what we're supposed to do."

The critical moments in this game came in the early innings. In the second inning, Mitch Moreland came up with the bases loaded and one out. He grounded into a routine double play. Moreland, who is in a 1-for-24 slump, said Colon simply threw him a fastball on the inner half and he didn't get the barrel on it. An inning later, Elvis Andrus hit into a double play after Ian Kinsler's leadoff single. The Rangers didn't have more than one baserunner in an inning the rest of the night. The last 14 hitters went in order.

"We didn't have a great night offensively," Murphy said. "We had one inning where we had an opportunity and we didn't get it done. That happens. The rest of the game we really didn't give ourselves many opportunities. That's what's crazy about this game. Everyone knows what this offense is capable of, but we can have nights like this. It's happened more frequently lately than we like."

Ironically, two of the coldest hitters on this trip have been players who were among the hottest before it began. Josh Hamilton is 4-for-25 and Adrian Beltre is 4-for-23.

"We just need to keep grinding," Washington said. "There are nights we put it together and nights we don't put it together. The only thing you can say is we're inconsistent."

Double plays plague Rangers

By Jeff Fletcher

06/07/12

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Texas Rangers are in a rut of hitting into double plays.

They hit into two more in Wednesday night's 2-0 loss to the Oakland Athletics. They've now hit into 12 double plays in their past eight games, six of them losses.

Manager Ron Washington responded to this trend with little more than a shrug of the shoulders.

"It's just the pitcher executing the pitch," Washington said. "That's the root cause. There's not much else you can say. When a pitcher executes a pitch in that situation, that's what you get."

The most galling double play on Wednesday was Mitch Moreland's with the bases loaded and one out in the second. Bartolo Colon threw a fastball on the inside part of the plate and Moreland fisted it to second base.

"There's no rhyme or reason for hitting into double plays other than the pitcher executing his pitch," Washington said.

Washington may be onto something in thinking that the run of double plays is just an unfortunate coincidence rather than a systemic problem. A look at the stats reveals that the Rangers are actually one of the best teams in baseball at avoiding double plays. Coming into Wednesday's game, they hit into 42 double plays in 401 opportunities, the lowest rate in the American League.

Buzz: Questions about two pitching spots

By Jeff Fletcher

06/06/12

OAKLAND, Calif. — Texas Rangers manager Ron Washington suddenly has two spots in his starting rotation that are up in the air.

Scott Feldman, who is scheduled to start Saturday in San Francisco, may not start because he has performed poorly of late, including a disastrous 1 2/3-inning, eight-run outing Monday.

Derek Holland, who is scheduled for Sunday, may not start if the Rangers determine that he still hasn't regained enough strength from a stomach ailment that has caused him to lose 15 pounds in 2 1/2 weeks. Washington said Holland looked like "a ghost" after Tuesday's outing.

Washington clearly said that neither Feldman nor Holland have been "ruled out" for those starts, but he conceded that both spots are "questionable." At the moment, though, both pitchers are listed as starting, and both went about their business Wednesday as if they would take their turns.

Feldman threw his normal bullpen session. Holland went through his normal workout routine for the day after a start.

Both Holland and Washington agreed there was “concern” over the pitcher’s weight loss. Although Holland got the victory Tuesday, he lost velocity as he got deeper into the game and the A’s hit him hard in his final innings.

“I lost a good bit of weight,” Holland said. “Of course I am concerned.”

For now, Holland is not scheduled for any further tests. He’s been on an antibiotic, and he said he’s been feeling better.

“I just want to be able to get rid of it so I can be myself,” Holland said. “I want to be out there and have my team not be worried about how I feel.”

In the meantime, Washington said no fewer than a half-dozen pitchers have been “mentioned” as potential starters: reliever Robbie Ross, Triple-A pitchers Zach Jackson, Michael Kirkman and Neil Ramirez, and Double-A pitchers Barret Loux and Justin Grimm.

“We’re just trying to search and make sure we find the right pieces for whatever need we might have,” Washington said. “That’s all.”

Notes:

* Washington said he did not ask Josh Hamilton to skip the home run derby at the All-Star Game, but he was nonetheless relieved that his superstar made that decision.

“That’s his decision on that, not up to me,” Washington said. “It’s not up to me, but I’m happy he’s not doing it. If he takes a swing and miss and hurts something I don’t think any other team in baseball would care.”

Washington added that he “gave him a hug” after learning of his decision.

* Rangers outfielder David Murphy was thrilled to see Brandon Moss playing first for the A’s on Wednesday. Murphy and Moss came through the Red Sox system together, and Murphy said Moss is one of his closest friends in baseball.

“I’m glad he’s getting a shot,” Murphy said. “I just hope he doesn’t go off until we leave.”

* Roy Oswalt will make his second appearance for Triple-A Round Rock on Thursday at Omaha. Oswalt is scheduled for three or four innings, around 50 pitches. The Rangers have him on a schedule that would have him in the majors in about two weeks.

* Every Rangers starter had a hit and a strikeout Tuesday night, the first such game for the Rangers since July 10, 2008. According to baseball-reference.com, there have been only 10 such games in the majors since 1918, and the Rangers have been responsible for three of them.

Pitchers, athletic OFs dominate Rangers' draft

By Clint Foster

06/06/12

Throughout the three days of the 2012 MLB Draft, the Texas Rangers leaned heavily on selecting pitchers and athletic outfielders with high upside.

The 43 players the Rangers picked included 26 pitchers (18 right-handed, eight left-handed), nine outfielders, five infielders and three catchers.

The Rangers looked to the outfield early and often, using their first-round pick to select Lewis Brinson out of Coral Springs High School (Fla.).

Brinson was the first of three members of ESPN's top 100 draft prospects that the Rangers were able to snag, the other two being third baseman Joey Gallo from Bishop Gorman High School (Nev.) in the first compensatory round and outfielder Jamie Jarmon from Indian River High School (Del.) in the second round.

Two-sport athletes were another over-arching theme of this year's draft, as the Rangers selected multiple highly touted high school football recruits with high upside should they choose to play pro baseball. Jarmon quarterbacked his high

school to the state championship, while Kwinton Smith (WR) and Jameis Winston (QB) are four-star football recruits committed to South Carolina and Florida State, respectively.

For the bottom half of the draft, the Rangers turned their attention to pitchers, including four of whom are 6-foot-6 or taller. Some of the notable pitchers taken were RHP Colin Wiles (first compensatory round) from Blue Valley West HS (Kan.), RHP Alec Asher (fourth round) from Polk State College (Fla.), LHP Sam Stafford (13th round) from the University of Texas (who missed 2012 with a shoulder injury) and the 6-foot-9 LHP Chase Mullins (24th round) from Bourbon County HS (Ky.).

Some other notable draftees include outfielder Nick Williams (second round) from Galveston Ball HS, outfielder Preston Beck (fifth round) from UT-Arlington, outfielder Royce Bolinger (sixth round) from Gonzaga and second baseman Cam Schiller (seventh round) out of Oral Roberts.

FOXSPORTSSOUTHWEST.COM

Rangers' bats silenced in shutout loss to A's

By Anthony Andro

06/06/12

OAKLAND, Calif. — Texas Rangers designated hitter Michael Young said he expected the Rangers to be able to score in every game.

For the first 56 games of the season, that expectation held up.

Bartolo Colon put an end to that streak Wednesday night by combining with Brian Fuentes on a five-hit shutout as the Athletics blanked the Rangers 2-0.

The shutout, which squandered a complete-game effort from Colby Lewis, has been a week in coming. Texas has sputtered throughout their 10-game road trip, getting no-hit into the eighth inning Monday night and scoring just two or fewer runs three times before Wednesday.

Colon, who made a career out of mastering the Rangers a decade ago but hadn't won a game against Texas since 2009, allowed just one baserunner after the fourth inning and threw 100 pitches in eight innings, with 77 for strikes. Fuentes pitched a perfect ninth to complete the blanking.

Colon came into the game having allowed more base hits than any pitcher in the American League. The Texas offensive effort left the Rangers puzzled as they've had just four extra-base hits in the first three games of the series.

"We've got to be more consistent," said outfielder Nelson Cruz, who went 0 for 3 with two strikeouts. "It's that simple. We need to figure out a way to get in the zone a little bit and do what we're supposed to do."

There was no zone for the Rangers to get into Wednesday. Texas had one solid scoring opportunity early.

A base hit by Michael Young, a walk by David Murphy and a single from Mike Napoli loaded the bases for Mitch Moreland. But Moreland, who was hitting .309 on May 26, continued his recent struggles at the plate by grounding into an inning-ending double play on an inside fastball from Colon.

Moreland has now grounded into four double plays on the road trip and his average has dropped to .263 as he's in a 1-for-23 slump.

That opportunity was magnified because it was the last time the Rangers had a baserunner in scoring position.

"We had our opportunity in the second inning and hit into a double play," Texas manager Ron Washington said. "From that point on, both Colby and Bartolo loaded up the strike zone and made quick work of the hitters that were at the plate. We just didn't put any offense together. We just couldn't muster anything against him."

Oakland put just enough offense together against Lewis. The Athletics scored the only run they would need in the second inning on an RBI single from Brandon Inge. Oakland tacked on another in the fourth but Lewis would allow just one more baserunner after that.

Lewis pounded the strike zone, throwing 77 of his 101 pitches for strikes. He allowed just six hits, didn't walk a batter and struck out three. But for the 10th time in his 12 starts, the Rangers failed to score more than three runs.

"It is what it is," said Lewis, who pitched his first complete game of the season and fourth of his career. "You go out there and try to keep the team in the game. You can't worry about that side of things. You've got to go out there and keep doing what you're doing and try to go deep into the game and let things fall where they may."

At least Lewis (4-5), who lowered his ERA to 3.38, gave a break to a Texas bullpen that's been taxed on this road trip.

Washington said the pitching by Lewis was amazing. His offense said the same thing, which makes Wednesday even tougher to take.

"Everybody knows what this offense is capable of and we can have nights like this," Murphy said. "It's probably happened a little more frequently lately than we'd like. I think the biggest thing is you hate to waste a pitching performance like we got tonight because Colby did a great job."

Hamilton makes Sports Illustrated cover

By Anthony Andro

06/06/12

OAKLAND, Calif. — Just a little more than four years after making his debut on the cover of Sports Illustrated, Josh Hamilton has found his way back to the cover of the magazine.

Hamilton is on the cover this week and the subject of a story entitled "The Fragile Brilliance of Josh Hamilton."

The Rangers have had seven players make the cover of SI and Hamilton and Nolan Ryan are the only ones to make it twice in Texas uniforms.

Hamilton was interviewed for the story when the team was in Houston.

"Hopefully they did a good job with the story," Hamilton said. "I spent an hour and a half with the guy. They talked to Katie (Hamilton's wife.). We had a message we wanted to get in there and get across and hopefully it made it. It's always cool to be on the cover."

Holland optimistic he'll make Sunday start

By Anthony Andro

06/06/12

OAKLAND, Calif. — Texas left-hander Derek Holland believes he's turned the corner in his fight against a lingering stomach virus.

Holland, who has lost 15 pounds in two weeks and got fatigued during his Tuesday start, went through a full workout Wednesday and expects to take the ball Sunday against San Francisco.

"I feel better," said Holland, who last pitched a total of seven innings in his last two starts. "It's going to take a little more time. I have to keep pushing and get my strength back. That's the main thing. That's what the real focus is, getting my strength back."

Holland, who is down to 201 pounds, doesn't think he'll need any tests done. He's taking medication for the illness but is the weight loss a little alarming.

"I've lost a good bit of weight," he said. "Everybody would be concerned with that."

Holland started feeling bad when the team was in Seattle for a May 21-23 series. He said he's not using the stomach problem as an excuse for his pitching.

Texas manager Ron Washington said Holland is still the likely pitcher for Sunday's game and Scott Feldman is still penciled in to start Saturday. Feldman lasted 1 2/3 against Oakland Monday and has an ERA of 7.01 after allowing eight runs. Feldman went through his regular bullpen session Wednesday.

Washington said Holland looked like a ghost after his start but he had more color Wednesday.

The Rangers don't have a lot of options in the short term if Feldman or Holland can't go. Possible candidates mentioned have been everyone from Zach Jackson to Barret Loux.

"I feel pretty good about Saturday although today is only Wednesday," Rangers manager Ron Washington said. "I never said I was doing anything with Feldman. Today is Wednesday we've still got three or four days. We've got time to make a decision if we have to."

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Colby Lewis after Rangers' 2-0 loss to A's: 'It is what it is'

06/06/12

OAKLAND, Calif. — Bartolo Colon hardly had to sit down in the dugout before getting up to pitch again, just the kind of rhythm he prefers.

Colon pitched eight scoreless innings, Yoenis Cespedes finished a home run shy of hitting for the cycle, drove in run and scored, and the Oakland Athletics beat the Texas Rangers 2-0 on Wednesday night.

"I like to have a rhythm like that. I tried to go fast," Colon said. "I'm really happy with how I pitched tonight."

Brandon Inge hit an RBI single in the second and Colon won for the second time in his last nine outings to improve to 18-6 in 28 starts against Texas — his most wins against any opponent.

"He has a lot of wins against them and that gives him confidence," Cespedes said.

The right-hander (5-6) was backed by just enough run support in this outing after the A's were blanked his last time out at Kansas City on Friday — the third time Oakland hasn't scored a run in one of his outings.

Cespedes did his part, matching his season high with three hits and dazzling with his glove in left field.

"When he has a good offensive night, it feels like we win," manager Bob Melvin said.

He doubled and scored in the second, hit an RBI single in the fourth and tripled in the sixth during Oakland's sixth shutout of the year. The Cuban slugger and cleanup hitter is batting .375 (9 for 24) with a home run and five RBIs in six starts since coming off the disabled last Friday after recovering from a left hand injury.

"I'm not 100 percent, but I'm close. I'm getting stronger," he said, noting he didn't think about the cycle because, "I have many games and many opportunities to do it."

Colby Lewis (4-5) had a rare loss against his former Oakland club despite eight strong innings for his fourth career complete game. The right-hander is 7-4 in 19 appearances and 17 starts against the A's — and he'd been 5-0 over his previous seven starts in the rivalry.

Lewis is 5-2 with a 2.56 ERA in 10 career starts at Oakland.

"I just go out and try to keep the team in the game as long as I can. It is what it is," Lewis said. "I felt like I threw the ball pretty good."

A night after bouncing back from Monday's 12-1 rout with a 6-3 victory, Texas struggled at the plate again and couldn't do much of anything against the hard-throwing Colon. It was Texas' first shutout since Sept. 16, 2011, by Seattle.

Even Adrian Beltre was stymied, going 0 for 4 after he came into the game with 17 hits and 13 RBIs off Colon.

He allowed five hits in eight innings, struck out five and walked one in an impressive 100-pitch performance for one of his best outings since joining the A's in January on a \$2 million, one-year contract. He threw 77 pitches for strikes. Brian Fuentes completed the five-hit shutout in 2 hours, 4 minutes with a 1-2-3 ninth for his fifth save in seven chances. It was the shortest game in the American League this season.

"It takes a lot of poise and guts to get through that ninth when the starter is pitching a game like that," Melvin said.

The Rangers lost for the ninth time in their last 13 games versus the AL West.

They missed a scoring chance in the second with the bases loaded and one out, but Colon got No. 9 hitter Mitch Moreland to ground into an inning-ending double play. Texas hit into another double play in the third and Colon didn't allow another baserunner beyond first.

"It's very important when you're pitching to make those double plays so the rhythm stays fast," Colon said.

Colon retired the final 11 Rangers hitters he faced.

"We had our opportunity in the second but we hit into a double play. From that point on Colby and Bartolo Colon loaded up the strike zone and made quick work of the hitters," Rangers manager Ron Washington said. "He kept us off the fat part of the bat and we couldn't do anything offensively. We couldn't muster anything against him. He's still smart. He still knows what he's doing."

The series finale Thursday will complete just four home games during a 16-game stretch for the A's from May 28 to June 14.

NOTES: A's LHP Dallas Braden, still rehabbing his strained, surgically repaired throwing shoulder, played catch out to 80 feet and reported no problems. "That's very encouraging," Melvin said. ... Melvin is going to stay away from using LHP reliever and former 1B Sean Doolittle in back-to-back days for now. He made his major league debut Tuesday and struck out the first three batters he faced and retired all four in order using all fastballs among his 21 pitches. What's his best off-speed pitch? "I don't know yet, we'll see," Melvin said. "It's a slider, I hear." ... Yu Darvish (7-3) pitches for the Rangers in the series finale Thursday against Brandon McCarthy (4-3). ... The A's placed RHP reliever Andrew Carignan on the 15-day disabled list and he could be headed for elbow ligament replacement surgery after leaving Tuesday's game in the eighth inning with a sore arm.

HICKORY DAILY RECORD

RiverDogs rally to deal Crawdads second straight loss

By Record Staff

06/06/12

CHARLESTON, S.C. – The Hickory Crawdads couldn't hold on to a lead Wednesday night.

They were up by two runs through four innings, but Charleston (S.C.) chipped away at the lead and used a three-run seventh inning to beat the visiting Crawdads 9-5.

A crowd of 4,758 watched the RiverDogs rally for a South Atlantic League victory that left Hickory 31-27 and Charleston at 36-22.

The final game of a three-game series is Thursday in Charleston, and the Crawdads come home Friday to begin a series against Greenville, S.C.

In Wednesday night's game, Charleston led 3-2 after three innings before the Crawdads scored three runs in the fourth inning to grab the lead.

Kevin Torres had an RBI single in the fourth, and Hickory got one run via an error and another on a double play ball.

The RiverDogs pulled within 5-4 in the fifth on a run-scoring sacrifice fly by Gary Sanchez, then took control in the seventh inning.

In the seventh, Mason Williams led off with a double and eventually scored the tying run on a groundout by Tyler Austin. With two outs, an error on Crawdads shortstop Hanser Alberto and a single by Dante Bichette Jr. brought up Angelo Gumbs, who hit a three-run home run that put Charleston ahead 8-5.

Williams, Bichette, Gumbs and Reymond Nunez each had two hits for the RiverDogs.

For Hickory, Luis Sardinas, Zach Cone and Trever Adams had two hits each and Alberto drove in two runs. But the Crawdads were 4-for-14 with runners in scoring position and left nine on base.

Marcel Checo (6-1), who threw 2 1/3 innings of scoreless relief for Charleston, got the win.

Will Lamb took the loss for Hickory, going 1 2/3 innings. He gave up six hits and four runs, but only one run was earned.