

# RAYS CLIPS



July 30, 2012

# Tampa Bay Rays beat Los Angeles Angels 2-0, win two of three in series

*By Marc Topkin, Times Staff Writer*

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Jeremy Hellickson did a good job Sunday keeping the Angels hitters uncomfortable and off-balance through his six innings. But his greatest bit of deception apparently took place toward the end of the first, when he walked to the grass behind the mound, put his hands on his knees and — as indiscreetly as one can in that situation — threw up.

"I tried to hide it," he said.

He'd throw up again several times throughout the afternoon, most noticeably in the dugout after the third and sixth innings. But as nauseated as Hellickson felt, as much as his stomach hurt, as light-headed as he was getting, he was pitching incredibly well, a prime reason the Rays beat the Angels 2-0, extending their scoreless streak to 23 innings and posting their first back-to-back road shutouts in 10 years.

"My stuff felt good, and my arm felt good," Hellickson said, after a postgame IV. "That's really all I needed to feel good."

As the Rays won their second series on the three-stop trip that takes them next to Oakland and improved to 53-49, they all were feeling pretty good.

The defense was crisp, the offense opportunistic against Angels import Zack Greinke and the bullpen again dominant, with Kyle Farnsworth, Joel Peralta and Fernando Rodney finishing what Hellickson started.

Rodney, who logged his 30th save, made it entertaining, allowing two two-strike singles with one out in the ninth, falling behind Albert Pujols 3-and-0 before getting him to ground a 3-and-1 changeup into a double play, then, after firing another of his imaginary arrows, announcing, "the Rally Monkey has passed away."

Manger Joe Maddon, while tempering his excitement, is enthused about their overall improved play, even as the offense produces minimally.

"That's how we win," Maddon said. "That's who we are. And when you do all of that, all of a sudden you get the momentum and guys feel a little bit better about themselves and here comes six, seven, eight runs."

Sunday, two were enough, and they had help in getting them.

The first came in the sixth, the sequence starting with an Elliot Johnson blooper to right-center that dropped between three Angels for a double and ended with a crisp RBI single by Matt Joyce. But the big play came in the middle as Johnson was caught off second when Greinke snagged Sam Fuld's bouncer but — smartly — stayed in the rundown long enough for Fuld to get to second. "Fantastic," Maddon said. Fuld went to third on Ben Zobrist's infield single and scored on Joyce's hit.

They scored again in the seventh when Carlos Peña — who Maddon singled out for his overall outstanding game — doubled, went to third when Ryan Roberts productively grounded to the right side ("Another big play," Maddon said) and scored on Greinke's second wild pitch.

"We're playing better baseball," Maddon said. "I know we won two games, I'm not going nuts about that, but we're playing better. Execution-wise, we talked about a couple opportunities. Defensively, catching the ball. We pitched like crazy. We're playing better. And I want to believe there's MOR-mentum to be gained from playing better."

The MOR-mentum is one of Maddon's catch phrases. But after Saturday's win, the momentum came from Hellickson who, as sick as he was, didn't allow a hit until the fourth and only two total, eschewing his cutter for a solid repertoire of fastball, curveball and changeup while throwing 86 pitches.

Hellickson said he woke up nauseated and felt progressively worse, not helped by pregame doses of medicine or in-game fluids, but he had no thought of giving up.

"I just had to do it," he said.

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## Joe Maddon still believes Tampa Bay Rays will stand pat at trade deadline

*By Marc Topkin, Times Staff Writer*

ANAHEIM, Calif. — RHP **James Shields** is eagerly looking forward to Tuesday, ostensibly because it's the day of his next start but also because — one way or another — it will be the end of the trade rumors that have followed him for weeks.

There was some speculation Sunday that the Rangers are intensifying their interest in the veteran starter, and that the Cardinals may have joined the Braves, Dodgers and Indians as other possibilities. The Rays' decision to give CF **B.J. Upton** the day off — supposedly just for rest, Upton said — raised the question if he could be involved in a deal. And with the deadline nearing, more rumors are sure to fly.

But Rays manager **Joe Maddon** said before, and again after, Sunday's game that he doesn't think the Rays will make a trade by the 4 p.m. Tuesday deadline.

"My feeling normally is this, and I've been right almost all the time, is that we're not going to do anything," Maddon said. "We talk a lot and it always takes two to dance, and at the end of the day it's difficult to match up all the time. So I would bet that nothing really happens."

**MONKEYING AROUND:** After two rough seasons with the Angels, RHP **Fernando Rodney** enjoyed his return to Anaheim, getting his 29th and 30th saves and both days aiming his imaginary arrow at the scoreboard that features the Rally Monkey.

He said on Saturday he shot the "son" and on Sunday he got the "father," who was there to "intimidate" him. So what does he expect when the Rays come back in a few weeks? "They have to order something," he said.

Rodney became the fourth Ray to have a 30-save season, joining **Rafael Soriano** (2010), **Danys Baez** (2004-05) and **Roberto Hernandez** (1999-2000).

**LONGO UPDATE:** **Evan Longoria** was back in the lineup for Triple-A Durham as the DH on Sunday, going 1-for-3 with a sacrifice fly and a walk in the third game of his rehab assignment, aiming for a possible return this week. Longoria,

sidelined since partially tearing his left hamstring April 30, played two games then sat out Saturday after reporting some soreness. "He's feeling pretty good," Maddon said Sunday.

**PRICE CHECK:** LHP **David Price** goes for his major league-leading 15th win tonight in Oakland in the Rays' 103rd game. Since 2000, only three American League pitchers have done so in fewer games: Toronto's **David Wells**, 88 in 2000; Chicago's **Jon Garland**, 95 in 2008; New York's **CC Sabathia**, 101 in 2011.

**ABOUT SATURDAY NIGHT:** LHP **Matt Moore**'s strong start was the key to the 3-0 victory, with both Moore and Maddon saying that his curveball was a particularly effective weapon. The ESPN's Stats and Info crew confirmed that, noting that Moore got a career high-matching six outs with the curve (and would have had seven if not for 3B **Ryan Roberts**' error), and that Moore didn't allow a hit off his curve or his fastball, all four coming off his changeup.

**MISCELLANY:** Sunday was the 52nd time (in 102 games) the Rays scored fewer than four runs. ... The Angels were shut out in consecutive games for the first time since May 3-4, second time for the season. ... RHP **Alex Colome** pitched his first career nine-inning complete game in Double-A Montgomery's 5-2 win over Mississippi.

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## Tampa Bay Rays: Ryan Roberts victim of a laundry mishap; Joe Maddon guards against illness

*By Marc Topkin, Times Staff Writer*

### Rays at A's

**When/where:** 10:07 tonight; Oakland Coliseum

**TV/radio:** Sun Sports; 620-AM, 680-AM (Spanish)

### Probable pitchers

**Rays:** LH David Price (14-4, 2.57)

**A's:** RH A.J. Griffin (3-0, 2.25)

**On Price:** Leads the majors in wins, including six straight, one shy of the team record. Has allowed only 10 runs over his past seven starts. Is 2-1, 3.62 in five starts vs. Oakland, including 1-1, 3.66 in three games at the Coliseum.

**On Griffin:** A 13th-round pick in 2010, Griffin (6-5, 230) worked his way from Double A to Triple A to the majors by late June. Has worked six innings in each of his six starts, allowing two or fewer runs five times. Has struck out 29 and walked only eight in 36 IP.

### Rays vs. Griffin

None have faced.

### A's vs. Price

Jonny Gomes 3-for-6

Brandon Inge 2-for-11

Kurt Suzuki 1-for-8

### **On deck**

**Tuesday:** at A's, 10:07, Sun Sports. Rays — James Shields (8-7, 4.52); A's — Tommy Milone (9-7, 3.51)

**Wednesday:** at A's, 3:37, Sun Sports. Rays — Alex Cobb (4-8, 4.93); A's — Jarrod Parker (7-4, 3.38)

**Thursday:** Off

**Friday:** vs. O's, 7:10, Sun Sports. Rays — Matt Moore (7-7, 4.01); O's — TBA

*Marc Topkin, Times staff writer*

### **Laundry mishap of the day**

The new size-XL sweater Rays INF**Ryan Roberts** wore to the stadium Sunday was a little big, so he asked the clubhouse staff to wash and dry it so it would "shrink up a little bit." But they went a little too far, because when Roberts got it back, the sweater was reduced to essentially a kid's size. "Look at this thing," Roberts said. "I can't even get it on. I mean, are you kidding me?"

### **Quote of the day**

*"I made sure when he came in I fist-bumped his glove and not his bare hand."*

**Rays manager Joe Maddon, on congratulating starter Jeremy Hellickson, who was ill.**

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## **Hellickson, Rays blank Angels again, take series**

*By Roger Mooney, The Tampa Tribune*

**ANAHEIM, Calif. --**

The heat quickly became a problem for Jeremy Hellickson on Sunday afternoon and so were the fluids he drank before taking the mound in the first inning to combat that heat. So he walked to the grass behind the mound at Angel Stadium, bent over as if to adjust his uniform pants and, well, yuk.

Hellickson somehow managed to get sick without most of the more than 35,000 in the ballpark noticing.

"I hid it pretty well," he said.

Hellickson said he got sick four or five more times during the afternoon but waited until he reached the dugout between

innings.

"He was chalkier than a Des Moines winter right there," Rays manager Joe Maddon said of the Iowa native. "He was hurting."

But you wouldn't have guessed that, judging by the way Hellickson breezed through the Angels lineup, holding them to two hits in six innings as the Rays won 2-0 to take two of three in the series.

The victory raised the Rays' record to 4-2 on this nine-game road trip and enabled them to gain a game on the American League wild card-leading A's and the Angels, who hold the second of the two wild-card spots.

What's more, the win gave the Rays momentum as they enter another big three-game series, this one with the A's that begins tonight in Oakland.

"We're playing better baseball," Maddon said. "I know we've won two games (in a row). I'm not going nuts about that. We're playing better."

The Rays did it Sunday with more opportunistic offense, solid defense and another shutdown day by a pitching staff that recorded back-to-back shutouts for the first time since 2008 and held the Angels scoreless during the final 23 innings of the three-game series.

"It's a very good hitting team and we were making the right pitches at the right time and playing good defense, too," said Joel Peralta, who pitched two scoreless innings during the series.

Fernando Rodney allowed a pair of one-out singles in the ninth inning, then fell behind Albert Pujols 3-0 before getting the Angels slugger to ground into a game-ending double play.

Zack Greinke made his Angels debut and allowed a pair of runs in seven innings. But Hellickson stole the show while somehow managing to keep the fluids down.

"What he did was great," Peralta said. "Getting sick and pitching like he did, that says a lot."

Hellickson said he felt nauseous when he woke Sunday morning but was feeling better by the 12:35 p.m. game time. The heat, though, became a problem on a sunny Southern California afternoon and he said he became lightheaded as the afternoon moved along. Still, he managed to retire the first nine batters he faced and pitched to only two over the minimum.

"My stuff felt good. My arm felt good. That's really all I needed to feel good," he said. "I just had to do it. I had to give us five or six (innings) to save the bullpen and I felt good enough to stay out there, so I didn't really need to come out."

Hellickson stuck with three pitches — fastball, curveball and change-up. He said the game plan was not to use the cutter, which is a pitch that has caused some problems for him this season.

"It was absolutely wonderful to watch him pitch that way," Maddon said.

Elliot Johnson, whose bloop double in the sixth inning helped the Rays score their first run, said Hellickson was throwing harder than he has all season.

"He was throwing his fastball by people," Johnson said. "I saw (catcher Jose Lobaton) not move his glove I don't how many times. It was impressive."

Maddon said he actually thought of taking Hellickson out during the second or third inning. But Hellickson said he felt well enough to pitch, and Maddon decided to let Hellickson gut it out, so to speak.

"No question. It was hot and he did not feel good from the time he arrived here. But that's him," Maddon said. "He just calmly goes out there. ... Those quiet guys, you got to be heads up with because they're very tough."

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## Rodney stays locked in

*By Tampa Tribune Staff*

**ANAHEIM, Calif. --**

The only thing standing in the way of closer **Fernando Rodney** and what would be his American League-leading 30th save was Angels 1B **Albert Pujols**, who was standing at the plate with one out in the ninth inning Sunday and runners at first and second.

Also, Rodney fell behind 3-0.

"I wasn't scared," Rodney said. "I was trying to get a ground ball."

After taking a strike, Pujols swung at a change-up and hit into a 6-4-3 double play to end the Rays' 2-0 victory.

Rodney turned and fired an imaginary arrow at the giant video board in right field, taking aim at what he said was the father of the Angels' famed Rally Monkey. Rodney said he felled the Rally Monkey after earning the save in Saturday's win. According to Rodney, the Rally Monkey's dad promised revenge.

Anyway ...

Rodney was able to work his way out of a huge jam after allowing a pair of one-out singles.

"The beauty about Fernando right now is the heartbeat has slowed down," manager **Joe Maddon** said. "He doesn't get rattled in the moment, and he's able to throw a strike when he wants to with both pitches (fastball and change-up), and that's why he was able to get the ground ball right there."

Rodney, who is second in the major leagues in saves, joins **Roberto Hernandez** (1999, 2000), **Danys Baez** (2004-05) and **Rafael Soriano** (2010) as the only closers in team history to record 30 saves in one season.

### **The Rays Way**

The Rays won the final two games of the series despite scoring only five runs on 11 hits.

"(The pitching is) picking us up right now," SS **Elliot Johnson** said. "Hopefully we can get some runs and give them a little bit of coasting time, a little bit of breathing room. It almost seems like we're getting two and saying, 'OK, guys, go get 'em.' "

Johnson, who opened the sixth inning with a bloop double to center field, helped produce the game's first run by staying in a rundown between second and third long enough after LF **Sam Fuld** bounced back to the mound to allow Fuld to take second base.

"He did everything right," Maddon said of Johnson. "There's no way to not react like he did when the ball's hit. We talked about (Angels starter **Zack Greinke** being a great athlete and you saw it. He did everything right, and Elliot did everything right and thus, Sam gets to second base."

Fuld scored on a single by RF **Matt Joyce**. 1B **Carlos Peña** scored the Rays' second run in the seventh when he doubled to right, moved to third on a ground out to second and scored on a wild pitch.

"That's how we win," Maddon said. "I've said before we're not going to bludgeon you to death. We're real happy we scored two runs (Sunday) and three (Saturday), because of our pitching and the defense we played the last few days. That's who we are. But when we do that, all of sudden we get the momentum and guys feel a little better about themselves and here comes five, six, seven runs."

### **On to Oakland**

The Rays finish this road trip with three games against the surprising A's, who lead the AL wild-card standings.

The A's are 18-4 this month, 12-3 since the All-Star break. What's more, they have a major league-best 11 walk-off wins.

"They are playing inspired baseball," Maddon said. "They're comprised of names that you normally don't know. They're developing their own household names up there, so you're not going in there and see this lineup card laden with these multimillion dollar players, but they're playing it hard, they're playing it right. Their pitching is outstanding and their bullpen, I think, is the best in the American League right now. And all of a sudden their offense is coming alive, and that's the scary part."

### **Noteworthy**

3B **Evan Longoria** (hamstring) went 1-for-3 with a walk and two strikeouts for Triple-A Durham. ... Sunday was CF **B.J. Upton's** turn to get a day off on this road trip. ... Maddon said he hasn't heard anything regarding trades and said he doesn't expect the Rays to make a move by Tuesday's non-waiver trade deadline. "My feeling normally is this and I've been right almost all the time, that we're not going to do anything," Maddon said. "We talk a lot and it always takes two to



dance, and at the end of the day, it's difficult to match up all the time. I would bet that nothing really happens." ... The last time the Rays posted back-to-back shutouts on the road was May 19-21, 2002, at Baltimore and Seattle.

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## Price hopes Shields still around after Trade Deadline

By Bill Chastain, *MLB.com*

ANAHEIM -- David Price teased with reporters that James Shields' bags were packed prior to Sunday's game against the Angels. The obvious inference was that the Rays right-hander had been traded.

Not so fast.

In reality, Sunday was getaway day for the Rays, so Shields' bags were packed, as were those of his teammates.

Easy smiles aside, Price said he would "definitely" be happy once the non-waiver Trade Deadline has passed Tuesday at 4 p.m. ET because he doesn't want to see his close friend get traded, but he added: "I don't know how that works, but I know teams make trades after the Deadline." Then, a player would first have to clear waivers.

Shields has been the Rays player whose name comes up most often in trade speculation. Shields said that he too is "definitely looking forward to Tuesday" -- but not because of the Deadline.

"Because I get to pitch," he said with a smile. Shields is scheduled to start Tuesday night's game against the Athletics in Oakland.

Joe Maddon has a feeling about the approaching Deadline.

"My feeling normally is this -- and I've almost always been right -- is that we're not going to do anything," the Rays manager said. "That's my normal thing. We talk a lot. It always takes two to dance and at the end of the day, it's difficult to match up all the time. So I would bet nothing really happens."

### **Carlos Pena: A thinking man's hitter**

ANAHEIM -- Carlos Pena has struggled offensively this season. The Rays first baseman carried a .193 batting average into Sunday's game against the Angels.

Pena is a thinker and, sometimes, he believes that thinking leads to over analyzing things.

"I think the ability to just accept who you are, who I am as a hitter [is something he has to do]," Pena said. "I know what I bring to the table. I'm a selective hitter, I make pitchers work, I know I play good defense, I know I get on base, I walk, I hit for power, I drive in runs. I will strike out. I have the shift working against me. The chances are against me of hitting .350.

"So accepting that and being OK with that is incredibly important, because the moment you try to combat it or fight against it or resist, it persists. It's like the old saying: What you resist persists."

Pena said his case is the perfect example of what he is trying to resist persisting.

"So instead of me worrying too much, I'm trying to put it on the back burner and forgetting about it, knowing that at the end of the year my numbers are going to be fine," Pena said. "Most important, I want to make sure that I show up for my team

today. My skills are here. My eyes are here, my hands are here, my power's here. My defense is here. My attitude is here. And I want to make sure I bring it all clean, sharp, and crisp today to see if we can win this ballgame."

Rays manager Joe Maddon pointed out that Pena, despite hitting for a low average, still draws a lot of walks and his on-base percentage is .323.

"His on-base percentage based on his batting average is outstanding," Maddon said. "... Any time a hitter exceeds his batting average by more than 100 points, that's pretty good work. And again, I don't want him to be concerned about his batting average.

"I still believe if he were to get a little more finely tuned with the strike zone, that's going to be his best way to start getting better pitches to really drive, because people are still challenging him on the periphery and not really coming after him."

Hitting against a shifted infield has worked against left-handed-swinging Pena greatly over the past several years, which Maddon believes is a difficult thing for a hitter to experience.

"When you're hitting balls hard into the shift and you're out, what does that do to you psychologically?" Maddon said.

"That wears you down a little bit. When you were 16 or 17 that was a hit and now it's an out. That's different, man. It's not easy to just turn the field around at a certain juncture in life. It's defensive sophistication that has caught up to him a little bit."

### **Since the break, relievers have been All-Stars**

ANAHEIM -- The Rays bullpen put forth another shut-down effort Saturday night, when Jake McGee, Joel Peralta and Fernando Rodney took care of the final eight outs of the Rays' 3-0 win over the Angels.

Entering Sunday's game against the Angels, the Rays bullpen ranked as the American League's best since the All-Star break.

In the last 26 2/3 innings, the bullpen has allowed only one run and struck out 41. Rays relievers have worked 48 innings since the All-Star break and have been scored upon in only four of those innings. Their 1.69 ERA since the break is the best in the American League.

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## **Contenders A's, Rays looking for an edge**

*By Ben Estes*

With August around the corner, just over two months remain in the season, and the contenders are beginning to separate themselves from the pretenders.

As the A's and Rays meet for a three-game set in Oakland, both believe that they fit in the former category, and their series could be a test of that.

Oakland's hot recent play, its loss to Baltimore on Sunday notwithstanding, has put the team in sole possession of the first Wild Card slot. That's a spot that many may have thought the Rays would own going into this year, but instead they're 2 1/2 games behind the A's.

Tampa Bay has certainly noticed how well its opponent has been playing. In fact, David Price, the team's starting pitcher on Monday, said Oakland reminds him of the Rays in 2008, when they came out of nowhere to make the playoffs for the first time in franchise history.

"They have the best starting pitching in the American League and their bullpen is one of the best, as well," Price said. "They throw well, play good defense, and they've got some guys who are stepping up in that lineup right now."

Price is one guy who's stepped up for his own team as of late. The left-hander has won his last six decisions, recording a 1.82 ERA in that span, and held the Orioles to one run in seven innings in his last outing.

Another good start would go a long way in helping the Rays get a win the series opener, and it would be big considering how strong Oakland has been in July.

But though the A's have put themselves in a good position with two months left, manager Bob Melvin likes to say that they just take it one day at a time. Melvin, too, respects Tampa Bay.

"A good team that does a lot of things," Melvin said. "They can pitch, they can hit and run, I think they're first in the league in steals right now. It's always a tough team to try to plan for and attack because they do so many different things and they're a very creative team. So it's a tough team to play."

#### **A's: Griffin goes for fourth win**

- To oppose Price, the A's will send rookie A.J. Griffin to the mound. The right-hander has gone six innings in each of his six career starts, and hasn't allowed more than three runs in any of them. He picked up his third win in his last start on Wednesday against the Blue Jays.

- Oakland announced on Sunday that it had acquired catcher George Kottaras from the Brewers in exchange for Minor League reliever Fautino De Los Santos. With two catchers already on the roster, it seems likely that either Kurt Suzuki or Derek Norris will be moved off when a corresponding move is made on Monday.

- The A's overtook the Angels for second place in the AL West after Saturday and remained in second going into Monday, thanks to the Rays' two weekend victories in Anaheim.

"It makes you feel good, especially the way we've been playing, but our focus still needs to be on today's game," Melvin said on Sunday. "You start thinking about 30 games from now, and I think that is a distraction. But you can't help but notice where we were in the standings today."

#### **Rays: Price looking forward to pitching in Coliseum**

- Known as one of the more pitcher-friendly parks in baseball, the Coliseum has made for plenty of low-scoring games this season. Price, naturally, is looking forward to toeing the rubber in Oakland.

"I guess the only dislike is that it's a long way from the dugout," Price said of the walk to the mound. "It's a big field. A lot of foul territory. It's definitely a pitcher's park. I don't have anything to complain about."

- Tampa Bay's relievers have allowed just one run in their last 29 2/3 innings, and had the best ERA [1.69] in the AL since the All-Star break going into Sunday.

#### **Worth noting**

- The A's are in the midst of a stretch of 17 straight games against teams from the AL East. Oakland welcomes the Blue Jays for a series after playing Tampa Bay.

- Rays closer Fernando Rodney recorded his 30th save of the season on Sunday, putting him in a tie for second in the Majors. He's one save behind leader Joel Hanrahan of the Pirates.

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# Nothing to it, as ailing Hellickson outduels Greinke

*By Bill Chastain*

ANAHEIM -- Joe Maddon wasn't blowing smoke when he said, "I'm happy to have Jeremy Hellickson pitching for us."

That remark from the Rays manager came in response to repeated questions about the Rays having to face Zack Greinke, who was making his first start for the Angels on Sunday after getting traded out West from Milwaukee on Friday.

All Maddon's guy did was fight off nausea to match the former Cy Young Award winner inning for inning until the Rays finally generated some offense en route to a 2-0 win.

"Hellickson had as good or better stuff than [Greinke] did today, for me," Maddon said. "From where I'm watching, I'm talking fastball, I'm talking changeup, his curveball today. ... Greinke's good, but I like our guys a lot, too."

By winning, the Rays claimed the weekend series with their second straight shutout while moving to 4-2 on the current road trip and 53-49 on the season.

Rays pitchers have now posted 23 consecutive scoreless frames. Posting back-to-back shutouts is a feat that has been performed just four times in franchise history. Coincidentally, the last time Rays pitchers turned the trick was May 9-10, 2008, against the Angels.

Hellickson allowed no runs on two hits while striking out five in six innings to earn his sixth win of the season. And he would have pitched longer had he not been sick. The Iowa native fought nausea from the time he took the mound.

"First inning, I actually threw up on the mound," said Hellickson, who noted that he threw up "five or six times" on the day. "Then I threw up in the dugout a couple of times. ... Got a little light-headed later in the game."

Maddon had to walk a fine line, balancing Hellickson's problem against how well he was pitching, which is why Maddon pulled him after 86 pitches. The 2011 American League Rookie of the Year earned the praises of Angels manager Mike Scioscia for his performance.

"Well, he changed speeds as well as you can," Scioscia said. "I think early we hit some balls hard. We had, probably the first three innings we hit three or four balls right on the screws right at guys and made some nice plays. After that, he settled down and pitched six strong innings. Good changeup, good fastball, mixed in some good breaking balls. He pitched a terrific ballgame, no doubt about it."

After both pitchers had posted five zeros on the board, Elliot Johnson blooped a double into right field off Greinke to lead off the sixth.

Desmond Jennings tried to bunt Johnson over to third, but his two-strike attempt rolled foul for the first out.

Would the failed sacrifice haunt the Rays? Against a pitcher like Greinke, any mistake can be magnified. So what did the Rays do? They made another blunder when the next hitter, Sam Fuld, hit one back to Greinke, who fielded the ball and turned to catch Johnson running on the hit. But Johnson managed to stay in a rundown long enough for Fuld to make it to second base to effectively negate the mistake.

"Off the bat, I'm thinking the ball is ticketed for center field," Johnson said. "... I realize, you're technically supposed to wait and see if it goes through. But if you hesitate and it gets through, you're probably going to get held up at third. So as soon as the ball was hit, I was going."

"Greinke snagged it somehow. Then my job was to stay in the rundown as long as I could. And Sam did a great job of getting over there and I stayed there long enough for him to get there."

Ben Zobrist followed by hitting a chopper toward the mound. Greinke jumped to make the play, but the ball just got over his glove to put runners at first and third for Matt Joyce.

Joyce came through by lacing a single through the right side to put the Rays up 1-0.

The Angels tried to answer in the sixth, getting a runner to second with one out. Hellickson responded to the challenge by striking out Maicer Izturis and retiring Howie Kendrick on a groundout to end the inning.

Carlos Pena doubled down the right-field line to open the seventh and he moved third on a groundout. With Jose Lobaton hitting, Greinke then uncorked a wild pitch, allowing Pena to score the Rays' second run.

Greinke took his first loss in an Angels uniform despite allowing just two runs over seven innings and striking out eight. Since the beginning of the 2008 season, the Rays have gone 35-14 against teams starting a former Cy Young Award winner.

Kyle Farnsworth, Joel Peralta and Fernando Rodney covered the final three innings. Rodney, who earned his 30th save of the season, escaped a ninth-inning jam by getting Albert Pujols to hit into a game-ending double-play with two runners aboard.

"They're picking us up right now," said Johnson of the Rays' pitching. "Hopefully we can score some runs and give them a little bit of coasting time, a little bit of breathing room. It's almost like we're getting them two, then saying, 'OK guys, go get 'em.' Eventually we will pick them back up. But that's kind of how the team is built and I think everybody understands that."