



Clips
(July 26, 2013)

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FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

Angels rediscover their offense, beat Oakland Athletics, 8-3

Albert Pujols has three of the Angels' 12 hits, and the team mounts a seven-run outburst in the fifth and sixth innings to back a strong effort by C.J. Wilson.

By Mike DiGiovanna

July 25, 2013, 11:35 p.m.

OAKLAND — The Angels scored as many runs in the fifth and sixth innings against the Oakland Athletics on Thursday night as they did in their previous four games combined. They had more hits with runners in scoring position (six) in the game than they totaled in their previous eight games (five).

The floodgates didn't open — the Angels didn't come close to their season highs for runs and hits — but the offense definitely flowed more freely in an 8-3 victory in the opener of a crucial four-game series against the American League West-leading A's at the Oakland Coliseum.

Albert Pujols had three hits and two runs batted in, and J.B. Shuck had two hits and scored three runs to lead a 12-hit attack that produced a four-run fifth inning and a three-run sixth for the Angels, who moved to within 10 games of Oakland.

The Angels scored 19 runs in the previous nine games. They were six for 11 with runners in scoring position Thursday after going five for 55 in those situations in the previous eight games.

"We had a great approach with runners in scoring position," Manager Mike Scioscia said. "We've been setting the table; we just haven't cashed in the way we need to. Tonight, we did. We showed enough patience to get into some good counts."

The beneficiary of the breakout night was C.J. Wilson, who gave up three runs and five hits in seven innings to improve to 11-6 on the season and 7-1 with a 1.96 ERA in his last eight starts.

The left-hander wasn't as sharp as he was Saturday in Anaheim, when he blanked the A's on three hits for 8 1/3 innings; he needed a season-high 123 pitches and walked three while striking out six.

"But he stuck it out and gave us seven strong innings," Scioscia said. "It was a grind for him. He wasn't as locked in tonight. It showed up in his pitch count, his ball-strike ratio and first-pitch strikes. He had to work harder for outs tonight."

Likewise, the Angels didn't crush the ball offensively. There was only one extra-base hit, Mark Trumbo's two-run double to cap the fifth. But there was plenty of execution and clutch hitting.

Shuck's hit-and-run single to center in the fifth put runners on first and third for Mike Trout, who hit a sacrifice fly to make it 2-2. Pujols singled, and Josh Hamilton, who missed the previous three games because of a stiff right ankle, singled for a 3-2 lead. Trumbo's double to left-center made it 5-2.

After Hank Conger and Erick Aybar opened the sixth with singles, Shuck beat out a perfectly placed sacrifice bunt attempt for a single to load the bases. Conger scored on wild pitch, and Trout and Pujols hit run-scoring singles for an 8-2 lead.

Pujols, who hit a two-out, run-scoring single in the third, is 11 for 29 since the All-Star break, raising his average from .249 to .259.

"The big thing for us, when you look at the way we broke the game open, was execution," Wilson said. "We had the hit-and-run single, got a bunt down, scored on a wild pitch, had a sacrifice fly. ... We scored a lot of runs without a home run, and that's a good thing to get our mojo going."

Angels lose some scoring power by hitting a lot of solo home runs

Among many reasons the Angels have struggled is that more than two-thirds of their home runs are hit with the bases empty. Their 100 double-play grounders don't help.

OAKLAND - The Angels aren't getting much bang for the buck, and not only because sluggers Albert Pujols and Josh Hamilton, who are signed to a combined \$365 million in contracts, have underperformed.

Of the 108 home runs the Angels hit entering Thursday, 73 came with the bases empty, the third-most solo shots in the American League. Their percentage of home runs that came with the bases empty — 67.6% — is the highest in the league.

"If a few more of those came with guys on base, we might have some more wins," said first baseman Mark Trumbo, who leads the team with 22 home runs, 15 of them solo shots. "You take what you can get, but it would be nice if more of them came with two or three runners on. It's the weird nature of the game sometimes."

The Angels entered Thursday ranked fourth in the AL in average (.265) and slugging (.423), fifth in on-base percentage (.327) and eighth in home runs and runs (443). They ranked 10th with a .256 average with runners in scoring position.

But one reason the bases are often empty for home runs is that the Angels lead the major leagues with 100 double-play grounders.

Of Pujols' 17 home runs, 11 were with the bases empty. Mike Trout had 16 home runs, 12 of them solo shots. Hamilton had 14 home runs, eight solo.

"I think some of it is timing and some of it is cyclical," Manager Mike Scioscia said. "The batter's-box productivity, that power we can bring into a game, hasn't fully materialized the way we hoped it would."

On the move

General Manager Jerry Dipoto said this week that bouncing Garrett Richards back and forth between the rotation and bullpen "is not appealing." Richards, however, doesn't seem to mind.

Richards welcomed the move to replace struggling Joe Blanton in the rotation for Saturday's game, even though it means moving from relief to starting for the second time this season.

"I'm excited," said Richards, who could improve his chances for a 2014 rotation spot by pitching well. "I feel like this is an opportunity to show what I can do. Every opportunity is an audition for a job. ... I'm going to try to fill up the strike zone and go right after guys."

In two big league seasons, Richards is 4-5 with a 4.92 earned-run average in 16 starts and 2-4 with a 4.57 ERA in 55 relief appearances.

Blanton, who is 2-13 with a 5.66 ERA, declined to comment about his demotion to a foreign role. He has nine relief appearances in nine seasons.

"His stuff could play in the bullpen," Scioscia said. "We all feel Joe needs to be taken off that treadmill of banging into a wall and just exhale a little bit."

Short hops

The Angels designated pitcher Billy Buckner for assignment to clear a spot for reliever J.C. Gutierrez, who was claimed off waivers from Kansas City on Wednesday. ... The Angels acquired minor league outfielder Julio Concepcion and right-hander Andres Perez from the New York Mets for a \$360,500 international slot bonus.

FROM THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Angels enjoy singles night

By JEFF FLETCHER / ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

OAKLAND – Yes, runs are runs, and the Angels will take them any way they can get them.

But the way they scored their runs in an 8-3 victory over the Oakland Athletics on Thursday was particularly comforting to Manager Mike Scioscia because they did exactly what they hadn't been able to lately.

They parlayed 11 singles and one double into a robust offensive output by doing all the little things and by coming through in the clutch.

The Angels had been 7 for 63 (.111) with runners in scoring position over the previous nine games, but they were 6 for 11 on Thursday night, and that didn't even include driving in a run with a sacrifice fly.

"We've been setting the table and haven't cashed in," Scioscia said. "Tonight we needed to and we did."

The Angels put the game away with four runs in the fifth and three in the sixth. They did it by stringing together one quality at-bat after another, without a single ball going over the fence.

"Our patience at the plate was balanced with the fact that when there was a mistake we didn't miss it," Scioscia said. "There's no magic formula. But I liked the quality of at-bats, especially with runners in scoring position."

Albert Pujols provided three of the singles, two that drove in runs. Since having four days to rest his foot at the All-Star break, Pujols is 11 for 29 (.379) since the break.

C.J. Wilson picked up the victory, allowing three runs in seven innings. Wilson is 7-1 with a 1.96 ERA in his past eight starts.

The Angels beat the Athletics for the third time in their four meetings since the All-Star break. They have three more with the Athletics and then six with the second-place Texas Rangers in the next two weeks.

"It's huge," Wilson said. "We have to win every game, if we can win against Oakland and Texas it's even better. We have a long road to go. There's no way of sugar coating or making it look rosy. We are way down in the standings. We have to put it together, otherwise it's going to be a long offseason."

Miller: Angels' Cowgill keeps looking forward

By JEFF MILLER
COLUMNIST
ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

He was the starting center fielder, hit a grand slam – something no player ever had done in his first game as a New York Met – and heard the fans in the bleachers behind him chant his name.

"Welcome To New York," trumpeted the New York Times the next morning, and if you don't think opening day was a long time ago, consider that Collin Cowgill's recent arrival in Anaheim could have been, comparatively speaking, signaled less by a trumpet and more by a kazoo.

"Obviously that was a special day, one of the highlights of my career, but that was also in April and we're almost into August," the newest Angels outfielder says. "It's time to move on and try to make some new highlights."

At least he's in the right place now with the Angels, who've spent this entire season trying to move on.

In a strange way then, this stranger among them already is the perfect Angel, the player who best embodies a team that opened the season on a high note only to follow with a series of flat ones.

Cowgill emerged in spring training as the Mets' unexpected starter in center, his head-first, dirty-uniform style drawing comparisons to Lenny Dykstra. "The new Nails?" asked a New York Post headline.

He shined as the Mets embarrassed the San Diego Padres, 11-2, on Opening Day. Manager Terry Collins praised Cowgill for the Ruthian way he seized his first chance. One Mets blogger noted that Cowgill had the skills "to become a dynamic catalyst" for New York.

First impressions in baseball can be great at foretelling the future but also at overselling the present.

Two weeks later, with Cowgill struggling, Collins promised reporters "we're going to keep running him out there." Cowgill started five more times before the Mets decided to run him someplace else – out of town.

They accepted an Angel minor leaguer in exchange for Cowgill, and a player who began as a star in the Big Apple suddenly was a sub in the impending Big Pumpkin, the Angels desperately trying to prevent their season from striking midnight.

"Whatever is supposed to happen, whatever's in the cards for me, is going to happen," Cowgill says. "I'm just going to go out each day and be me."

How long ago was opening day? The Angels were in first place back then, unbeaten at 1-0, having defeated the Cincinnati Reds.

Their best hitter that afternoon was Chris Iannetta. Their winning pitcher was Mark Lowe. Manager Mike Scioscia called the extra-inning victory "a great character game."

Ah, right. What was that saying about first impressions in baseball again? Yes, we said *MarkLowe*. That's how long ago opening day was.

"You're going to have good days and bad days," Cowgill says. "No matter what, you have to just kind of get rid of them and move on to the next day."

Or the next town. The Angels are his fourth team since December 2011. Cowgill has been traded three times. He never has had as many as 105 at-bats in a season.

So Cowgill, 27, is a player who has had a lot of opportunities but not many actual chances. He could view baseball as the most agonizing sport on earth. Instead, he joined the Angels and, in his first interview, declared it to be "the greatest game in the world."

That's a healthy perspective and a welcomed one around here, the stumbling Angels having sucked so many of the silver linings out of this summer.

"There's no sense in looking at it any other way," Cowgill says. "Anytime you get traded, you're going to a team that wants you. The team you're leaving might just not be the right fit, that's all. There's no point in looking at it negatively."

This is a player who once was described by one of his minor league managers as having "no ego, other than the drive to be successful," a player who is 5-foot-9 but attempts to stand taller through his effort, a player strung so tight competitively that he missed 80 games in Single-A after, in a fit of frustration, punching a wall.

So Cowgill has had enough ups and downs to attach too much significance to either.

"This game is hard enough," he says. "If you start looking at all the different scenarios, playing time and all that stuff, it's just wasted energy, wasted time."

There's no point in doing anything then but looking forward. There's certainly no value in continuing to look back, back to an opening day that provided a real memory but a false foundation.

Cowgill was a promising Met and the Angels a budding contender. Fortunes have changed just slightly since.

OK, that's enough about the past. It's not worth harping on opening day 2013 any longer. But it is worth noting the date of the event.

It was April 1, April Fools' Day.

Angels Afterthoughts: Props for Butcher

by Jeff Fletcher

* **Angels pitching coach Mike Butcher** has taken a lot heat for the performance of the pitching staff over the past couple of years, but he got a nice shout-out from C.J. Wilson tonight.

Wilson had given up two runs on four hits and three walks in his first four innings. He said that's when he talked to Butcher about what he felt was going wrong.

"He gave me a mechanical adjustment," Wilson said. "That made a big difference and everything synched up from there."

Wilson has been sizzling lately – going 7-1 with a 1.96 ERA over his past eight starts – but this one was not nearly as neat as some of his recent outings.

"C.J. had trouble with first-pitch strikes, had trouble with ball-strike ratio, but he seemed to make pitches to get out of jams or minimize damage," Manager Mike Scioscia said.

* **Earlier this month in Seattle**, the Mariners played an exaggerated shift to the right side against Hank Conger, which Conger said no team had ever done before.

Tonight, the A's did it to him when he came to bat with no one in the sixth inning. Conger yanked a ground ball to the right side, but it still got through for a hit.

One of Shuck's hits was on a hit-and-run, which was executed perfectly to help the Angels avoid a double play and spark their four-run fifth inning.

* **J.B. Shuck had a rough week**, failing to come through in clutch situations in the late innings on Monday and Tuesday, but he helped make up for it with a good night tonight.

Shuck beat out the back end of a potential double play in the third, which extended the inning long enough for him to score the game's first run on an Albert Pujols single.

In the fifth, with the Angels trying to stay out of a double play, Shuck executed a hit-and-run perfectly, singling into center field and sending Erick Aybar from first to third, which sparked a four-run inning.

In the sixth, Shuck was called on to sacrifice and he bunted so perfectly that he beat it out for a hit.

Shuck also made a nice throw to the plate in the fourth inning, but Chris Young just beat catcher Hank Conger's tag.

* **J.C. Gutierrez gave up one hit in a scoreless inning** in his Angels debut. He was hitting 95 mph with his fastball.

"Nice delivery, power arm," Scioscia said. "The ball came out hot. Hopefully he'll have a good role in our bullpen."

* **Josh Hamilton returned to the lineup** after missing three days with a sore right ankle. Hamilton's at-bats were nothing special – he went 1 for 5 with an RBI and hit into a double play – but Scioscia was encouraged to see that the ankle didn't affect his running. Hamilton scored from first on Mark Trumbo's double in the fifth.

Richards grateful for return to Angels rotation

By JEFF FLETCHER / ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

OAKLAND – Garrett Richards is finally going to get another chance to show if he can turn potential into performance, and he knows it.

"I feel like this is an opportunity to go out and show them what I can do," said Richards, who will rejoin the Angels starting rotation Saturday, in place of Joe Blanton. "Every opportunity I feel like is an audition for a job, whether that is in the starting rotation or the bullpen or even on the team. I'm just going to go out and pitch."

Richards has the best velocity and movement of any of the 10 pitchers who have started for the Angels this season, but he has been inconsistent in his young career. He has a 4.78 career ERA.

Manager Mike Scioscia said one of the issues is the Angels have asked Richards, 25, to learn in the majors instead of the minors.

"As a young pitcher, it's tough to develop in the major leagues, but he's helped us out in the 'pen and as a starter," Scioscia said. "What he needs to do is control counts more often so he can bring his secondary pitches in the game. He has terrific stuff but has to get into good counts on a consistent basis so that stuff will play. At times, that's been a challenge, as it is for most hard throwers."

Richards has made no secret of the fact he prefers to start. He said he feels more comfortable pitching out of the windup and having a predictable routine between starts.

"I like to have my bullpens in between my starts and to be able to get my lifts and stuff in," Richards said. "So for that aspect of it, I'm excited to be able to get back on my normal program I've done through the minor leagues and even in the big leagues. I like that routine much better."

Whether that comfort level will lead to better results remains to be seen. As a starter he has a 4.92 ERA and opponents have hit .265 against him. As a reliever it's 4.57 and .283.

Richards said the only adjustment he needs to make from his earlier four-start trial — when he had a 5.54 ERA — is to be more aggressive.

"Just not to be too fine," he said. "Fill up the zone and attack guys, go right after them."

BLANTON OUT

Blanton refused to speak to reporters, but Scioscia said Blanton "understands" the decision to take him out of the rotation.

Scioscia said Blanton will be available out of the bullpen and he'll work on fixing the command issues that have led to his 5.66 ERA.

"There's no doubt we all feel Joe needs to be taken off that treadmill of banging into a wall and just exhale a little bit," Scioscia said.

It's unclear just how Blanton will be used out of the bullpen. It will be an adjustment period for Blanton, who has made only nine relief appearances in his career.

GUTIERREZ ARRIVES

J.C. Gutierrez, who was claimed on waivers from the Kansas City Royals on Wednesday, joined the Angels on Thursday.

Scioscia said Gutierrez's role will evolve as they get a better look at him. He is a power pitcher who relies mostly on a fastball and slider. Gutierrez had a 3.38 ERA with the Royals this season, an improvement over the 4.79 ERA he had in the majors before this season.

Gutierrez said he had been working on keeping the ball down in the strike zone.

Billy Buckner was designated for assignment to make room for Gutierrez. This is the second time he has been designated this season.

MINOR TRADE

The Angels acquired two minor leaguers from the New York Mets in exchange for a portion of the Angels' international signing bonus allotment. The Mets can now spend an extra \$360,500, which is deducted from the Angels' allowance.

No cash goes from the Angels to the Mets. In exchange for the bonus allotment, the Angels got outfielder Julio Concepcion and right-hander Andres Perez. Concepcion will be assigned to Rookie League Orem and Perez will report to the Arizona League.

On deck: Angels at A's, Friday, 7 p.m.

By JEFF FLETCHER / ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Where: O.co Coliseum

TV: Fox Sports West

Did you know: The Angels have won series from four of the six first-place teams (Detroit Tigers, St. Louis Cardinals, Boston Red Sox, Oakland Athletics) in the past month.

Numbers game: 33 — One-run games the Angels have played entering Thursday, most in the majors.

THE PITCHERS

JEROME WILLIAMS (5-6, 4.73)

After three consecutive outings in which he allowed 18 earned runs in eight innings, Williams faced the Athletics on Sunday and gave up four earned runs in five innings. Williams might be on a short leash because Jason Vargas could be ready to return to the rotation in two weeks.

- **vs. Oakland:** 3-4, 3.79
- **at O.co Coliseum:** 1-1, 3.38
- **Loves to face:** Seth Smith, 2 for 11 (.182)
- **Hates to face:** Brandon Moss, 4 for 7 (.571)

BARTOLO COLON (13-3, 2.52)

On Sunday the Athletics saw Colon pitch about as well as he could pitch. He threw his third shutout of the season, scattering four hits and walking one. Colon has a 13-start streak of pitching at least six innings and allowing three runs

or fewer. The 40-year-old has been connected to the Biogenesis investigation that resulted in Ryan Braun's suspension.

- **vs. Angels:** 11-6, 3.17
- **at O.co Coliseum:** 14-8, 2.96
- **Loves to face:** Howie Kendrick, 1 for 19 (.053)
- **Hates to face:** Mike Trout, 4 for 11 (.364), HR

Angels open 4-game set with 1st-place A's

Tonight at 7 the Angels will play their 100th game of the season, and they'll be facing the first-place Oakland A's, who lead the Angels by 11 games in the AL West.

If the Angels are going to get back in this race, winning at least of these four games is almost mandatory, and even then they'd still be nine games out.

In the third game of the series, they'll be sending Garrett Richards to the mound instead of Joe Blanton, which is certainly the big news around the club these days.

"I'm excited," Richards said. "This is going to be a chance to improve that part of my game and kind of get back into my routine, as far as starting goes."

Richards spot in the bullpen will be filled by J.C. Gutierrez, who was added to the active roster tonight.

Billy Buckner was designated for assignment, so Blanton likely takes his role as the long man.

For tonight the Angels will start C.J. Wilson, who has won six of his last seven starts. The A's will counter with Dan Straily.

FROM ANGELS.COM

Halos ride huge burst to rout in AL West clash

Seven runs over two innings give Wilson all he needs to earn victory

By Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com | 7/26/2013 2:45 AM ET

OAKLAND -- The ineptitude stayed with the Angels' offense for nine games. It started immediately after a 13-run night at Wrigley Field on July 10, clung to them through the All-Star break and reared its ugly head once again during the first two series of the ceremonial second half, manifesting itself into 2.1 runs per game and a .236 batting average.

Finally, in the fifth and sixth innings at O.co Coliseum on Thursday night -- and in the opener of a seven-game road trip that may define the Angels' season -- they shook it off, compiling seven runs on nine hits to back an effective C.J. Wilson and beat the first-place A's, 8-3.

"We know we haven't scored a ton of runs recently, but the at-bats have been good and the competitiveness has been there," Mark Trumbo said. "You never know. We can go on an absolute tear, and this could be a good start for it."

It's now or never, frankly.

The Angels, 4-3 since the All-Star break despite winning three of four against the A's, still find themselves 10 games back of first place and 48-52 through their first 100 games -- seven games off their 2012 pace at this point. They'll play three more games in Oakland, followed by three others in Texas (56-46).

They either make up significant ground, or they start looking ahead to 2014.

"We have to win every game, but if we can win against Oakland and Texas, it's even better," Wilson said after throwing seven innings of three-run ball. "We have a really long road to go.

"There's no sugar-coating way of making it look like it's all rosy. It [stinks]. We're way down in the standings. We have to really put it together, otherwise it's going to be a long offseason."

Josh Hamilton returned after missing the last three games with a stiff right ankle and Albert Pujols keyed an offense that did most of its damage in the middle innings, going 3-for-4 with a walk to give him a .379 batting average (11-for-29) since the All-Star break.

In the fifth, Mike Trout tied the game at 2 with a sacrifice fly on a long line drive to right field, Hamilton gave the Angels the lead on an RBI single -- his only hit in five at-bats -- and Trumbo provided some cushion with a two-run double in the left-center-field gap, chasing Dan Straily out of the game.

"I felt like up until that point that I was commanding everything pretty good," Straily said, "and then pretty much out of nowhere, I wasn't able to correct myself."

After loading the bases to start the sixth, Hank Conger scored on a Jesse Chavez wild pitch, Trout laced an RBI single to right field after fouling off four straight two-strike pitches and Pujols added another run-scoring single, giving him 1,496 RBIs for his career and all the Angels would need.

Over that previous nine-game stretch, the Angels batted .176 (13-for-74) with runners in scoring position.

On Thursday, when only one of their hits went for extra bases, they went 6-for-11.

"We had a great approach with runners in scoring position tonight," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "Albert got us going using the middle of the field and a lot of hits just kept on going. We've had issues with guys in scoring position. We've been setting the table; we just haven't cashed in the way we need to. Tonight we did."

Wilson had to battle a lot harder than he did five days ago, when he shut out the A's through 8 1/3 innings in what was easily his sharpest outing of the season. By the end of the fourth, he had given up two runs and thrown 91 pitches. Then he stopped aiming his curveball and took advantage of a three-run lead, retiring nine of his next 10 batters and throwing 32 pitches the rest of the way.

Wilson now has a 1.96 ERA in his last eight starts and is 11-6 with a 3.18 ERA on the year.

"It was a battle tonight," Wilson said after tying his season high with 123 pitches. "I didn't have my good stuff. I didn't have my good velocity and these guys just saw me. I had to switch the game plan up a little bit. It looked like they were all looking for breaking balls or something like that with two strikes, so I had to get a lot of strikeouts on fastballs."

Richards gets another chance in starting rotation

By Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com | 7/25/2013 10:50 P.M. ET

OAKLAND -- Garrett Richards has often said he's more comfortable taking the ball every five days as a starting pitcher, and his upside has always pointed in that direction.

Now would be as good a time as any to show what he can do in that role.

The Angels announced after Wednesday's game that Joe Blanton was going to the bullpen and Richards was replacing him in the rotation, starting against the A's on Saturday, despite serving as a reliever for the better part of the last three months. How long Blanton remains in a relative state of limbo and what ripple effects are caused by Jason Vargas' eventual return are unknown at this point.

All the 25-year-old Richards knows is he has a chance -- yet another one -- to prove he can handle the job of starting.

"I feel like this is an opportunity to go out and pitch and to show them what I can do," Richards said when asked if this can be somewhat of a tryout for 2014. "Every opportunity I feel like is an audition for a job, whether that be in the starting rotation or in the bullpen or even on the team. I'm just going to go out and pitch."

Blanton, who refused to speak to the media prior to Thursday's series opener at O.co Coliseum, has a 5.66 ERA in his first 20 starts with the Angels while leading the Majors in losses (13), hits allowed (157) and homers given up (24). Angels manager Mike Scioscia didn't disclose any details about his meeting with Blanton, saying only that the two had "a good conversation" and that the veteran starter "understands."

"Nobody works harder than Joe," Scioscia said, adding that the 32-year-old Blanton "needs to be taken off that treadmill of banging into a wall and just exhale a little bit."

Angels general manager Jerry Dipoto, who signed Blanton to a two-year, \$15 million contract in December, declined to speculate whether Blanton would be a starter in 2014.

"Joe has had a rough year, particularly a rough April and a rough July," Dipoto said. "But there was a five-week stretch into May and the entire month of June when Joe pitched really well. We've seen it. We've seen it in pockets, we've seen it in singular starts, the different ways he can contribute when he's performing the way he can. The move is nothing more than trying to change it up, give the team a new look, a new feel, and just see if we can inject some life."

Richards' stuff has always had life; he's just never been able to put it together.

In 152 2/3 innings from 2011-13, he's posted a 4.78 ERA with a 1.46 WHIP and a surprisingly low 6.1 strikeout-per-nine rate. In that span, Richards has been given 16 starts -- towards the end of 2011, in the middle of '12 and in late April of '13 -- and posted a 4.92 ERA, very rarely showing glimpses of how good he can be.

How can he be better this time around?

"Just not be too fine," Richards said. "Just fill up the zone and attack guys. Just go right after them."

Gutierrez ready to play role in Angels bullpen

OAKLAND -- It had been a long 10 days for reliever J.C. Gutierrez, from the time the Royals cut him on July 14 until the Angels finally claimed him off waivers on Wednesday.

"It was a lot of time gone after I got designated for assignment," Gutierrez said. "I was thinking a lot and talking to my agent. He said, 'Be good, keep working hard and someone will claim you.'"

Familiarity eventually worked in Gutierrez's benefit. From 2009-11, he appeared in 143 games for the D-backs -- finishing 59 of them while posting a 4.62 ERA -- and Angels general manager Jerry Dipoto worked in that front office.

Dipoto likes Gutierrez's stuff -- a fastball that consistently sits in the mid-90s with a curveball and slider he considers above-average -- and was intrigued by his bounce-back 2013 season for a crowded Royals bullpen, where Gutierrez posted a 3.38 ERA in 29 1/3 innings.

On Thursday, the Angels guaranteed him a spot in their upstart bullpen, designating right-hander Billy Buckner for assignment in order to create room on the active roster. Gutierrez doesn't have a concrete role yet, but he's capable of pitching two innings at a time.

"I'm really happy to be here," said Gutierrez, who had Tommy John surgery late in 2011 and struggled mightily in the Minors in '12. "Jerry knows me from the Diamondbacks, and he told me he's happy to have me on this team."

Constant adjustment part of Trumbo's offensive game

OAKLAND -- The ebbs and flows of a season are inevitable, and for Mark Trumbo, a power hitter with a long swing, they're even more pronounced. But that doesn't mean he doesn't feverishly look to make adjustments with his swing.

Few are more analytical about that component than Trumbo.

"I want to be a productive player, so I spend a lot of time thinking about what I can do to be better," Trumbo said. "I do make quite a few adjustments. It might not always look like it, but I'm always thinking about how I can get better."

Trumbo's most recent one -- the one that had him riding three straight multihit games heading into Thursday -- involves him getting his foot down earlier and going back to the swing he deployed in his final Minor League season of 2010.

Trumbo preferred not to get into the details of that new swing, but lately, he's been unafraid to go the other way and, as a byproduct of getting the foot down earlier, has sacrificed some power for more contact.

"This is a nice combination, but ultimately what I would like to see is me checking off a lot of pitches that I can't get to," Trumbo said. "That's going to be a very good indicator to me."

It's been an up-and-down season for the right-handed-hitting Trumbo, who entered the seven-game road trip with a .250/.314/.476 slash line and a team-leading 102 strikeouts. But he's made noticeable improvements in his defense at first base and right field, he's on pace for another 30-homer season -- while currently leading the Angels with 22 -- and he's already surpassed his previous career high in walks, with 37.

"It goes in waves, like anything," Trumbo said of drawing walks. "I wish I was a guy who walked 100 times a year, but the reality is, I've had to work pretty hard to improve upon it. I'm trying to pick my spots for it."

Worth noting

- The Angels sent \$360,500 in international slot bonus money to the Mets in exchange for two Minor Leaguers, outfielder Julio Concepcion and right-hander Andres Perez. Concepcion will be assigned to rookie-level Orem, and Perez goes to the Arizona Summer League. The Angels don't physically give the Mets any money; they simply have that much less to spend for the rest of this international signing period.
- Jason Vargas (blood clot in left armpit area) is closer to getting in a rehab assignment than Sean Burnett (left elbow impingement), but it's still "going to take a little more work for Jason," Scioscia said. Both continue to throw bullpen sessions.
- Peter Bourjos (right wrist) is still hopeful of being cleared to swing a bat on Saturday.

Angels have tough test against A's, red-hot Colon

Williams out for redemption in rematch of Sunday's contest

By Quinn Roberts / MLB.com | 7/26/2013 2:00 AM ET

Though the Angels were all smiles after Thursday's 8-3 win against the A's, things could change drastically come Friday's contest in Oakland.

That's because Bartolo Colon will be on the hill for the A's. Not only did the right-hander carve up the Halos last season, going 2-1 with a 1.66 ERA in three starts, he dominated them in one start this season.

Facing the Angels on Sunday, Colon had his best outing of the season, tossing a four-hit shutout. He also struck out two and walked five for his 13th victory of the season.

"He just knows how to pitch. He made pitches," Angels outfielder J.B. Shuck said after Sunday's game. "He knew what he needed to do to get outs, located well and made pitches when he had to."

The 40-year-old has tossed six or more innings and allowed three runs or fewer in each of his last 13 starts, which is the second longest such streak by an A's pitcher since at least 1916. He's also 10-1 with a 1.62 ERA during that stretch.

Meanwhile, Angels right-hander Jerome Williams will be out for a little payback after getting roughed up by Oakland in his last start.

He allowed six runs (four earned) on eight hits in five innings of work on Sunday for his sixth loss of the season. Pitching into the fifth inning just once in July, Williams' ERA has ballooned from 3.21 to 4.73.

However, Williams and manager Mike Scioscia felt he had a better rhythm throughout the game, something he had trouble with at the beginning of the month.

"I thought he threw the ball well," Scioscia said after the contest. "If you look at the line score, it doesn't look really healthy, but I thought Jerome threw the ball very well. He had both sides of the plate going, just not a lot of luck."

Angels: Gutierrez ready to help bullpen

After being cut by the Royals on July 14 and then claimed off waivers by the Angels on Wednesday, reliever J.C. Gutierrez is ready to make his mark in the bullpen.

"It was a lot of time gone after I got designated for assignment," Gutierrez said. "I was thinking a lot and talking to my agent. He said, 'Be good, keep working hard and someone will claim you.'"

On Thursday, the Angels guaranteed him a spot in their bullpen, designating right-hander Billy Buckner for assignment in order to create room on the active roster.

They wasted no time using him, having him pitch the ninth inning of Thursday's game, in which he allowed one hit.

A's: Vogt recalled

Oakland placed catcher John Jaso on the seven-day disabled list with a concussion and recalled catcher Stephen Vogt from Triple-A Sacramento on Thursday.

Jaso exited Wednesday's series finale against the Astros in the eighth inning with a headache after he was hit in the mask by a foul tip for the third time in four games.

"Nowadays, there's more evidence and more scrutiny put upon those types of things," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "In the past, you kind of just played through these things and I think it's shown with some injuries, head injuries in the past, that you do need to be more careful with it."

Melvin said he anticipates the seven days will be enough for Jaso to recuperate. He must spend a minimum of seven days on the DL, and he will be transferred to the 15-day DL if he hasn't healed after 14 days.

Worth noting

- Angels starter Jason Vargas (blood clot in left armpit area) is closer to getting in a rehab assignment than Sean Burnett (left elbow impingement), but it's still "going to take a little more work for Jason," Scioscia said. Both continue to throw bullpen sessions.
- The A's have scored 62 runs in 10 games against the Angels this year.
- Colon is 11-6 with a 3.17 ERA in 22 career starts against the Angels.

FROM YAHOO! SPORTS

Angels Team Report

Garrett Richards has been hoping for another chance to start for months, and Joe Blanton's struggles have finally helped him get it.

Richards, one of the most enigmatic pitchers on the staff because his results don't match his raw stuff, will go into the rotation in Blanton's spot, starting Saturday.

"I feel like this is an opportunity to go out and show them what I can do," Richards said. "Every opportunity I feel like is an audition for a job, whether that is in the starting rotation or the bullpen or even on the team. I'm just going to go out and pitch."

Richards has a career 4.78 ERA in parts of three seasons spent bouncing between the rotation and the bullpen. He's got a 4.92 ERA as a starter and a 4.57 ERA as a reliever, but he said he prefers to start.

"I'm excited," Richards said. "This is going to be a chance to improve that part of my game and kind of get back into my routine, as far as starting goes."

Manager Mike Scioscia said one of Richards' challenges has been that the Angels, because of their needs, have had him pitching in various roles in the majors instead of developing in the minors.

"What he needs to do is control counts more often so he can bring his secondary pitches into the game," Scioscia said. "He has terrific stuff, but he has to get into good counts on a consistent basis so that stuff will play. At times, that's been a challenge, as it is for most hard throwers."

Record:

48-52

Streak:

Won two

Past 10 Games:

4-6

NEXT: Angels (Jerome Williams, 5-6, 4.73) at Athletics (Bartolo Colon, 13-3, 2.52)

Player Notes:

- RHP Joe Blanton, who lost his job in the rotation to RHP Garrett Richards after going 2-13 with a 5.66 ERA in 20 starts, was in the bullpen Thursday night for the first time this season. Manager Mike Scioscia said he has yet to pinpoint Blanton's role but has no doubt he needed to be removed from the rotation. "We all feel that Joe needed to be taken off the treadmill, just banging into a wall, and maybe just exhale a little bit," Scioscia said. "If he throws strikes and has the ability to get strikeouts with his other pitches, we'll see how his stuff plays out in the bullpen. I don't think we need to commit to any role right now. We'll let the flow tell us what his best role will be."
- RHP Garrett Richards will go into the rotation in RHP Joe Blanton's spot, starting Saturday. "I feel like this is an opportunity to go out and show them what I can do," Richards said. "Every opportunity I feel like is an audition for a job, whether that is in the starting rotation or the bullpen or even on the team. I'm just going to go out and pitch." Richards has a career 4.78 ERA in parts of three seasons spent bouncing between the rotation and the bullpen.
- RHP J.C. Gutierrez, who was claimed off waivers Wednesday from Kansas City, made his Angels debut Thursday, pitching a scoreless ninth inning in an 8-3 win over the A's. "Nice delivery, nice power arm," manager Mike Scioscia said. "The ball came out hot, and hopefully he's going to have a good role in our bullpen." In 25 relief appearances for the Royals, Gutierrez went 0-1 with a 3.38 ERA. He struck out 17 and walked eight. To make room for Gutierrez on the 25-man roster, the Angels designated RHP Billy Buckner for assignment.
- RHP Billy Buckner was designated for assignment Thursday, opening a roster spot for RHP J.C. Gutierrez, who was claimed off waivers Wednesday from Kansas City. Buckner went 1-0 with a 4.67 ERA in seven appearances with the Angels, including two starts. He struck out seven, walked seven and allowed five home runs over 17 1/3 innings. The Angels signed him on Nov. 13.
- RF Josh Hamilton (right ankle stiffness) returned to the starting lineup Thursday against the A's after missing three games. Hamilton, who received a cortisone injection earlier in the week, hit fourth in the lineup and played right field. When he woke up Monday morning, Hamilton's right ankle was sore. He was scratched from the lineup that night against Minnesota. An MRI revealed inflammation, and X-rays were negative. Hamilton went 1-for-5 with an RBI against Oakland.
- LHP C.J. Wilson improved to 11-6 on Thursday night, allowing three runs on five hits over seven innings in an 8-3 victory over the A's. Wilson is 7-1 over his past eight starts. He struck out six and walked three Thursday, beating the A's in back-to-back starts. He threw 123 pitches, tying his season high. "It was a battle tonight," Wilson said. "I didn't have my good stuff, I didn't have my good velocity, and these guys just saw me. I had to kind of switch the game plan up a little bit."
- RHP Jerome Williams will make his second consecutive start against the A's on Friday. He took the loss Sunday vs. Oakland, allowing six runs in five innings. In 12 games (eight starts) against the A's, Williams is 3-4 with a 3.79 ERA. Williams has allowed at least four earned runs in each of his four starts in July. He's 0-3 with a 14.54 ERA during that stretch.

Quote To Note:

"We all feel that Joe needed to be taken off the treadmill, just banging into a wall, and maybe just exhale a little bit. If he throws strikes and has the ability to get strikeouts with his other pitches, we'll see how his stuff plays out in the bullpen. I don't think we need to commit to any role right now. We'll let the flow tell us what his best role will be."

—Manager Mike Scioscia, on demoting RHP Joe Blanton.

Medical Watch:

- RF Josh Hamilton (sore right ankle) missed the July 22-24 games. He had X-rays July 23, which came back negative. An MRI exam showed inflammation but no significant injury. He rejoined the lineup July 25.
- LHP Jason Vargas (blood clot in left armpit) was placed on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to June 18. He had surgery June 26. He resumed his throwing program July 9. He threw a bullpen session July 23, his first time on the mound since the operation. He could return to the big-league rotation in mid-August.
- LHP Sean Burnett (left elbow impingement) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to May 27. Burnett came off the disabled list May 21 after sitting out 22 games with left forearm irritation. He started playing catch June 2, but his elbow was not responding, so he went to see Dr. James Andrews, who recommended he shut it down until mid-July. He began playing catch again July 9 after taking a month off from throwing. He threw a bullpen session July 23, his first time on the mound in six weeks. As of July 23, Burnett was still at least two weeks away from rejoining the bullpen.
- RHP Ryan Madson (Tommy John surgery in April 2012) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to March 22, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on June 25. He threw a simulated game April 19. He had scar tissue removed from his elbow in late April. He threw a bullpen session May 4, and he pitched in an intrasquad game at extended spring training May 9. He began a rehab assignment with Class A Inland Empire on May 13, but he hasn't pitched since that day. He experienced soreness in his elbow May 22, scrapping plans for him to begin a rehab assignment with Triple-A Salt Lake. He resumed throwing in late June. He threw a bullpen session July 4. He has made progress throwing off a mound in Arizona. He could be getting close to pitching in a rehab assignment in the minors, manager Mike Scioscia said.
- CF Peter Bourjos (broken right wrist) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to June 30. He has been running in Arizona. He hopes to be cleared to begin swinging a bat July 27.
- RHP Robert Coello (right shoulder inflammation) went on the 15-day disabled list June 11.
- LHP Andrew Taylor (torn left labrum) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to March 22, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on April 9.

Athletics Team Report

The A's went 77 days without placing a player on the disabled list, their second-longest such streak since 1990, but on Thursday, the team had to put catcher John Jaso on the seven-day concussion DL.

Jaso was hit on the top of the catcher's mask by foul tips three times this week, and he had to leave games Tuesday and Wednesday because he felt fuzzy. He also had a headache Wednesday and was checked by a doctor before the team's flight home from Houston.

The A's recalled catcher Stephen Vogt, who has been Triple-A Sacramento's best hitter most of the season. He was batting .324 with 13 homers and 58 RBIs for Sacramento. In a stint with Oakland at the end of June and start of July, he hit .154 with a homer and two RBIs in four games.

The A's won all four games in Vogt played, and he also recorded his first big-league hit, a homer.

Another plus with Vogt: At Sacramento, he has thrown out 36 of 61 attempted base-stealers.

Jaso is the first-ever Oakland player on the seven-day DL.

"Nowadays, there's more evidence and scrutiny put upon those things," A's manager Bob Melvin said, a catcher during his playing career. "In the past, you kind of just played through these things, but it's been shown that you do need to be more careful with it."

Record:

59-43

Streak:

Lost one

Past 10 Games:

5-5

NEXT: Angels (Jerome Williams, 5-6, 4.73 ERA) at Athletics (Bartolo Colon, 13-3, 2.52 ERA)

Player Notes:

- RHP Bartolo Colon, coming off a four-hit shutout of the Angels, will start Friday night against Los Angeles for the second time this season. Colon is 11-6 with a 3.17 ERA in 22 career starts against the Angels, one of his former teams. Colon struck out five and walked just one in his victory Sunday at Anaheim, improving to 13-3 on the season and lowering his ERA to 2.52. The shutout was Colon's third of the year, matching his career high from 2002. In each of his past 13 starts, Colon has allowed three or fewer runs and thrown six or more innings.
- C John Jaso went on the seven-day concussion disabled list Thursday after leaving each of the previous two games while feeling fuzzy. Jaso was hit on the top of the catcher's mask by foul tips three times on the A's last road trip. Jaso has reached base safely in each of his 27 starts at catcher, dating to May 4. He's batting .271 with three home runs, 21 RBIs and 38 walks in 70 games overall.
- C Stephen Vogt was recalled from Triple-A Sacramento on Thursday, replacing C John Jaso (concussion) on the roster. Vogt pinch-hit in the ninth inning and flied out to center in the Athletics' 8-3 loss to the Angels. Vogt hit .154 with a home run and two RBIs in four games with the A's—all starts at catcher—during a stint from June 25 to July 3. He was batting .324 with 13 home runs and 58 RBI in 74 games with the RiverCats.
- RHP Dan Straily lost his second straight start Thursday night, both of them to the Angels. He allowed five runs on seven hits and lasted just 4 1/3 innings in the Athletics' 8-3 defeat. The Angels snapped Straily's career-high five-game winning streak on Saturday when they beat the A's 2-0 at Anaheim. "I just wasn't able to command the baseball," Straily said. "I wasn't keeping it down. Up until (the Angels' four-run fifth inning), I felt like I was commanding everything pretty good. Then just out of nowhere I wasn't able to correct myself, and it cost us the ballgame."
- CF Coco Crisp's slump continued Thursday night when he went 0-for-4 with two strikeouts in an 8-3 loss to the Angels. Crisp is batting .180 (20-for-111) over his past 28 games. In his previous 16 games, Crisp hit .361.
- 3B Vinnie Catricala, designated for assignment by the A's on Wednesday, cleared waivers and was outrighted to Double-A Midland. Catricala, 24, hit .238/.307/.327 with four homers and 39 RBIs in 81 Double-A games this season. He was acquired from the Seattle organization in June.

Quote To Note:

"I think he probably lacked a little bit of control with his fastball. It looked like he maybe wasn't hitting the glove as many times as we've seen him here in the past."

—Manager Bob Melvin, on RHP Dan Straily, who gave up five runs in 4 1/3 innings Thursday in Oakland's 8-3 loss to the Angels.

Medical Watch:

- C John Jaso (concussion) went on the seven-day disabled list July 25.
- LHP Brett Anderson (sprained right ankle, stress fracture in right foot) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to April 30, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on June 14. He was cleared to begin weight-bearing activities in early July. He threw at a distance of 120 feet in mid-July. He threw a 35-pitch bullpen session July 22 and came out of it well. He threw a 45-50 pitch session July 24, and he could go on a rehab session soon.
- 2B Scott Sizemore (torn left anterior cruciate ligament) went on the 15-day disabled list April 10, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on April 22. He had season-ending surgery April 16.
- RHP Fernando Rodriguez (torn ulnar collateral ligament in right elbow) went on the 60-day disabled list March 23. He had season-ending Tommy John surgery March 25.
- RHP Andrew Carignan (Tommy John surgery in July 2012) began a throwing program in the fall. The non-roster reliever could be pitching again by midseason if his recovery continues to go well.

Rangers Team Report

Left-hander Derek Holland is earning a new nickname, which he absolutely would love to shed.

Hello there, Mr. Hard Luck.

Holland allowed two runs in 7 1/3 innings Thursday to lower his season ERA to 3.06 and run his streak of quality starts to six over the last month. Oh, yeah, he's also fighting to keep his win-loss record above .500. He fell to 8-6 with a 2-0 loss to the New York Yankees.

For the seventh time this season, Holland received a loss or a no-decision in a quality start. Holland is 0-4 with a 2.92 ERA in those games, with the Rangers scoring a total of 11 runs. In his current six-start stretch, the offense has scored more than two runs just twice.

"I'm not worried about it," Holland said. "My main job is to do as well as I can and give my team a chance to win. I don't ever get caught up in other stuff. I know what our offense can do."

"It's a shame that Derek hasn't gotten the support that we could have given him," said catcher A.J. Pierzynski, who lined out to left fielder Vernon Wells to end the sixth with two runners on base. "He's really stayed the course. He's really turned himself into a pretty darn good pitcher."

That is the silver lining in all of this for the Rangers. This season has turned into a test for Holland's psyche, and he is handling it.

In the previous two seasons, Holland benefitted from outrageous run support. In 2011, Holland received more runs (168) while in the game than any other major league starter. In each of his first four seasons, Holland received an average of more than five runs per game. This year: It is 3.83.

Breaks do not always fall the same way for a pitcher. Some pitchers buckle when in Holland's situation. He's only gotten better.

"He's keeping us in every game," pitching coach Mike Maddux said. "He's showing a lot of maturity."

Record:

Streak:

Lost one

Past 10 Games:

3-7

NEXT: Rangers (Martin Perez, 3-3, 3.40) at Indians (Corey Kluber, 7-5, 3.69)

Player Notes:

- LHP Martin Perez is scheduled to open a three-game set against the Indians on Friday. Perez is 3-3 with a 3.40 ERA in seven starts in 2013. After notching wins in four consecutive games, Perez has dropped his last two, giving up at least four runs in each. Perez has tied or bested his previous strikeout total in each of his starts in 2013 and recorded five in his last start against Baltimore on July 21.
- RHP Colby Lewis (right elbow surgery) is scheduled to make a rehab start on Sunday for Double-A Frisco. Lewis, who has been out since March 22, started his most current rehab assignment on July 17.
- LHP Derek Holland gave up just two runs but picked up the loss on Thursday against the Yankees. Holland gave up eight hits with a walk and struck out two. Holland is winless in his last five home starts, the longest stretch of his career without a win at Rangers Ballpark.
- 3B Adrian Beltre extended his league-best streak without a strikeout to 18 games on Thursday. Beltre was 1-for-4 with a single.
- SS Elvis Andrus extended his home hitting streak to 11 games, seven overall, with a 2-for-4 effort on Thursday against the Yankees.

Quote To Note:

"It's a shame that Derek hasn't gotten the support that we could have given him. He's really stayed the course. He's really turned himself into a pretty darn good pitcher."

—C.A.J. Pierzynski, on LHP Derek Holland, who gave up just two runs but picked up the loss on Thursday against the Yankees.

Medical Watch:

- DH Lance Berkman (inflamed left hip) went on the 15-day disabled list July 7. He took batting practice July 22. Berkman doesn't have a timetable but hopes to return soon.
- RHP Colby Lewis (right flexor tendon surgery in July 2012) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to March 22, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on June 6. He began throwing live batting practice April 8, and he pitched in extended spring training May 4. He began a rehab assignment with Triple-A Round Rock on May 9, but his rehab was then shut down due to triceps soreness. Lewis began a new rehab assignment with Double-A Frisco on May 20, and he started for Round Rock on May 25. On May 28 the team shut him down due to muscular soreness in the back of his right elbow. He was given a platelet-rich-plasma injection. He threw a bullpen session June 17. He did some long-tossing June 25 in Arlington, then threw bullpen sessions in late June and early July. He threw live batting practice July 9. He started a rehab assignment on July 17. He made a rehab start July 22 for Double-A Frisco and will make another one July 28.
- LHP Matt Harrison (lower-back soreness) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to April 7, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on May 25. He had surgery April 23 to repair a herniated disk. He underwent a second operation May 1. He was playing catch from flat ground as of mid-June and as of July 9 has started to play catch off a

mound. He threw live batting practice July 24 and is expected to throw again July 27. He could begin a rehab assignment the next week.

- RHP Nick Tevesch (inflamed right elbow) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to July 6.
- LHP Michael Kirkman (recurrence of cutaneous lymphoma on right triceps) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to June 7, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on June 12. The cancer, which will be treated with radiation sessions, was found during a routine screening in May by Rangers doctors. He was first diagnosed with skin cancer in the same area in January 2012.
- RHP Neftali Feliz (Tommy John surgery in August 2012) went on the 60-day disabled list March 24. He has started throwing off a mound in Arizona. Feliz threw his third bullpen session June 26 but will only throw fastballs. He was throwing bullpen sessions but not facing live hitters as of July 18.

Blue Jays Team Report

There was supposed to be more of what Mark Buehrle gave the Toronto Blue Jays on Thursday.

Buehrle and the rest of the rebuilt starting rotation was supposed to be much better than it has been.

When Buehrle shut out the Houston Astros 4-0 on two hits it was only the second complete game by the Blue Jays' starting staff this season, both shutouts. R.A. Dickey went the distance in beating the Tampa Bay Rays 3-0 on June 26 at Tropicana Field.

Buehrle's timing was good -- it snapped the Blue Jays' season-long, seven-game losing streak.

The Blue Jays are pretty well out of contention for a playoff spot that it was built to reach this season. They were 46-55 after Thursday's win and last in the American League East.

"We know the situation we're in, it's not a good spot but we've got to go out there and battle every night for the rest of the season," Buehrle said.

As a staff the Blue Jays have had eight shutouts when six combined efforts between the starters and relievers are included.

The Blue Jays now have as many complete games this season as their opponents -- two. They have been shut out seven times.

The shutout knocked Buehrle's earned-run average down to 4.50.

But the Blue Jays' starting staff is overall 25-37 on the season after 101 games with a .502 earned-run average. That is 29th in the major leagues, ahead of only the Minnesota Twins.

That is not the way it was supposed to be. But there are a lot of things that have not worked out for the Blue Jays this season.

Record:

46-55

Streak:

Won one

Past 10 Games:

2-8

NEXT: Astros (Jordan Lyles, 4-4, 4.78) at Blue Jays (R.A. Dickey, 8-11, 4.75)

Player Notes:

- RHP Brandon Morrow (forearm) is expected to be out for about six weeks after he was diagnosed with an entrapped radial nerve in his right forearm. The diagnosis made by Dr. James Andrews on Wednesday. Morrow will begin a throwing program once the soreness subsides. Morrow, 29, is 2-3 with a 5.63 ERA in 10 starts this season. He has been on the disabled list since May 29. "The thinking is hopefully when the six weeks is up he starts getting on the mound and so when he leaves at the end of the season he goes into the offseason knowing where he's at and feeling good about it anyway," manager John Gibbons said.
- RHP R.A. Dickey will be trying to snap a three-start losing streak when he pitches the second game of a four-game series against the Houston Astros on Friday at Rogers Centre. It is the first meeting of the season against the teams. The knuckleball pitcher has not won since going seven innings in an 8-3 verdict over the Detroit Tigers on July 1. He is 0-3, 5.68 ERA, in three starts since. He is 2-2 with a 3.50 ERA in eight appearances against the Astros, including six starts.
- 3B Brett Lawrie will see most of action at third base from now on, manager John Gibbons said before Thursday's game with the Houston Astros. He had been playing second base with the idea of possibly making that a permanent change but some of the plays Lawrie made while playing third base convinced Gibbons that is where he belongs, at least for now. "There might be a time when we move him over (to second) but watching that game (Wednesday night), the plays he makes, I may be dumb but I'm not stupid," Gibbons said. He said that Lawrie could move over to second base on occasions when he starts INF Mark DeRosa at third. "We always have the right to change our minds," Gibbons said. "But we'll see how that plays out."
- LHP Mark Buehrle struck out a season-high nine in recording the ninth shutout and the 29th complete game of his career in a 4-0 win over the Houston Astros on Thursday. It was only the second complete game and second shutout by a Blue Jays starter this season, which shows how disappointing the starters have been this season. RHP R.A. Dickey blanked the Tampa Bay Rays 3-0 on June 26 at Tropicana Field for the other shutout. Buehrle's outing gave the Blue Jays bullpen a breather as well but Buehrle said that did not change his approach. "In your mind you know that the bullpen has been worn out, been used a lot," Buehrle said. "But again I'm going to try as deep into the game as I can anyway." It was Buehrle's first shutout since July 23, 2009, when he pitched a perfect game against Tampa Bay. Buehrle's strikeout total was his highest since April 15, 2005, when he had 12. "I don't know what the strikeout pitch was," Buehrle said. "Just one of those days where I had everything going."
- INF Maicer Izturis snapped a 0-for-14 drought with a two-run single in the seventh inning of Thursday's 4-0 win over the Houston Astros. He has reached base safely in 14 of his past 16 games. With the experiments to try 3B Brett Lawrie at second base over for now, Izturis figures to get most of the playing time at second with Lawrie getting the starts at third.
- 1B Edwin Encarnacion drove in a run with a double in the fourth inning of Thursday's 4-0 win over the Houston Astros. He has 50 RBIs in his past 60 games and 75 for the season.
- RHP Drew Hutchison (Tommy John surgery) pitched four innings Thursday for Class-A Dunedin, allowing one hit, one walk and no runs with eight strikeouts. In three games on his rehab assignment with Dunedin, he is 0-0, 1.04 ERA, in 8 2/3 innings, allowing two hits with 12 strikeouts and one run.

Quote To Note:

"Today was one of those days when obviously I had a lot of stuff working for me."

—LHP Mark Buehrle, who recorded a complete-game shutout win over Houston on Thursday.
Medical Watch:

- RHP Sergio Santos (triceps strain, bone chips in elbow) went on the 15-day disabled list April 15, and he was transferred to the 60-day disabled list May 19. He had surgery May 16 to remove bone chips and shave bone spurs. He began a rehab assignment July 3 in the rookie-level Gulf Coast League, then moved to Class A Dunedin on July 12 and to Triple-A Buffalo on July 18. He pitched again July 23 and 24. There is no date set for his return to Toronto.
- RHP Drew Hutchison (Tommy John surgery in August 2012) went on the 60-day disabled list March 22. He began a rehab assignment with Class A Dunedin on July 14, then pitched for the same team July 20.
- LHP J.A. Happ (sprained right knee, skull fracture, lacerated left ear) went on the 15-day disabled list May 8, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on May 24. Tests indicated he did not sustain a concussion after taking a line drive to the head May 7. He began a rehab assignment July 13 in the rookie-level Gulf Coast League, then pitched July 18 for Class A Dunedin. He moved his rehab to Triple-A Buffalo on July 23.
- RHP Brandon Morrow (entrapped radial nerve in right forearm) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to May 29. An MRI showed no structural damage. He made a rehab appearance for Class A Dunedin on June 17 but was shut down after experiencing renewed forearm discomfort. He resumed throwing on flat ground in late June and had a 25-pitch bullpen session at the Blue Jays' complex in Dunedin, Fla., on July 9. He threw another bullpen session July 12. He is expected to be out until early September after he was diagnosed July 24 by Dr. James Andrews with an entrapped radial nerve in his right forearm. Morrow will begin a throwing program once the soreness subsides.
- LHP Luis Perez (Tommy John surgery in July 2012) went on the 60-day disabled list Feb. 23. He probably won't be available until late in the season. He began a rehab assignment with Class A Dunedin on June 10. He suffered what has been termed a minor setback on his rehabilitation assignment and was shut down June 18. He is scheduled to begin a minor league rehabilitation assignment at the beginning of August and could rejoin the Blue Jays in September.
- RHP Ramon Ortiz (strained right elbow) went on the 15-day disabled list June 4, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on June 26. An MRI on June 4 showed no tear or injury to the ligament.