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**Darvish dazzles D-backs with 14 K's in win
Ties single-game high in 16th career double-digit-punchout effort
By Master Tesfatsion
8/1/2013 11:19 PM ET**

ARLINGTON -- The Rangers didn't get a chance for their fourth consecutive walk-off win. Blame Yu Darvish, who wouldn't stop striking out the D-backs on Thursday. He was electric in his 21st start of 2013, matching a career high with 14 strikeouts in a 7-1 Texas win at Rangers Ballpark in Arlington.

It's the fourth time Darvish has had a 14-strikeout game this season, passing Nolan Ryan for the most times accomplishing the feat in a season in club history. Darvish recorded double-digit punchouts for the 16th time in his career, and fell two short of tying the franchise record for most strikeouts in a game, twice done by Ryan. Darvish is the first pitcher with four 14-K games in a season since Randy Johnson in 2004.

"He was as good as I've seen all year, counting the almost perfect game he threw the first start of the year," catcher A.J. Pierzynski said. "His stuff was just nasty. He's throwing fastballs to the corners, he had a really good split tonight, and obviously he always has his slider. He just kept mixing it up and strikeouts kept coming and coming. Nights like that are fun."

Darvish allowed five hits in seven scoreless innings. With the 14 punchouts, Darvish has the second-most strikeouts through the first 50 career games, 407, among players to debut since 1900, behind Dwight Gooden.

Darvish struck out every hitter in the Arizona lineup except Cody Ross, who went 1-for-3 against the Rangers' ace. He struck out 10 of his first 13 batters and recorded his first six outs on strikeouts, all swinging, in the first two innings while allowing two hits. It marked the third time in his career Darvish struck out the side in consecutive innings.

"I didn't think I was going to get that many strikeouts," Darvish said through an interpreter. "My movement on my slider was really inconsistent. Some were dropping down, some were going sideways. I think that worked in my favor."

His fastball topped at 98 mph against Eric Chavez with two outs in the first. Chavez struck out two pitches later on a 95-mph heater that he tipped into Pierzynski's glove.

"I think the key was when I went on the DL, I tried to do things as far as my delivery and tried many new things to have the delivery that I have right now," Darvish said of his fastball command.

Darvish failed to record a strikeout only in the seventh, which was his final inning. It's also the only inning Darvish allowed two hits, both singles, putting two on with one out. On a night filled with K's, Darvish surprisingly ended his start on a flyout and popout to Jason Kubel and Didi Gregorius. He pounded the strike zone consistently, throwing 78 of his 111 pitches for strikes, and didn't walk a batter.

"He's got good movement on his ball; he's got a lot of different pitches," Adam Eaton said. "As a hitter you've got a lot of different thought processes in the box, and when you hit your spot and have that many pitches, it's tough as a hitter to put the ball in play and get good swings on balls."

The Rangers' left-handed hitters provided the offense with right-handed pitcher Zeke Spruill making his first Major League start. They went 6-for-10 off Spruill in four innings, with three home runs and five RBIs. Pierzynski, Mitch Moreland and David Murphy each hit solo home runs off Spruill.

"We created a lot of opportunities and gave ourselves a lot of chances there," Moreland said. "We were able to push a lot of runs across. With Darvish throwing the ball the way he did, playing like that as a team is definitely a boost and good to take into the road trip."

Leonys Martin hit a two-run double with two outs in the fourth. He slid past the third-base bag in his attempt at a triple and was tagged out to end the inning. Spruill allowed five runs on seven hits in the loss.

Elvis Andrus extended the longest active hitting streak in the Majors to 14 games with a two-out double in the seventh. It started a two-run inning for the Rangers, both unearned.

After Ian Kinsler's walk, reliever Tony Sipp committed a fielding error on a ground ball by Adrian Beltre that rolled down the first-base line. Sipp swiped at the ball in attempt to make the play, but it rolled out of his reach. Beltre was safe at first, paving way for Pierzynski's two-run single.

"It's beginning to be infectious throughout the lineup, and when we can do that throughout the lineup, that's when we're at our best," Rangers manager Ron Washington said. "That's what we've been doing these past four days."

Thursday's game was a makeup of a May 29 contest that was postponed due to field conditions. The Rangers went 4-0 on the homestand, sweeping the Angels and defeating the D-backs. They're now 3 1/2 games behind the A's, who were off Thursday, for first place in the American League West. They'll travel to Oakland for a three-game series starting on Friday as part of a 10-game road trip against three division teams.

"It's nice to be on a win streak and feel good about yourself, but we have to go up in there and continue to play good ball," Washington said on the Oakland series. "They have good pitching, and we have good pitching. We have to continue to do the little things. If we do that, we'll be fine."

Cruz: I'll 'make a decision when I have to make it'

By Master Tesfatsion

8/1/2013 9:36 P.M. ET

ARLINGTON -- Nelson Cruz remained quiet on any details about Major League Baseball's ongoing investigation with his association to the Miami-area Biogenesis clinic.

"I've heard a lot of stuff, but I cannot comment," Cruz said. "It's something that I have to make a decision when I have to make it."

Cruz did not comment on the possible suspension he faces from MLB or when he expects a ruling on the suspension. He remained consistent with his comments earlier this week that he has not made any decision on whether he will accept or appeal any suspension handed down by MLB.

"I haven't made any decisions yet," Cruz said. "I'll let you know when I've made a decision."

Cruz was 5-of-9 with a home run and three walks on the homestand before Thursday's game, and he went 0-for-3 with a strikeout before exiting, as a precautionary measure, with tightness in his left quad.

He had hit safely in three straight games, including a solo home run in the second inning Wednesday against the Angels. The Rangers entered Thursday's game against the D-backs just four games behind the A's for first place in the American League West.

"It's tough," Cruz said on the situation. "We're in a good situation now. We're close to first place and close to the Wild Card also. Hopefully everything plays out well. That's what I hope."

Berkman determined to get bat back in lineup

ARLINGTON -- Lance Berkman plans to continue rehabbing left hip inflammation that caused the designated hitter to contemplate retirement. He met with general manager Jon Daniels before Wednesday's game and felt his return was in the best interest of a club that didn't acquire a bat at the Trade Deadline and could lose Nelson Cruz pending the ongoing Biogenesis investigation.

"I'm coming back, but it just has to get to a point where I don't need a pinch-runner every time I'm on base," Berkman said.

Berkman has felt improvement over the last two days from the injury that put him on the disabled list on July 7. Berkman hit in the cages Wednesday and hit on the field Thursday, but his biggest concern was running. He said he's about 50 percent after running 60-yard strides 10 times Thursday. Berkman said the hip injury crept up on him when he attempted to increase the pace beyond that level.

"It's not unrealistic to expect discomfort from here on out, I've just got to manage it," Berkman said.

Berkman has set a personal goal to begin a medical rehabilitation assignment between Aug. 8-9. He's unsure if he'll hit that goal, but it'd likely make him available for an eight-game homestand that starts Aug. 13 against the Brewers.

"If I can push myself to endure a little discomfort, I'm willing to do that to help my team win," Berkman said.

Sardinas, Odor among trio moved to Double-A

ARLINGTON -- The Rangers promoted three of their top nine prospects to Double-A Frisco from Class A Advanced Myrtle Beach on Thursday. Infielder Luis Sardinas, infielder Rougned Odor and right-handed pitcher Luke Jackson made the jump to the RoughRiders as part of six promotions by the organization.

Sardinas, 20, is ranked as the 77th best prospect in baseball. He hit .297 with a home run and 31 RBIs in 95 games with the Pelicans. He's is the second-best prospect in the organization and the ninth-best shortstop prospect in baseball.

Odor, 19, will be the youngest player at the Double-A level by nearly three months. He's ranked as baseball's seventh-best second-base prospect and the fifth-best prospect in the farm system. He led Myrtle Beach in batting (.304) and stolen bases (27) in 98 games before his promotion. He was part of the Futures Game "Final Vote" this season.

Sardinas and Odor hit 1-2 in Frisco's lineup Thursday, starting at shortstop and second base, respectively.

Jackson, 21, is the ninth-best Rangers prospect and the third-best pitching prospect in the organization. The former first-round pick in the 2010 First-Year Player Draft went 9-4 with a 2.41 ERA in 19 starts. His 104 strikeouts are fourth most in the Texas farm system.

Worth noting

- Adrian Beltre was the unanimous selection as the club's Player of the Month in July. He led the AL during the month with nine home runs. He hit .369 with 19 RBIs in 26 games. He has received the award in four of the last six months dating back to last season.
- The Rangers became just the fifth team in Major League history with three consecutive walk-off home runs. It hasn't occurred since June 26-29, 2004, for the Tigers. It's just the second time this feat occurred in a three-game series sweep, along with the 1999 D-backs.
- The Rangers begin a three-game series with the A's Friday in Oakland. The A's will send out Tommy Milone, Jarrod Parker and A.J. Griffin during the series. The Rangers will counter with Alexi Ogando, Matt Garza and Derek Holland.

Rangers look to gain ground vs. A's in Oakland Ogando heads to the hill for Texas; Milone starts for Athletics By Cash Kruth 8/1/2013 10:28 PM ET

The second-place Rangers went more than a month without gaining ground on the American League West-leading A's. But with four consecutive wins, Texas now has cut into Oakland's advantage for three straight days.

The Rangers have a chance to creep closer to the A's this weekend, as the division rivals open a three-game series on Friday at O.co Coliseum.

The A's have won seven of their last 11 games, while the Rangers are riding consecutive victories for the first time in more than three weeks. Their win over the D-backs in Thursday's makeup game drew them to within 3 1/2 games of the idle A's.

"It's important because they're in first place," Rangers manager Ron Washington said of the upcoming series, one of three remaining on the teams' schedules. "It's not do or die. If we go out there and play our game, we'll take care of business."

While the Rangers were unable to get a bat to go along with recently acquired right-hander Matt Garza before Wednesday's non-waiver Trade Deadline, the A's added infielder Alberto Callaspo on Tuesday from the Angels. Although Callaspo isn't a game-changer, the 30-year-old fits in Oakland's lineup nicely as a platoon mate with Eric Sogard at second base.

Callaspo played third base in Anaheim, but the A's have no worries about Callaspo defensively at second.

"Because that's his natural position, that's where he started out," A's manager Bob Melvin said about why he feels confident with Callaspo at second. "Now there is some uncertainty, obviously, because he hasn't played there a couple years, but he's always been a sure-handed defender. My talk with him this morning was that it doesn't matter where we play him."

The Rangers begin this key weekend series with right-hander Alexi Ogando making his third start since returning from the disabled list. Ogando missed six weeks with shoulder inflammation but said his arm feels strong -- though he's yet to pitch more than five innings since coming back.

Ogando will be opposed by left-hander Tommy Milone, who tossed seven innings of one-run ball and struck out six in his last start against the Angels. Milone owns a 2.97 ERA in his nine home starts, compared with 5.00 in 12 road outings.

Rangers: Walk it off

Before Monday, the Rangers hadn't experienced a walk-off home run in more than a year. They then proceeded to launch walk-off blasts on three consecutive days, becoming the fifth team to accomplish that feat in Major League history. Geovany Soto played the hero Monday, Leonys Martin following suit Tuesday, and Adrian Beltre capped the run on Wednesday.

The only other team to pull that off while sweeping a three-game series was the 1999 D-backs.

- Shortstop Elvis Andrus owns the longest active hitting streak in the Majors at 14 games, although only three of those have been multi-hit efforts. Andrus is 17-for-51 (.333) with four doubles and seven walks during the streak.

A's: Reddick held out Wednesday

Outfielder Josh Reddick was held out of the A's lineup Wednesday after taking a knee to the right side of his head in a three-player collision the night before.

"He came in today with a little bit of a headache, and that's why I scratched him," Melvin said. "We don't feel it's concussion symptoms, but anytime someone comes in with a headache after being hit on the head, you want to be careful with that."

- The A's have posted eight consecutive winning months dating back to last June.

Worth noting

- Oakland's Jed Lowrie is hitting .414 with six RBIs through the first seven games of the club's 10-game homestand.

- The Rangers' Tuesday night extra-inning victory was only the club's second of the season. They are 2-7 in such contests.

FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

Yu Darvish fans 14 as Rangers have cakewalk, not walk-off

Posted Friday, Aug. 02, 2013

BY DREW DAVISON

ARLINGTON — Yu Darvish didn't think he'd rack up the strikeouts Thursday night.

He had better command of his four-seam fastball in his last start, in his opinion, but he made up for it by locating it in key situations and mixing in a slider that confused batters once again.

That proved to be the perfect formula for Darvish, who matched a career-high with 14 strikeouts and led the Texas Rangers to a 7-1 victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks at Rangers Ballpark.

Texas won its fourth straight, and headed to Oakland after the game trailing the A's by 3 1/2 games in the American League West.

"Today was a great game," first baseman Mitch Moreland said. "A lot of guys pitched in, and Darvish threw unbelievably."

The Rangers have seen Darvish turn in gems like this before. After all, his last 14-strikeout performance came against the same D-backs on May 27 in Arizona.

That's just one of the many notable items from Thursday's game, including:

- Darvish set the franchise record with four starts with at least 14 strikeouts in a season. He passed Nolan Ryan, who did it three times in 1990.
- Darvish is the first pitcher to strike out at least 14 Diamondbacks in a start twice in a season. He's also the first pitcher since interleague play began in 1997 with multiple games of at least 14 strikeouts against the same opponent.
- To put his four 14-strikeout games in perspective, only two other pitchers in the big leagues have at least 14 strikeouts in starts this season. Chris Sale of the White Sox had 14 on June 14, and Anibal Sanchez of the Tigers had 17 on April 26.
- Darvish has recorded at least 10 strikeouts in 16 of his first 50 starts, second most in the modern era (since 1900). Dwight Gooden had 20 in his first 50 starts with the Mets in 1984-85.

"His stuff was just nasty," catcher A.J. Pierzynski said. "He was throwing fastballs to the corners. He had a really good split tonight, and a really good slider. He just kept mixing it up and the strikeouts kept coming."

Fittingly, Darvish started the game by striking out Gerardo Parra on a two-seam fastball, and his first six outs and 10 of his first 11 came on strikeouts.

Darvish had at least two strikeouts in his first six scoreless innings, and then worked around a pair of singles in a scoreless seventh that featured no strikeouts.

Darvish exited after 111 pitches, 78 for strikes, and the seven innings were the longest he's gone since June 13. He picked up his 10th win by scattering five hits with no walks. Nine of his strikeouts were swinging. He also recorded seven of them on sliders, five on four-seam fastballs and two on two-seam fastballs.

"I didn't think I was going to get this many strikeouts," Darvish said. "But my movement on my slider was really inconsistent. It dropped down, some were going sideways, and I think that worked in my favor."

It certainly left the Diamondbacks hitters guessing.

"As a hitter, you've got a lot of different thought processes in the box," Arizona outfielder Adam Eaton said. "When you hit your spot and have that many pitches, it's tough as a hitter to put the ball in play and get good swings on balls."

With Darvish's dominant performance, there was no need for more walk-off magic by the Rangers, who had three consecutive walk-off homers going into the game.

The long-ball trend continued, however, beginning with Pierzynski's solo homer in the second. Moreland led off the third with a homer, and David Murphy had a two-out solo shot in the fourth for a 3-0 lead.

The Rangers pushed it to a 5-0 lead with two more runs in the fourth on a two-run double by Leonys Martin, and added two more unearned runs on a two-run single by Pierzynski in the seventh.

"Our offense has woken up," manager Ron Washington said. "We knew it was in there, just a matter of it coming out. It's beginning to be infectious throughout the lineup and when we do that throughout the lineup, that's when we're at our best."

Rangers notes: Berkman puts off retirement

Posted Thursday, Aug. 01, 2013

BY JOHN HENRY

Special to the Star-Telegram

ARLINGTON — Texas Rangers designated hitter Lance Berkman said Thursday that he has shelved thoughts of retirement and will proceed with rehabilitation on his lingering hip injury with visions of a return later this month.

Berkman said he hopes to begin a rehabilitation assignment next week, perhaps Aug. 8 or 9.

That timetable depends on whether he can run the bases, which he can't do at full speed. He labeled himself "50 percent" as a base runner.

"I'm coming back, it's just a matter of how long to get where I don't need a pinch runner when I get on first base," said Berkman, who has missed 22 games with left hip inflammation. He took batting practice before Thursday's game against Arizona.

Team management and Berkman were encouraged when the switch hitter hit in the indoor cages on Wednesday without any issues.

Berkman said hitting from the right side causes him some discomfort, but the 37-year-old added that at this point "it's unrealistic to expect that I wouldn't be playing with discomfort from here on out. It's managing the discomfort," he said.

Berkman said he considered retiring, citing the frustration and mental grind of dealing with injury and the realization that he might not be able to compete at this level because of it.

An upbeat Berkman said he is resolved to finish the season.

"I've made up my mind that this is what this team needs to happen and I'm going to do my dangdest to give them everything I've got," Berkman said.

Cruz update

Nelson Cruz remained in right field for the Rangers while awaiting word on what seems inevitable: a suspension of as many as 50 games imposed by Major League Baseball for a connection to the Biogenesis performance-enhancing drugs scandal.

Various reports over the past several days indicated that an announcement could be made as early as Friday.

Cruz could appeal a suspension, though any delay into next season would almost certainly cause a negative effect on negotiations on a new contract in the off-season when he is a free agent.

Cruz said he hasn't made any decisions about an appeal if or when the decision is made.

"It's tough, I mean, we're in a good situation now, we're close to first place and close to the wild card also," Cruz said. "Hopefully everything plays well."

Lewis close

Right-handed pitcher Colby Lewis, coming off elbow surgery and now triceps tendinitis, said he is ready with complete confidence that his stuff is capable of getting big-league hitters out.

He'll make what is expected to be his final rehabilitation start on Saturday in Frisco.

What his role with the big-league club will be is the next question. Lewis acknowledged as such on Thursday, noting that the Rangers' current rotation of Yu Darvish, Derek Holland, Alexi Ogando, Matt Garza and Martin Perez has been effective.

"I'm going to do what ever they ask me to do," said Lewis, who is slated to throw 90 pitches against the San Antonio Missions on Saturday. "It doesn't matter what role that is. As long as I'm active out there trying to contribute."

Briefly

- On this weekend's series with AL West leader Oakland, manager Ron Washington said: "It's important because Oakland is in first place, but it's not do or die."
- Adrian Beltre was selected Rangers player of the month after hitting nine home runs, 19 RBIs and 13 extra-base hits.

Rangers 7, Diamondbacks 1 AUGUST 01, 2013

ARLINGTON, Texas – Yu Darvish matched a career high with 14 strikeouts and A.J. Pierzynski had three hits, including a home run, and three RBIs in the Texas Rangers' 7-1 victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks on Thursday.

Darvish allowed five hits over seven innings and struck out 12 of the first 18 hitters he faced in helping the Rangers pull within 3 ½ games of Oakland, which was idle.

The AL West division rivals open a three-game series on Friday in Oakland.

Darvish (10-5) has a major-league best eight games with 10 strikeouts or more this season.

In 50 career starts, Darvish has 16 games of 10 or more strikeouts, second only to Dwight Gooden in the modern era of major-league history. Gooden had 20 games in 1984-85.

Darvish's fourth career game with 14 strikeouts matched a career high set this season and is now the most in club history.

Nolan Ryan had three in 1990.

Zeke Spruill (0-1) took the loss in his first career major-league start. Spruill allowed five runs on seven hits in four innings.

Martin Prado accounted for Arizona's only run, an RBI single in the ninth off Joakim Soria.

Pierzynski led the Rangers' offense, going 3-for-4 with a home run and two-run single in the seventh.

Leonys Martin had two RBIs and David Murphy and Mitch Moreland had one each in the Rangers' 11-hit attack.

Solo home runs by Pierzynski and Moreland in the second and third innings gave the Rangers an early lead. Texas broke open the game with three in the fourth, all with two outs.

Murphy, who was 3-for-4, smacked yet another solo home run to left-center field.

Jurickson Profar kept the rally alive with a single to center, and Moreland was hit by a pitch to put runners on first and second for Martin, who cleared the bases with a double to left-center.

Martin was thrown out trying to turn his extra-base hit into a triple.

Darvish, meanwhile, was in charge, striking out five of six in the third and fourth innings.

Suspension talk not keeping Nelson Cruz out of lineup AUGUST 01, 2013

Suspension talk not keeping Nelson Cruz out of lineup

Manager Ron Washington continues to write Nelson Cruz's name in the Texas Rangers' lineup, and intends to do so until he hears otherwise.

Cruz is one of several big leaguers linked in the Biogenesis of America scandal, as the now defunct anti-aging clinic in South Florida reportedly supplied him and others with banned substances. There have been multiple reports that MLB intends to hand down suspensions to the players involved in the coming days, and Cruz is well aware of that.

"I've heard a lot of stuff, but I cannot comment on something that I have to take, a decision when I've got to take it," Cruz said.

Cruz reiterated that he has not made a decision as to whether he would appeal or take a suspension should one come his way. If he appeals, the process would likely drag out long enough that he could play the rest of this season without penalty. However, that option and a possible suspension going into the 2014 season would significantly hurt his value on the free agent market this winter.

If Cruz chooses to serve his suspension this season, it likely will keep him out the rest of the regular season. The Rangers have played 108 games so far, and the suspension has been speculated to be 50 games, the standard penalty for a first time offense if a player fails a drug test.

But MLB could force Cruz into a corner by saying they would seek a longer penalty if chooses to appeal it because it falls under a non-analytic positive test, not a standard failed drug test.

Cruz admitted those circumstances have weighed on his mind, and have made the potential decision more difficult.

"It's tough, I mean we're in a good situation now," Cruz said. "We're close to first place and close to the wild card also. Hopefully everything plays well."

Rangers general manager Jon Daniels spoke to reporters Wednesday, and said Cruz had not informed the team of his plans to accept or appeal a potential suspension. He also said the team receives most of their information about the Biogenesis scandal through media reports.

-- Drew Davison

Lance Berkman: I'm coming back AUGUST 01, 2013

Lance Berkman: I'm coming back

Lance Berkman sounded upbeat and optimistic that he would return this season before taking batting practice on Thursday afternoon. He even threw out a target date of Aug. 8 or 9 to begin a medical rehabilitation assignment.

Berkman, 37, has been weighing the idea of retirement since landing on the disabled list on July 7 with left hip inflammation and playing with a surgically-repaired right knee, but rehab has progressed better the past couple of days.

"I'm going to do my dangdest to," Berkman said.

Berkman said he had grown frustrated when rehab and treatment didn't seem to be working, but he is beginning to see signs of improvement. He said that, more than the three straight walk-off wins, is why he has become more optimistic about returning.

Berkman had been down on the idea of going on a rehab assignment, but knows it's necessary after missing more than a month on the field. The Rangers are simply hoping he can return and give him what he gave them in April -- a .319 average, eight extra-base hits and 15 RBIs.

-- Drew Davison

Rangers announce several minor league transactions AUGUST 01, 2013

Rangers announce several minor league transactions

The Texas Rangers had several moves down on the farm today. They are the following:

* Infielders Luis Sardinas and Rougned Odor, right-handers Francisco Mendoza, Jon Edwards and Luke Jackson promoted from High A Myrtle Beach to Double A Frisco.

* Infielders Odubel Herrera and Hanser Alberto, right-handers Kevin Pucetas and Nick McBride transferred from Frisco to Myrtle Beach.

* Right-hander Carlos Pimentel promoted to Triple A Round Rock from Frisco.

* Right-hander Cody Kendall activated from disabled list at Low A Hickory, and promoted to Myrtle Beach.

* Catcher Eli Whiteside activated from DL at Round Rock, and catcher Brett Teschner transferred to Short A Spokane.

-- Drew Davison

DALLAS MORNING NEWS

Grant: Yu Darvish's performance is becoming mundane, the Rangers' offense finally isn't

By EVAN GRANT

Published: 01 August 2013 11:10 PM

Updated: 01 August 2013 11:49 PM

ARLINGTON — Yu Darvish struck out 14 Arizona batters on Thursday night, but this, quite frankly, is becoming so regular as to be almost mundane. After all, it was his fourth 14-strikeout game of the season.

Let's talk, instead, about a really special development: The arrival of a relaxed and confident offense. Consider it the carryover from winning three consecutive games with walk-off homers.

In beating Arizona 7-1 Thursday to sweep their brief four-game homestand, the Rangers scored early, remained hungry to pad the lead and converted two-out opportunities at a great rate. They went 6-for-13 with two outs, and each of the last five runs began with a two-out hit.

They finished the homestand with 27 runs in four games. They had scored 25 runs in the previous 10 games.

"It can be infectious throughout the lineup," manager Ron Washington said of hitting. "Our offense has woken up. We knew it was there."

"It's awesome to see that we're using every last out we have to score runs," said David Murphy, who had three hits, including a homer, all with two outs. "We got an early lead and continued to add to it. That's something we haven't done much of. Things are going well right now. And when things go well, everything is easy."

The win moved the Rangers' within 3 1/2 games of AL West leader Oakland, the Rangers' first stop on a 10-game road trip that begins Friday.

And while the offensive outburst was significant, the foundation for the win was still laid by Darvish's performance. He again showed exceptional command of his fastball, which, in turn, made his slider that much more effective. Darvish spent his two-week disabled list stint tinkering with his fastball, and the results since he returned have been impressive.

While throwing fastballs or cutters 69 percent of the time, he's allowed just one run in 19 1/3 innings while striking out 19. Using the fastball to set up his devastating slider has been much more effective than letting hitters sit on the slider and react to more occasional fastballs.

As a result, he recorded his first six outs via strikeout, eight of the first nine and 10 of the first 12. When he was done after seven innings with 14 strikeouts and no walks, he became the first Rangers' pitcher to have at least four games with 14 strikeouts in one year. Nolan Ryan had three in 1990.

"It was as good as I've seen all year," catcher A.J. Pierzynski said of the fastball command. "He moved to both sides of the plate. In that situation, you just try to keep him going."

"It wasn't as good as my last start," said Darvish, who lost 1-0 in his last start at Cleveland. "But when I needed to throw it, I was able to execute it."

It allowed the offense to relax even more. Pierzynski homered with one out in the second to give the Rangers a lead. Mitch Moreland, who had been in a 0-for-23 slump until Tuesday, homered to start the third.

And then came the two-out hits. Murphy homered with two outs in the fourth. No. 8 hitter Jurickson Profar singled, and Moreland was hit by a pitch. Leonys Martin followed with a double that scored both runners and might have led to an even bigger inning, but he was thrown out after over-sliding third base.

In the seventh, with Darvish having just completed his last inning of work, Elvis Andrus delivered a two-out double to start a rally that led to a bases-loaded double by Pierzynski.

With the Biogenesis Clinic suspensions expected to be handed out by Monday, it was significant that Murphy had a big night, that Moreland continued to emerge from his slump and that Andrus continued his two-week hot streak. All three will be called on to play larger roles if Nelson Cruz is suspended.

“When you feel comfortable up there, it doesn’t matter how many outs there are,” Andrus said. “You stick to your plan and you execute.”

Cowlshaw: There is absolutely no need for Alex Rodriguez to receive a lifetime ban

By TIM COWLISHAW

Published: 01 August 2013 11:04 PM

Updated: 02 August 2013 01:37 AM

There was a time when there was no more easily lucrative job than being the agent for Alex Rodriguez. Now when you see the words “Alex Rodriguez’s representatives” scroll across your television screen, it’s to update the player’s hopes of avoiding expulsion from the game.

Technically, I suppose those attorneys are doing just fine. It’s just a different sort of representation.

From home run champ and MVP to the most disgraced player in the game, it has been one magnificent fall for one of the most talented players in baseball history.

Major League Baseball came close to doing the unthinkable this week. The game’s authorities — we might as well just say commissioner Bud Selig — sought a lifetime ban that would run the risk of making Rodriguez a sympathetic figure, if not now than sometime in baseball’s future.

And you could place that right alongside A-Rod’s three MVPs or his five home run titles in terms of amazing achievements.

It seems most likely now that A-Rod will accept some sort of suspension in the one-year range or perhaps from now through the end of the 2014 season as a result of MLB’s investigation into performance-enhancing drug use by players through Miami’s Biogenesis Clinic.

And that’s fine. That does the trick. There is absolutely no need for a lifetime ban.

Keep Rodriguez off the field for all or most of 2014 and he will have missed two seasons. He will be 39 years old. We have seen the decline of his body and his skills for several years. There isn’t much left, and there’s no threat that — if anyone’s still worried about this — he will surpass Barry Bonds as the all-time home run king. Rodriguez is 115 behind the former Giant.

Of course, as recently as five or six years ago Rodriguez was viewed as the “clean” answer to the “dirty” Bonds, and I suppose that’s one of the things that makes Selig and baseball fans hold A-Rod in such low regard.

It is one thing to cheat and lie. It’s another to put on a phony façade that fools people for years before the lying and cheating are discovered.

To Bonds’ credit (if you can call it that), he never spent five minutes trying to polish his image. For the narcissistic Rodriguez, nothing has ever been more important.

It all started to unravel when he got to Texas. In Seattle, Rodriguez was the greatest young player the game had seen for years, maybe ever. He should have won the MVP in 1996, a season in which he turned 21 in July. He was a fabulous combination of size, speed and grace at shortstop.

But money changed everything with A-Rod, and although he hit like no Ranger ever had — winning home run titles from 2001-03 with 52, 57 and 47 — his record-breaking contract, his relationship with owner Tom Hicks, his aloofness from teammates and his special requirements outweighed performance.

Making out lineup cards for manager Jerry Narron probably falls under the category of “unnecessary.”

Rodriguez has been forced to acknowledge he began using steroids while in Texas. He said the pressure of the 10-year, \$252 million contract made him do it. Of course, A-Rod opted out of that deal in New York when he could, and of course he let that announcement leak out on the last day of the 2007 World Series to grab the spotlight once again.

Now the Yankees are stuck with the final four years and \$86 million of that record-breaking deal, although the combination of suspensions and insurance to pay for an injured player will soften that blow.

His time as a player of relevance is running out if it's not completely gone already. That's why I think the lifetime ban (if it's more than a negotiating ploy) is a terrible idea.

Selig wants to preserve the integrity of the game to the extent that such a thing is still possible. We look back now on the lifetime bans given out by commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis for the Black Sox Scandal nearly a century ago and wonder if that was too much.

I am far from alone in thinking MLB has made (for a growing number) a sympathetic figure of Pete Rose with his lifetime ban.

If people were to look back in 50 years and see that all of Bonds' records were allowed to stand, that he was never suspended for so much as a game for steroids use and that voters were permitted to consider him for the Hall of Fame while Rodriguez was banned for life, then sympathy for A-Rod would not be out of the question.

And that would be part of the shame of baseball as well.

Even if Alex Rodriguez is banned for life, the Rangers still owe him more than \$40 million

By Evan Grant

11:15 pm on August 1, 2013

If Major League Baseball were to ban Alex Rodriguez for life because of performance-enhancing drugs, the New York Yankees would get off the hook for nearly \$100 million in future salary.

The Rangers would not be so lucky.

The Rangers still owe Rodriguez approximately \$40 million (which will grow to nearly \$50 million by the time it is paid) in deferred money from his original contract. That money was later deferred even further to accommodate his trade to New York. It is to be paid from 2016-2025.

Rangers Pierzynski: No sympathy for penalized PED users

By Gerry Fraley

4:11 pm on August 1, 2013

A.J. Pierzynski has not discussed the Biogenesis scandal with Texas Rangers teammate Nelson Cruz, who faces the possibility of a 50-game suspension for receiving performance enhancing drugs from the defunct anti-aging clinic in Miami.

Pierzynski is adamant on the subject. Those who are found to have violated baseball's Joint Drug Agreement, which prohibits the use of PEDs, deserve whatever punishment they receive.

"The guys who did what they did ... they chose to do that," Pierzynski said. "You can't cry over it. You can't be sorry for anybody. They made the decision, and they are grown men. That's the way it is. That's the way it should be. We want a level playing field. That's the way to do it."

Colby Lewis aims to make last rehab outing on Saturday, but no room exists in Rangers rotation

By Evan Grant

4:04 pm on August 1, 2013

ARLINGTON – RHP Colby Lewis expects that his start for Double-A Frisco on Saturday will be his last before he is ready to rejoin the Rangers.

There is only one problem.

There is currently no place to put him.

"We've got five guys in the rotation who are throwing the ball pretty well right now," said Lewis, who is scheduled to throw 90-100 pitches Saturday. "I assume it will be my last rehab start. I don't think I'm going to need to throw more than 90-100 pitches. I feel like if I'm getting outs and locating my pitches, I can do it at the big league level."

The Rangers, however, currently have five pitchers who are doing it at the big league level in RHP Yu Darvish, LHP Derek Holland, RHP Matt Garza, RHP Alexi Ogando and LHP Martin Perez.

In order to shoehorn Lewis into the rotation, the Rangers would have to move someone out or endure yet another injury. The most likely to be moved out would be Perez, who has minor league options remaining, or Ogando, who has had trouble pitching deep into games. For now, though the Rangers appear to be committed to both. Perez certainly did nothing to hurt his position with 7.1 strong innings against Los Angeles on Wednesday. Ogando is scheduled to start on Friday at Oakland.

Ogando's durability is currently the rotation's biggest issue. In five starts since May 10, his longest outing has been six innings and he's accomplished that just once. He has also spent eight weeks during that time on the DL with shoulder soreness.

If the Rangers wanted to, they could keep Lewis on rehab through August 16, but would still be two weeks shy of being able to expand rosters to the full 40-man list.

Texas Rangers Lance Berkman now resolved to play again this year: "They need a bat and I'm gonna do my dangdest"

By Evan Grant

3:41 pm on August 1, 2013

ARLINGTON – Rangers DH Lance Berkman, who has spent the last four weeks on the DL and pondering retirement, said Thursday that he intends to play again this season.

Berkman also took batting practice for the second consecutive day and made it through 10 60-yard sprints running at about "50 percent," with no significant pain in his inflamed hip. Only when he tried to push harder did he feel any soreness.

Berkman said he has set a goal of August 8 or 9 to begin a rehab assignment with the hope of rejoining the team no later than its return from the upcoming 10-game road trip

"That we didn't trade for anybody and that we still don't know what is going to happen with Nelson [Cruz], I feel like if I push myself and endure a little discomfort, I can get out there and try to do something to help this team win," Berkman said. "I've made up my mind to try and play. This team needs a bat and I'm gonna do my dangdest to make that happen."

Berkman's goal is to simply get to a point where he can manage his pain while running. At best, it will be a situation like that of Adrian Beltre, who has managed sore hamstrings all year. Beltre occasionally can push the hamstrings a bit, but mostly runs at a comfortable speed in order to stay in the lineup..

Diamondbacks' Brandon McCarthy: Texans 'insane' to live in this heat

SportsDayDFW.com

Published: 01 August 2013 04:36 PM

Updated: 01 August 2013 06:44 PM

For those who didn't realize Brandon McCarthy once pitched with the Rangers and resides in North Texas, his tweets before Thursday's game with Texas seemed alarming.

"Ballpark in Arlington is like the surface of the sun right now. You have to be some kind of insane to live here."

He quickly responded to those who showed their concern over his comments on his handle @BMcCarthy32. "Before the idiot wagon stumbles off the track, I live in Dallas."

McCarthy knows a little bit about the the Ballpark in Arlington too. He spent three years with the Rangers, from 2007-09, and two years with the rival Athletics before moving on to the Diamondbacks this year.

ESPN DALLAS

W2W4: Rangers-A's

August, 2, 2013

8:00 AM CT

By Todd Wills | ESPNDallas.com

ARLINGTON, Texas -- Maybe it's too early to call this a pivotal series for the Texas Rangers and Oakland Athletics.

Still, it's pretty big for the Rangers, who go into Oakland for a three-game weekend series trailing the A's by 3 1/2 games in the American League West.

The Rangers can set the tone for what looks like a light schedule in August. After these three games against the A's, Texas doesn't play another game against a team with a winning record until Oakland on Sept. 2.

That's 24 straight games against opponents with losing records, and ugly ones at that (Seattle at 50-57 has the best record of the group the Rangers will see in August). Meanwhile, the A's have 16 games in August against teams that have a winning record.

So win two out of three in Oakland and the Rangers have a big chance to overtake the A's in the AL West.

Here's what to watch for this weekend:

A's out in front: The A's had their lead up to six games in the AL West before back-to-back home losses to the Toronto Blue Jays coupled with three straight wins by the Rangers. Oakland is 7-6 since the All-Star break while the Rangers are 6-8. The A's went 15-10 in July, picking up 4 1/2 games on the Rangers, who were 11-15 for the month. Oakland is a major league-best 43-23 since May 17 with the A's picking up 11 1/2 games on Texas in the standings.

A's bats go cold: The A's hit .222 for July, the worst team batting average in the majors. They scored 3.72 runs per game for the month. They've been shut out three times in their past 17 games. Sounds like a team that's battled cold stretches like the Rangers. The A's managed a winning month in July because of their pitching and patience at the plate. Oakland hitters lead the big leagues with 402 walks.

Close calls: If this weekend's games are close games, flip a coin. The Rangers have baseball's best winning percentage in one-run games at .643. They are 18-10. The A's are next with a .636 winning percentage. They are 21-12 in one-run games. The Rangers are 3-1 against the A's in one-run games this season.

Avoiding Colon: The Rangers will avoid their nemesis Bartolo Colon, who took a no-decision in the A's 5-2 loss in 10 innings to Toronto on Wednesday. Colon is 19-7 against Texas. Instead the Rangers will get left-hander Tommy Milone on Friday and right-handers Jarrod Parker and A.J. Griffin in day games on Saturday and Sunday, respectively. That trio is 5-3 against the Rangers with Milone carrying a 0-3 record and a 4.24 ERA against Texas. Parker is 4-1 with a 2.91 ERA against Texas in his short career. Griffin is 1-0 with a 2.19 ERA.

Can't stop Balfour: He's given the Rangers fits of late and was on the mound when the A's clinched the AL West in the final game of the 2012 season. Balfour is still going strong, though he did have his streak of 44 consecutive saves snapped on July 23 in a 5-4 loss at Houston (it happened on a throwing error by catcher Derek Norris). Balfour still leads the AL in save percentage (96.6 percent) and hasn't allowed a run in 21 of his past 23 appearances. The current Rangers are batting .121 against Balfour. Adrian Beltre, Ian Kinsler and David Murphy all have two hits against him.

Yu Darvish racks up 14 K's again

August, 1, 2013

10:34 PM CT

By Todd Wills | ESPNDallas.com

ARLINGTON, Texas -- Arizona Diamondbacks outfielder Adam Eaton wasn't in the lineup May 27 when Texas Rangers strikeout artist Yu Darvish had 14 K's against the D-backs.

He knows now what his teammates went through that night against Major League Baseball's strikeout leader.

Darvish hit his magic number of 14 strikeouts again in the Rangers' 7-1 victory over the Diamondbacks on Thursday night, the fourth time he has done it this season.

The only other pitchers in baseball to match that total this season are Chris Sale of the Chicago White Sox and Anibal Sanchez of the Detroit Tigers, both of whom struck out 14 once. Darvish has 186 strikeouts, 14 more than the New York Mets' Matt Harvey.

The first two innings told much of the story. Darvish got all six of his outs on strikeouts with three different pitches -- his four-seam fastball, his two-seam fastball and his slider.

"As a hitter you've got a lot of different thought processes in the box," Eaton said, "And when you hit your spot and have that many pitches, it's tough as a hitter to put the ball in play and get good swings on balls."

Five of Darvish's first six punchouts came on swings and misses. Darvish got 14 swings and misses on the night as he made it through seven innings.

Eaton had a one-out single in the first inning on a night when Darvish may have had no-hit type of stuff. The Diamondbacks center fielder said Darvish was effective in the zone with all of his pitches, hitting his spots.

"That's the recipe for a good outing for him," said Eaton, who struck out on a slider in the third inning.

The slider was dastardly for Darvish. He recorded seven of his strikeouts with the pitch. Darvish, who notched his 16th game with 10 or more punchouts, said there was a reason for that.

"My movement on my slider was real inconsistent," Darvish said. "Some were dropping down. Some were moving sideways. That worked in my favor, the inconsistency of my slider."

Darvish was clearly motivated for this start, though he didn't say so after the game. He took a 4-2 lead into the bottom of the eighth of that game in Arizona in late May and gave up a two-run home run to shortstop Didi Gregorius to tie the game. The Diamondbacks eventually won 5-4.

That might help explain why Darvish's fastball was sizzling Thursday night. He got it up to 98 mph against veteran Eric Chavez in the first inning.

"He pounded the strike zone," Texas manager Ron Washington said of Darvish. "He was just outstanding tonight. Everything he threw up there they couldn't get on."

Darvish made his third start since spending the time around the All-Star Game on the disabled list with a muscle issue in his back. He used the time off -- Darvish missed only one start -- to refine his fastball, tinkering with his delivery.

He has made three starts since and allowed one earned run in 19 1/3 innings. He has won twice to improve his record to 10-5. A lot of that has to do with a much improved fastball.

"It's as good of command as it's been," Washington said. "When he wants to get it up to 95 to 96 miles per hour he's been able to do that. The difference right now is the command. He's commanding on both sides of the plate."

Darvish, as he usually does, downplayed the effectiveness of his fastball.

"It was not as good a four-seam fastball as I had in my last outing," said Darvish, who lost a 1-0 game at Cleveland on Saturday. "But I was able to throw that pitch when I needed to in key situations."

Which suggests the fastball was pretty good. At least the Diamondbacks will tell you so.

Rapid Reaction: Rangers 7, Diamondbacks 1

August, 1, 2013

8:56 PM CT

By Todd Wills | ESPNDallas.com

ARLINGTON, Texas -- Yu Darvish had the strikeouts going, and the Texas Rangers have a four-game winning streak. That after Darvish punched out 14 batters in a 7-1 victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks in a makeup game on Thursday night at Rangers Ballpark.

The Rangers head to Oakland for a three-game weekend series just 3½ games behind the first-place Oakland A's after being six back entering Tuesday.

Yu the man: Darvish had his fourth 14-strikeout game of the season and first one since May 27 when he struck out the same amount of Diamondbacks in what turned out to be a 5-4 loss for the Rangers. Darvish lost a two-run lead to the Diamondbacks in the bottom of the eighth in that game. He took it out on Arizona hitters on Thursday. Darvish struck out the side in the first two innings. He had two strikeouts in the next four innings to get him to 14. Darvish finally went an inning without a punchout in the seventh, but worked around two singles with a fly ball to left field and a popup to shortstop.

Low hit game: Darvish allowed five hits in seven innings, the 12th time in 22 starts he has allowed five hits or fewer this season. All five hits allowed by Darvish were singles.

MLB strikeout leader: Darvish has 186 strikeouts to lead the major leagues. He has four games with 14 strikeouts this season. All other big league pitchers have two -- Chris Sale of the Chicago White Sox and Anibal Sanchez of the Detroit Tigers.

More on 14 Ks: Darvish set the Rangers' franchise record for 14-plus strikeout games. Hall of Famer Nolan Ryan had three of them in 1990.

AJP strikes first: A.J. Pierzynski gave the Rangers a 1-0 lead with a home run to center field. It was his 12th home run of the season. Of Pierzynski's 12 home runs, 10 have tied the game or given Texas the lead. Pierzynski's homer traveled 421 feet, his second longest of the season, according to ESPN Stats & Information. Pierzynski also had a two-out, two-run single in the bottom of the seventh to give him 40 RBIs for the season.

Moreland goes deep: Mitch Moreland gave the Rangers a 2-0 lead with a leadoff home run to open the bottom of the third. The home run to left field went 377 feet. Moreland has five hits since the All-Star break and two of them are home runs.

Murphy, Martin break it open: Struggling outfielder David Murphy ignited a three-run fourth inning for the Rangers, belting a two-out home run to right field. It was the longest home run of the night at 426 feet. Murphy finished with a three-hit game. After Jurickson Profar singled and Moreland was hit by a pitch, Leonys Martin ripped a two-run double for a 5-0 lead. Martin made an out at third base when he over-slid the bag trying for a triple.

Profar gets a start: Profar got his first start since July 25 and went 1-for-4. He scored a run in the fourth inning after a two-out single to right field.

Up next: The Rangers hit the road for 10 games with the first three coming this weekend against AL West leader Oakland. Texas right-hander Alexi Ogando (4-3, 3.05 ERA) goes up against A's left-hander Tommy Milone (9-8, 4.03) at 9:07 p.m. on Ch. 21. On Saturday afternoon, Rangers right-hander Matt Garza (7-1, 2.95) takes on A's right-hander Jarrod Parker (6-6, 4.07) at 3:05 p.m. on FOX. On Sunday afternoon, left-hander Derek Holland (8-6, 3.18) will face right-hander A.J. Griffin (10-7, 3.90) on Fox Sports Southwest. All games will be broadcast on radio on ESPN Dallas 103.3 FM and 1540-AM.

No bat, but trade deadline not a failure

August, 1, 2013

6:21 PM CT

By Richard Durrett | ESPNDallas.com

I get it. You wanted a bat. You expected a bat. And when general manager Jon Daniels didn't go and get a bat, you weren't happy about it.

But just because the Rangers didn't get a bat doesn't make the trade deadline a failure. First, this team is better thanks to the acquisition of Matt Garza, who has pitched well in his two Texas starts. I disagree with the notion that Garza had to be the first step and that if the Rangers didn't acquire a bat, it was a pointless deal.

Garza strengthens this team. His presence in the rotation should, in the long run, take a little pressure off the offense. Do they have to score as many runs for Garza as they would have for Nick Tepesch or Justin Grimm, for instance? But this lack of offensive firepower, those three exciting games against the Angels notwithstanding, had Daniels searching far and wide to get a bat with some impact in Arlington. One problem: That impact bat wasn't available at even a moderate price.

Want proof of that? Look at the names that didn't go anywhere. We heard whispers of Alex Rios, Hunter Pence, Jose Bautista, Edwin Encarnacion and even Michael Young. Which GM swooped in with the right offer to grab one of those bats? Nobody. The Pirates could have used a hitter. They weren't willing to pay the price. The Red Sox certainly could have used Young. The right deal wasn't there.

With way more buyers than sellers, the sellers decided they could hike the price with limited inventory out there. That's fine. But if the inventory doesn't come close to the asking price, you just can't buy it. Daniels had to save his prospects for another time, perhaps this offseason. Imagine if he'd dealt a Luis Sardinas or Luke Jackson, two prospects you may not know, but two that would likely come up in discussions for someone like a Giancarlo Stanton and a David Price. Sure, everyone knows Jurickson Profar. But Profar alone doesn't get you either one of those two players. And if they're made available this offseason -- and you never know, they could be -- the Rangers are in better position than most teams to make a big run at them.

Besides, one bat wasn't going to cure an offense that was struggling and could be without Nelson Cruz, assuming that suspension comes down in the next few days and he doesn't appeal it. So the Rangers did the only thing they could -- they reluctantly stood pat. Come August, maybe there's something out there.

But don't say the Rangers failed at the deadline because they didn't overpay for a bat that wasn't of high impact. Blame part of it on the offseason, if you want. That's at least fair. But with no true impact bat available, cashing in your chips on a mid-level hitter would have been the bigger failure.

Buzz: Nelson Cruz in difficult situation

August, 1, 2013

4:58 PM CT

By Todd Wills | ESPNDallas.com

ARLINGTON, Texas -- Texas Rangers right fielder Nelson Cruz again gave no indication Thursday of what his decision will be if Major League Baseball chooses to suspend him in the Biogenesis case.

It's a tough situation, Cruz said, especially with the Rangers starting August four games behind Oakland in the American League West and a half game out in the wild card race.

"I mean we're in a good situation now," Cruz said. "We're close to first place and close to the wild card also. Hopefully everything plays well."

Cruz said he's following media reports like everyone else and speaks with his agent often. He said he can't comment on any of their discussions.

Suspension are expected to be announced in coming days for those with ties to Biogenesis of America, a now-closed Florida anti-aging clinic accused of distributing banned performance-enhancing drugs.

Cruz was asked before Thursday's game if the Rangers remaining in contention in the playoff race will impact his decision to appeal any suspension handed down by MLB.

"I haven't taken any decisions yet," Cruz said. "I will let you know when I take a decision."

Tigers went after Profar: Danny Knobler of CBSSports.com reported Thursday that the Detroit Tigers repeatedly tried to engage the Rangers in attempt to trade for infielder Jurickson Profar. The Rangers declined interest.

Profar, who started Thursday for the first time since July 25, hasn't lost any trade value despite playing sporadically as the Rangers' utilityman. His name was one of the first one to come up in all trade talks involving the Rangers, sources said.

Martin still learning: New leadoff hitter Leonys Martin made a poor read on Elvis Andrus' bloop single in the first inning Wednesday, resulting in an out at third base (even though replays showed he was safe).

Washington said Martin should have made it to third standing up. It was another learning experience for the young outfielder.

"I want him to be aggressive going from first to third," Washington said. "But he would have made it easier if he had made the right move. That was an aggressive mistake right there."

Toaster on in Arlington: It was 100 degrees at first pitch Wednesday and it was even hotter and more humid Thursday as the Rangers went out for batting practice around 4 p.m.

Yes, the Texas heat may officially be here, which is OK with the Rangers leaving town for an 11-day, 10-game road trip to Oakland, Anaheim and Houston.

"The humidity is back," Washington said. "The other days it was hot by not humid. But you're right, we're getting out of here."

Wash on Oakland: Washington was asked about the importance of Friday-Sunday's three-game series at Oakland. The Rangers could go into the weekend 3 1/2 games behind the A's with a win Thursday night against Arizona.

"It's important because they're in first place," Washington said. "It's not do or die. If he go out there and play our game, we'll take care of business."

Berkman determined to play again

August, 1, 2013

4:45 PM CT

By Todd Wills | ESPNDallas.com

ARLINGTON, Texas -- Injured designated hitter Lance Berkman's determination to come back and help the Rangers is growing every day, and talk of his retiring has disappeared.

Berkman talked with general manager Jon Daniels before Wednesday's game and the decision was made for him to keep trying to get back on the field. Berkman's personal goal is to go on a rehab assignment August 8 or 9.

"I'm convinced I can get back in, and hopefully by getting back out there, I'll be helpful by the way I'll be performing," Berkman said. "We'll see what happens. I'm coming back, but it just has to get to a point where I don't need a pinch runner every time I'm on base."

Berkman, out since July 7 with inflammation in his left hip, ran 10 60-yard strides Thursday. He ran at 50 percent and said when he tried to bump it up more than that, the injury crept in.

"If I can push myself to endure a little discomfort, I'm willing to do that to help my team win," Berkman said. "It's not unrealistic to expect discomfort from here on out, I just have to manage it."

Minors: Sardinas, Odor promoted to Frisco

August, 1, 2013

2:23 PM CT

By Todd Wills | ESPNDallas.com

ARLINGTON, Texas -- The Rangers made several moves at their minor league levels Thursday, the big one being the promotion of infielders Luis Sardinas and Rougned Odor to Double-A Frisco.

High-A Myrtle Beach right-hander Luke Jackson, who figured prominently in the Matt Garza trade talks with the Chicago Cubs, will join top prospects Sardinas and Odor with Frisco, as well as right-handers Francisco Mendoza and Jon Edwards.

Infielders Odubel Herrera and Hanser Alberto and pitchers Kevin Pucetas and Nick McBride were transferred from Frisco to Myrtle Beach.

Right-hander Carlos Pimentel, who has come on strong in Frisco, also was promoted to Round Rock.

In other moves, right-hander Cody Kendall was activated from the disabled list at Low-A Hickory and was promoted to Myrtle Beach; catcher Eli Whiteside was activated from the disabled list at Round Rock; and catcher Brett Teschner was transferred to Spokane.

FOX SPORTS SOUTHWEST

Pierzynski plays big role in Darvish dazzler

KEITH WHITMIRE

Published: Thursday, August 01, 2013, 10:22pm

ARLINGTON, Texas – When Rangers pitcher Yu Darvish has his best stuff like he did Thursday, catcher A.J. Pierzynski said his job is fairly easy.

"You just try to keep him going, that's it," said Pierzynski of Darvish, who struck out 14 in a 7-1 win over Arizona. "You could tell kind early on he had it going. You just try to keep him going."

Pierzynski kept Darvish going through seven shutout innings of work, including 111 pitches – 78 for strikes.

It was Pierzynski's first time to catch Darvish since at June 25th game at Yankee Stadium. At the time, a mini-controversy had erupted about Darvish throwing too many breaking pitches.

Geovany Soto caught Darvish's next four starts. Pierzynski said he didn't detect any difference in pitch selection since the last time he caught Darvish.

"Yu's always the same," Pierzynski said. "He pitches the way he wants to pitch and you can't really try to fight that. It's the way he does it, and he does what he does and he's had success. Why would you want to? He's had success his whole life. He's a special talent and I'm glad he's on our side."

Pierzynski contributed on all sides of the win. First by hitting a second-inning homer that gave the Rangers a 1-0 lead. Pierzynski wound up 3-for-4 with three runs batted in.

He also stole his first base since August 21, 2010 – nearly three full years – when he swiped second in the sixth inning without drawing a throw. It was Pierzynski's first career game with both a home run and a stolen base.

"We used to always joke when I was coming up with the Twins to try to fill every column [in the boxscore]," said Pierzynski, who recorded his 14th steal in 16 major league seasons.

"I've been waiting a while to try to get a stolen base. It just worked out tonight where [Jurickson] Profar fell behind in the count and I just went. Luckily there was no throw because I probably would have been out if he would've thrown it."

Darvish piles up 14 strikeouts as Rangers roll on

ANTHONY ANDRO

Published: Thursday, August 01, 2013, 8:59pm

ARLINGTON, Texas – There was no walk-off magic needed for the Texas Rangers Thursday night against Arizona.

Yu Darvish made sure and sprinkled his magic through the first seven innings of the game and that was more than enough as the Rangers cruised to a 7-1 victory over the Diamondbacks.

The victory capped a 4-0 homestand for Texas and closed the gap in the American League West to 3 ½ games, the closest the Rangers have been to Oakland since July 25.

Darvish matched his Major League career high with 14 strikeouts and allowed just five singles in his seven scoreless innings as the Diamondbacks had no answer for the right-hander, who improved to 10-5 on the season.

Darvish threw 78 of his 111 pitches for strikes on his way to making history. He now has the club record for games with at least 14 strikeouts in a season (four), surpassing Nolan Ryan's old mark of three set in 1990. He's also just the third pitcher in big-league history to have at least three 14-strikeout games in a season without allowing a walk.

Darvish has now allowed just 10 hits in 21 1/3 innings since coming off the disabled list after the All-Star break and has 29 strikeouts.

"I didn't think I was going to get this many strikeouts," said Darvish, who has reached double figures in strikeouts in 16 of his 50 Texas starts. "My movement on my slider was consistent. Some were dropping down. Some were going sideways. That worked in my favor, the inconsistency of my slider."

There was one thing consistent about Darvish Thursday to the Arizona hitters. They were doing a lot of swinging and missing.

Darvish recorded his first six outs via strikeouts and had at least two strikeouts in each of the first six innings. He reached No. 14 with his third strikeout of Paul Goldschmidt to end the sixth. The one thing Darvish wasn't able to do was get to 15 strikeouts, which would have matched his high while pitching in Japan.

No one in the Texas clubhouse seemed to mind though, as Darvish has now struck out at least half the batters he's faced in a club-record four starts this year.

"He was using all his pitches, pounding the strike zone," Texas manager Ron Washington said. "He was just outstanding tonight. Everything he threw up there they just couldn't get on. He threw 78 strikes. He was pounding the strike zone. They just weren't putting the ball in play."

The Rangers didn't have that problem against Arizona rookie Zeke Spruill.

Texas gave Darvish some run support early when A.J. Pierzynski homered with one out in the second inning. Mitch Moreland added a homer in the third and David Murphy got a three-run third started by hitting the third homer of the game for the Rangers.

Texas finished with 11 hits, with five going for extra bases. The offense didn't need to do much though the way Darvish was going.

"He was as good as I've seen him all year, counting the almost perfect game he threw for the first start of the year," Pierzynski said. "His stuff was just nasty. He was throwing fastballs to the corners. He really had a good split tonight and obviously he always has a slider. He just kept mixing it up and the strikeouts just kept coming and coming. Nights like that are fun."

The Diamondbacks probably didn't see it that way. They've faced Darvish twice this season and have done lots of flailing. His third 14-strikeout game of the season came against Arizona on May 27.

No. 4 wasn't a lot of fun either, as Arizona had just one runner in scoring position against him in the first six innings.

"He's got good movement on his ball and he's got a lot of different pitches," said Arizona centerfielder Adam Eaton, who had a first-inning hit but then struck out in the third and grounded out in the sixth. "As a hitter, you have a lot of different thought processes in the box. When you hit your spots and you have that many pitches, it's tough as a hitter to put the ball in play and get good swings on the ball."

Berkman targeting dates for return to Rangers

ANTHONY ANDRO

Published: Thursday, August 01, 2013, 4:21pm

ARLINGTON, Texas -- Lance Berkman's bad right knee is feeling good enough that the Texas designated hitter has started targeting dates for his return to the lineup.

Berkman thinks that if he continues to progress the way he has in the last couple of days, he'd like to be on a rehab assignment around Aug. 8.

Berkman hit fastballs and curveballs off a machine Wednesday and then took batting practice Thursday. He also ran at about 50 percent.

"The only discouraging thing is when I tried to bump it more than that (50 percent) it started to creep up on me again but I did 10 of them today a lot better than even two days ago," said Berkman, who has been on the disabled list since July 7 and continues to be bothered by pain in his right knee.

Berkman met with general manager Jon Daniels Wednesday after the trade deadline passed without the Rangers making a move for offensive help. Berkman knows that he can help.

"I'm coming back it's just a matter of when," he said. "I feel like if I can push myself and endure a little bit of discomfort to try and help this team win."

Berkman said the key is to get to a point where he doesn't feel like the team needs to pinch hit for him every time he reaches base.

While Berkman was optimistic Thursday, he admitted that hasn't always been the case over the last month. Retirement was on his mind too.

"No doubt," he said. "It absolutely did. You get to a certain point with these injuries and it just becomes so frustrating. It's a mental grind. Every day you feel not good and it's not fun to compete whenever you feel like you're 60 percent of what you should be."

Berkman's goal is to get past that point and help a team that's won three straight.

"I've made up my mind that's what this team needs to happen and I'm going to do my dangdest to give them is whatever I got," he said.

Rangers Cruz plays on despite suspension talk

ANTHONY ANDRO

Published: Thursday, August 01, 2013, 4:01pm

ARLINGTON, Texas -- The Texas Rangers have made it to game No. 109 with Nelson Cruz in the lineup.

Cruz, who was batting sixth for the Rangers, is playing with the possibility of a suspension related to the Biogenesis clinch hanging over his head.

"I've heard a lot of stuff, but I cannot comment on something that I have to take, a decision when I've got to take it," Cruz said.

Cruz said he couldn't talk about what possible penalty he's facing but admitted it's difficult to play under the conditions he's had to, especially with the team riding high after three consecutive walk off wins.

"It's tough, I mean we're in a good situation now," he said. "We're close to first place and close to the wild card also. Hopefully everything plays well."

Cruz also wouldn't get into specifics about whether or not he would appeal a possible suspension, saying he hasn't made any decision yet.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Monday MLB drug deal deadline as playoffs loom

Posted Thursday, Aug. 01, 2013

BY RONALD BLUM

AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK — Looming playoffs could force an end to negotiations in baseball's latest drug scandal as pressure builds to impose penalties so stars can still make the postseason.

Monday appears to be the deadline for Alex Rodriguez and 13 others to accept suspensions for their ties to the Biogenesis of America anti-aging clinic. While A-Rod is expected to get a lengthy ban, a penalty starting that day would allow Texas All-Star outfielder Nelson Cruz to return for October.

Major League Baseball is prepared to issue two simultaneous announcements no later than Monday, a person familiar with the process told The Associated Press on Thursday. One would list players who accept suspensions; the other would name those disciplined without deals, but who could challenge penalties before an arbitrator.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because no statements were authorized.

Most players face 50-game suspensions for their links to the now-closed Florida clinic, which has been accused of distributing banned performance-enhancing drugs.

But baseball is threatening to kick Rodriguez out for life unless the three-time AL MVP agrees to a long ban, perhaps around 200 games.

Rodriguez appeared ready to talk Thursday as he was leaving the team's minor league complex in Tampa, Fla., waving a group of writers to his car in the parking lot and rolling down the window. However, when he saw a second group with TV cameras approaching, he said: "I'll talk to you guys, but no cameras."

Rodriguez closed the window and waited a moment, then left without saying another word.

Baseball's highest-paid player with a \$28 million salary, Rodriguez played in a simulated game and saw 31 pitches over six at-bats, played third and ran bases.

The Yankees expect A-Rod to be accused of recruiting other athletes for the clinic, attempting to obstruct MLB's investigation, and not being truthful with MLB in the past. Baseball has considered suspending him for violations of its labor contract and drug agreement, which would cause him to start serving his penalty before the case would go to arbitration.

Sidelined following hip surgery in January and then a strained quadriceps, the 38-year-old third baseman hopes to return to the Yankees in a few days. He is to play Friday and Saturday at Double-A Trenton, putting himself in position to rejoin New York for Monday's series opener at the Chicago White Sox if he's not banned.

Barring a rainout this weekend, Cruz's Rangers would have exactly 50 games remaining before they play at the Los Angeles Angels on Monday night. If he files a grievance, as a first offender, the penalty would be delayed until after a decision by arbitrator Fredric Horowitz. But the lengthy legal process likely would risk his eligibility for the playoffs and the start of next season.

Cruz said Thursday he hadn't made any decision about a possible appeal. Asked whether he was told specifically what penalty could be forthcoming, Cruz responded, "No, I cannot tell you. Sorry."

Detroit shortstop Jhonny Peralta is the other targeted All-Star on a pennant contender, and the Tigers would have 53 games left before playing at Cleveland on Monday.

Another All-Star shortstop, San Diego's Everth Cabrera, could serve all of a 50-game suspension this year if he begins with the Padres' game against Baltimore on Tuesday.

Others facing discipline include injured Yankees catcher Francisco Cervelli and Seattle catcher Jesus Montero, who is in the minor leagues with Triple-A Tacoma.

The Miami Herald reported Thursday that the U.S. Attorney's Office in Miami had opened a criminal investigation into whether Biogenesis founder Anthony Bosch illegally sold controlled substances to high school students. That probe has the potential to complicate baseball's disciplinary cases if Bosch's lawyers advise him not to participate in MLB grievance hearings, where the commissioner's office presumably would call him to testify and authenticate documents.

Yu Darvish strikes out 14 as Rangers blow out Diamondbacks

Associated Press

Published: 01 August 2013 06:16 PM

Updated: 02 August 2013 12:27 AM

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Inconsistency was the key for Yu Darvish.

With a devastating slider going in different directions and command of his fastball, Darvish matched his major-league high with 14 strikeouts and the Texas Rangers won their fourth game in a row, 7-1 over the Arizona Diamondbacks in a makeup game Thursday night.

"Some of (the sliders) were dropping down, some of them were going sideways," Darvish said through an interpreter. "The movement on my slider was really inconsistent and that worked in my favor."

Darvish (10-5) certainly had the Diamondbacks hitters baffled, 78 of his 111 pitches were thrown for strikes over seven scoreless innings. He had no walks and scattered five hits in his 50th major league start.

"As a hitter you have a lot of different thought processes in the box,"

Arizona's Adam Eaton said. "When you hit your spots and you have that many pitches, it's tough as a hitter to put the ball in play and get good swings on the ball."

Darvish also had 14 strikeouts when he faced the Diamondbacks just more than two months ago. But they managed to score four runs over 7 2-3 innings that night and won with a run in the ninth.

A.J. Pierzynski, Mitch Moreland and David Murphy all homered off Zeke Spruill (0-1), who went four innings in his first major league start. Pierzynski later added a two-run single.

Those homers were all hit early for the Rangers, who came off a three-game sweep of the Los Angeles Angels with game-ending homers in each. They had been shut out in three of the four games before the short homestand, and will now play 10 in a row on the road.

"Our offense has woken up, and the key is to just keep going," Rangers manager Ron Washington said. "We knew it was in there, it was just a matter of it coming out, and we're playing as a group."

Darvish struck out 10 of his first 13 batters, marking the 16th time since he joined the Rangers from Japan last season that he fanned at least 10. Dwight Gooden with 20 is the only other pitcher since 1900 with more in his first 50 starts.

"He was as good as I've seen him all year, counting the almost perfect game he threw the first start of the year. His stuff was just nasty," said Pierzynski, also the catcher when Darvish retired the first 26 batters at Houston four months ago. "He was throwing fastballs to the corners, he had a really good split, and obviously he always has a slider.

"He just kept mixing it up, and the strikeouts just kept coming and coming. Nights like that are fun."

It was the fourth game this season Darvish reached 14 strikeouts — there are only two other 14-K games in the majors this season. It is the most 14-strikeout games in one season for the Rangers, surpassing Hall of Fame pitcher Nolan Ryan's three in 1990. Over seven seasons in Japan, Darvish had 15 strikeouts three times.

The only Arizona starter who didn't strike out was Cody Ross. Leadoff hitter Gerardo Parra, who had a 10-game interleague hitting streak, and All-Star first baseman Paul Goldschmidt both struck out three times against Darvish.

"He was using all his pitches, pounding the strike zone," Washington said. "Everything he threw up there, they just couldn't get on."

The Diamondbacks scored their only run in the ninth inning on Martin Prado's RBI single.

Arizona had to make a side trip to Texas, on the way from Tampa Bay to Boston, to make up the game postponed on May 29 because of unplayable field conditions. A severe thunderstorm hit the area about an hour before that scheduled game, and the grounds crew struggled to get the tarp on the field.

For the makeup, it was 101 degrees when the game started and still in the upper 90s at the end.

Texas right fielder Nelson Cruz is among 14 players targeted for discipline by Major League Baseball because of their relationship to a closed Florida anti-aging clinic accused of distributing banned performance-enhancing drugs. The All-Star was lifted for a pinch-hitter in the seventh because of tightness in his left quad.

Depending on the timing and length of any possible suspension, which could be announced this weekend, it could have been the last home game this season for Cruz. He leads the Rangers with 25 home runs and 73 RBIs and is eligible for free agency after the season.

Notes: Rangers SS Elvis Andrus extended the majors longest active hitting streak to 14 with a double in the seventh. ... According to STATS, Darvish was the sixth pitcher since 1974 to have 10 strikeouts in the first 13 batters. The last was Ricky Nolasco for Florida on Sept. 30, 2009. ... The announced attendance was 41,569, but a lot of those purchased tickets went unused.

AUSTIN AMERICAN STATESMAN

Express comeback against Fresno falls short

Updated: 10:07 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 1, 2013

Posted: 10:07 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 1, 2013

By American-Statesman staff

The Round Rock Express were unable to pull off a comeback victory and dropped a second game in a row to Fresno 5-3 late Wednesday night.

The Grizzlies (51-60) built a 3-0 lead heading into the seventh before the Express (62-50) had any kind of offensive response. Mike Kickham got the start for Fresno and allowed only one hit through his 6 2/3 innings pitched. He did walk five batters, however, two of which scored to cut the lead to 3-2 in the top of the seventh. Jim Adduci and Joey Butler each scored on singles by Mike Bianucci and Alex Buchholz, respectively, in the inning.

Fresno responded to the Express runs with two runs in the bottom of the inning, stifling an Express comeback. Johnny Monell doubled to score the first run of the inning while a wild pitch by Wilmer Font allowed the second one.

The Express were only able to score once more the rest of the way.

SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

Former San Francisco Giant Eli Whiteside savors his good fortune

Posted: 08/01/2013 06:38:28 PM PDT

Updated: about 13 hours ago

By Marek Warszawski

FRESNO -- To many Giants fans, Eli Whiteside will always be the gray-haired backup catcher who wore a Grateful Dead T-shirt to two World Series parades.

Whiteside is no longer employed by the Giants and no longer in the major leagues. But he still has the T-shirt.

"I wear it around the house every now and then," Whiteside said with a grin.

A familiar face to Giants and Fresno Grizzlies fans since 2008, Whiteside returned to Chukchansi Park this week as a member of the Round Rock Express.

In a pregame ceremony before Tuesday's series opener, Whiteside received his 2012 World Series ring from Grizzlies manager Bob Mariano.

"It was nice to get it and nice to see it," said Whiteside, 33. "Everybody congratulated me and wanted to take a look."

Five years ago, such a scenario was hard to imagine. Whiteside arrived in Fresno in May 2008 after Minnesota cut him from its Triple-A roster.

Whiteside spent the rest of the season with the Grizzlies, splitting time with Steve Holm, Dayton Buller and Todd Jennings, before the Giants gave him a shot in 2009. He spent 2010 in the majors, including the playoffs, as the backup to Bengie Molina, and later to Buster Posey.

The Giants sent Whiteside back to Fresno last year. He did play 12 games in the majors, enough for a second World Series ring.

"The longer I play, the more I realize how much of it is just being in the right place at the right time," Whiteside said. "There's a lot of guys in Triple-A who are as talented as some guys in the big leagues right now. It's just, do they get an opportunity?"

After the Giants cut him during the offseason, Whiteside went through a transaction whirlwind.

The New York Yankees claimed him Nov. 3, only to waive him before the end of the month. For a few days, he was property of the Toronto Blue Jays. He ended up with Texas and assigned to Triple A.

"It was crazy and kind of a headache," he said, "but it's also nice to know there's interest in me."

In 56 games with the Express, Whiteside is hitting .168 with 21 RBIs. He is best known for defense, calling games and working with pitchers. (Remember Jonathan Sanchez's 2009 no-hitter? Whiteside was behind the plate.)

Whiteside realizes he's nearing the end of his playing career. He has spoken with wife Amy about coaching but frets over being away from his young sons, Whit and Wake.

The Mississippi native hopes to reach the majors again but is content with his place in Giants lore.

"When I walked around town in San Francisco, everybody knew who I was and said they appreciated me and what I did for the team," he said. "I'll always remember that."

MYRTLE BEACH ONLINE

Nationals top Pelicans in first game of doubleheader

Published: August 1, 2013

From staff reports

Last night at the ballpark

Nationals 6, Pelicans 1

Game recap | Potomac turned a one-run deficit into a lead they wouldn't relinquish after a four-run fourth inning. Taylor Nieto hit a solo home run for Potomac. It was the last game for the middle infield of the Pelicans, as both Rougned Odor and Luis Sardinas were called up. Game 2 of the doubleheader finished after press time.

Star of the game | Michael Taylor of the Nationals went 2-for-5 with four RBIs in the game.

Stat of the game | 10 – the number of hits allowed by Pelicans pitching

Pelicans look to fill holes after call-ups of 5 players

Published: August 1, 2013

By Josh Bell

MYRTLE BEACH — The Myrtle Beach Pelicans' lineup will be changing slightly, with some of their biggest hitters headed west to the Double-A Frisco RoughRiders after being called up Wednesday. Additionally, some familiar faces will be returning to TicketReturn.com Field.

The first half champion Pelicans announced Thursday the promotions of pitchers Luke Jackson, Francisco Mendoza and Jon Edwards, along with all-star middle infielders Luis Sardinas and Rougned Odor.

As part of the move, right-handers Nick McBride and Kevin Pucetas will return from Frisco to Myrtle Beach. Also joining them will be infielders Odubel Herrera and Hanser Alberto, who were teammates for part of the 2012 season.

Jackson, 21, was a Carolina League all-star and the leader in earned run average going 9-4 with a 2.41 ERA, earning his first promotion to the Double-A level. Mendoza, 25, led the Pelicans with seven saves out of the bullpen. Edwards, 25, appeared briefly in Frisco last season and returns after posting a 3.57 ERA in 26 relief appearances for Myrtle Beach.

Odor, 19, and Sardinas, 20, were both selected to the Carolina League midseason All-Star team. They've combined for 227 hits so far this season. Odor ranked fourth in the league with a .304 batting average while Sardinas was sixth at .297.

Herrera, 21, a Texas League all-star, was hitting .257 with 30 RBIs in 101 games for the RoughRiders. Last season with the Pelicans he hit .284 with five homers and 46 RBIs in 26 games. Alberto, 20, was hitting .213 in 100 games for the RoughRiders after hitting .265 in 66 games for the Pelicans last season.

McBride, 22, a Carolina League veteran, started the season in Myrtle Beach before being transferred in May after turning in a 1.96 earned run average in 12 relief appearances. He worked out the starting rotation for the RoughRiders and posted a 6.19 ERA in 13 assignments.

Signed this past offseason, Pucetas, 28, has spent time with the Giants, Royals and Nationals organizations. This season in Frisco he went 10-8 with a 4.67 earned run average.

In 25 relief appearances with the Crawdads, Kendall, 23, was 2-2 with a 3.43 ERA.

The Pelicans active roster remains at 24 players.

The first half champion Pelicans return home Sunday to take on the Frederick Keys at TicketReturn .com Field. It will be a Family Sunday featuring postgame fireworks and pregame catch on the field. Game time is set for 6:05 p.m. EST. Tickets are available for purchase online at www.myrtlebeachpelicans.com or by phone at 918-6000.

MiLB.COM

Mazara Goes Deep in 2-1 'Dads Win 7th inning solo shot helps Hickory snap 6-game slide at home

By Aaron Cox

08/01/2013 9:55 PM ET

Hickory, NC - A matchup featuring the two most powerful lineups in the South Atlantic League turned into a pitcher's duel Thursday night, with a 7th inning solo homer by Nomar Mazara leading the Hickory Crawdads to a 2-1 win over the Asheville Tourists at Crawdads Stadium.

The Crawdads and Tourists both entered the game ranked in the top 5 in the SAL in runs scored and homers, but each team was held to just a single run through the first six innings. Asheville struck first with a solo homer by Derek Jones in the top of the 3rd, followed the next half inning by an RBI triple from Hickory center fielder Chris Garia to tie the game at 1-1.

Fast forward to the bottom of the 7th, and Tourists starting pitcher Matt Flemer had retired the last 12 Crawdads in a row before Mazara lined the first pitch of his at-bat over the right field fence for a solo blast and a 2-1 Crawdads lead.

The long ball was the 9th homer of the year for Mazara and the 141st of the season for the Crawdads, who continue to add to their new single-season home run record.

The Hickory bullpen would hold Asheville in check the rest of the way, with LHP Sam Stafford pitching the 8th and RHP Jose Leclerc the 9th. Stafford (3-4) earned the win for his efforts with two scoreless innings pitched. Leclerc (3) picked up the save after striking out Tourists cleanup hitter Tom Murphy with the tying run on third in the ninth. Flemer (2-3) was handed the loss for allowing two runs on four hits, no walks and 7 Ks over his seven innings pitched.

Crawdads starting pitcher Andrew Faulkner received a no-decision, after allowing only one run on six hits, one walk and four strikeouts over 6 IP.

Mazara finished the game 2-3 with the home run, a double and an RBI. Garia went 1-3 with a triple and an RBI while Luis Marte had a 1-3 night with a run scored.

The win snaps the 'Dads 6-game, home losing streak and improves the Crawdads (22-18) record against the Tourists (16-23) this season to 6-1. The two clubs will face off again Friday night at 7:00 pm for game two of their 4-game series from Crawdads Stadium.

SPOKANE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Short-handed Indians lose 9-3

By Chris Derrick

August 2, 2013

The Spokane Indians will have to shuffle and tweak their roster if they hope to remain in the postseason chase.

Chase Johnson and the Salem-Keizer Volcanoes already have a spot locked up in the postseason.

Johnson (2-1) pitched five innings of four-hit ball on Thursday night and exited before persistent rain hit as the Volcanoes breezed past the hobbled and shorthanded Indians 9-3 at Avista Stadium.

The five-game Northwest League series is tied at 1. The Volcanoes lead the season series 4-3.

Johnson left with a 4-1 lead that grew to 9-1 when S-K sent 11 batters to the plate during its five-run sixth inning. The Volcanoes had four singles and one double during the long inning, which coincided with the start of rain that continued for the rest of the game.

"The conditions seem bad, but the field really isn't in bad shape now," Indians manager Tim Hulett said. "We just made some bad plays. We made some bad pitches. Everything we've been doing good, we didn't do good tonight."

Hulett's job becomes trickier each day. The Indians' top two offensive threats, center fielder Chris Garia and first baseman/catcher Kevin Torres, have been promoted to Hickory (N.C.) this week. Slick right fielder Ryan Cordell has a wrist injury that will sideline him another week, until after the All-Star break. Pitcher Yohander Mendez, who typically would have started Thursday, has a strained nerve in his elbow and is lost for the season.

"We have to patch another spot, but you know what, that's professional baseball," Hulett said of losing Torres. "That's how teams are. They change throughout the year."

Johnson, a third-round draft selection this year out of Cal Poly (San Luis Obispo), started his season at the Arizona Rookie League. He joined the Volcanoes in early July and pitched four shutout innings against the Indians in his debut.

The Volcanoes clinched the South Division's first-half title soon after Johnson's arrival.

"It's not going to affect how I pitch," Johnson said. "I'm always out there to get a win, but it's good knowing we've clinched already."

North Division first-half champ Everett is off to a quick start in the second half, so the Indians' playoff chances may hinge on having a better overall season record than Vancouver and Tri-City. Vancouver (26-22) is two games up on the Indians (24-24) in that category.