

ASTROS DAILY CLIPS

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Nearly no-hit, Astros edged by Rangers

Corporan breaks up Darvish's bid with one-out homer in eighth

By Chris Abshire / MLB.com

HOUSTON -- The Astros know how to play foil to Texas pitcher Yu Darvish. For the second time this season, the righty almost no-hit Houston -- this time with five outs remaining -- but just like on April 2, it was broken up by an unlikely Houston source.

Similar to that first flirtation with perfection against the Astros, Darvish secured his 12th win on Monday. He had less margin for error this time around, as Carlos Corporan's eighth-inning solo homer broke up the no-hit bid and halved the deficit, but Texas prevailed, 2-1, at Minute Maid Park.

"It was pretty similar [to April 2]," said Houston manager Bo Porter.

"Again, you're talking about a guy who has top-line stuff, knows how to use it. He throws all his pitches in any count, he pluses and minuses his fastball. First one of the game was 89 [mph]. You look up three innings later, and he's throwing 96, and it's all coming from the same arm slot. It's pretty good."

The win meant a four-game sweep for the Rangers in Houston and a sixth straight defeat for the Astros, who became the first Major League team to reach the 80-loss mark this season.

In the second game of the season and his first start, Darvish came without one out of a perfect game in Houston before Marwin Gonzalez broke it up with a ninth-inning single.

Darvish was no less dominant Monday, with Corporan's knock being the only hit he allowed to complement one walk and a career-high 15 strikeouts over eight innings.

"The pitches that I threw today were a lot different than what I threw in April," Darvish said. "I didn't throw that many cut fastballs, it was mainly sliders.

"I don't think my fastball was up there, but I had really good movement on my slider."

His brilliance negated another formidable outing by Astros lefty Brett Oberholtzer. Making the third start of his career, Oberholtzer pitched 6 2/3 innings, allowing only a pair of runs in the first inning and seven hits while fanning six.

After he held Baltimore and Boston scoreless over 14 innings in his first two career starts, Oberholtzer faced the pressure early on Monday.

Adrian Beltre's first-inning double plated Ian Kinsler before catcher A.J. Pierzynski drove in Beltre with a single for a quick 2-0 advantage.

"I'm a guy that likes to settle in," Oberholtzer said. "They got to me early, but other than that, I felt pretty good. Body-wise, not quite the same [as his first two starts], but some days, you'll wake up and not feel 100 percent."

From there, it was the Yu Darvish Show, and the Astros were just watching. Five of Darvish's 15 strikeouts caught a Houston batter looking. Jake Elmore was the only Astros player who didn't go down on strikes in the game.

That hesitance eventually paid off in the sixth. With a 2-2 count and two outs, Jonathan Villar took a breaking pitch that appeared just on the lower edge of the strike zone. Pierzynski and Darvish each began to trot for the dugout, figuring that it would be a called third strike.

Instead, home-plate umpire Ron Kulpa ruled it a ball, and Darvish walked Villar for Houston's first baserunner of the day. Pierzynski was tossed immediately for arguing with Kulpa.

"Pierzynski didn't like the pitch that I [called for a ball]. We had words about the [2-2] pitch," Kulpa said. "And then [Darvish] walked [Villar] on the very next pitch and [Pierzynski] continued to argue on the pitch before. And so he got ejected." Darvish fanned the next batter, Robbie Grossman, to end the inning.

Meanwhile, Oberholtzer lasted into the seventh inning, nearly matching Darvish after the early damage.

"They got two, and after that, they didn't put up anything," Oberholtzer said. "I gave my team a chance to win. We knew what we were up against in Darvish, it's tough competition. I knew what I was up against and battled hard."

Oberholtzer's day extended an impressive run for Houston rookies in the starting rotation. They have a combined 1.48 ERA in 10 starts dating back to Jarred Cosart's scoreless debut against the Rays on July 12.

With the no-hitter still intact, Darvish struck out Matt Dominguez to open the eighth, putting the potential third no-hitter of the Major League season within a handful of outs.

Instead, Corporan -- filling in for Jason Castro, who has a sore hip, for the second straight day -- raked the first pitch he saw into the right-field seats.

"For me, hitting is a bonus," Corporan said. "I like to take care of my pitching staff. If I hit, it's a bonus. My pitchers did a great job. Broke up the no-hitter, but I'd rather get a win.

"With Darvish, you can't sit. You have to see the ball and hit it. I found a fastball right there and could extend my arm. You have to attack early in the count, because he was pretty good today."

Corporan's homer was his seventh of the season. Combined with Jason Castro's 12 homers while playing catcher, the Astros lead the American League with 19 long balls by their backstops.

Texas closer Joe Nathan came on in the ninth inning and recorded his second save in three games. The loss concluded a 1-6 homestand for the Astros, who go back out on the road for a nine-game trip having scored two runs over the past 20 innings.

"I still think that today, the offense did a great job," Oberholtzer said. "Darvish is one of the best pitchers in the game. They battled to the end. He didn't finish the game, so that says something right there.

"We're a young team, but we've got heart."

Altuve, Castro rest in finale due to nagging injuries

By Chris Abshire / MLB.com

HOUSTON -- Three Astros starters were not in the starting lineup for Monday's series finale against the Rangers, with two of them dealing with nagging injuries.

Second baseman Jose Altuve was scratched with a sore left quad, and catcher Jason Castro missed his second straight game as he deals with a bruised hip. Outfielder L.J. Hoes received the day off after starting 11 straight games since being traded to the Astros on July 31.

It's only the second time all season that neither Castro nor Altuve were in the Houston order, with the other instance occurring against Toronto in a 2-1 loss on July 28.

Castro's sore hip stems back to a play at the plate in the eighth inning of Saturday's game, when the Rangers' Alex Rios slid into him, dislodging the ball from Castro's glove for the go-ahead run.

"His hip is a little sore from the slide and crash at the plate the other day," said Houston manager Bo Porter. "It was sore yesterday. I talked to him today. It is much better, but at the same time, having a sore hip and trying to get back there and catch for nine innings isn't ideal. We feel like if he gets another day, he'll be much better and ready to go."

It's the first time all season Castro has missed consecutive games.

In Altuve's case, the off-day has been coming for some time, as he's been noticeably slowed by his left quad on and off for two weeks. In the Texas series alone, Altuve was caught trying to score from second on a single during Saturday's game and was thrown out at third trying to stretch out a double in Sunday's contest.

"It's mentally him thinking that he's 100 percent when technically he's not," Porter said. "Going to ask him is probably not even an option anymore, because in his mind, he wants to play every day. From a manager's standpoint, you appreciate that.

"At the same time, there has to be some kind of balance and being honest about your body and how you're feeling. It's evident that he's not 100 percent. It's affected him running the bases and defensively. We're going to have to take it out of his hands and protect him from himself. He'll take some days off and DH some, and we'll monitor it from there."

Porter said a disabled-list stint is not even being considered for Altuve.

Looking to make move in AL West, A's host Astros

Colon, Lyles both aim to rebound from poor outings in opener

By Joey Nowak / MLB.com

The Astros left Houston with a sour taste in their mouths.

After a 1-6 homestand, capped by a four-game sweep at the hands of the Rangers and a Yu Darvish near-no-hitter in the series finale on Monday, the last-place Astros will embark on a nine-game road trip spanning three cities.

They'll start in Oakland on Tuesday, where right-hander Jordan Lyles will square off against A's righty Bartolo Colon.

After a 5-1 win against the Blue Jays on Monday, and the Rangers' sweep of the Astros, Oakland sits a game back of Texas in what should be a thrilling photo finish for the American League West title. The A's have lost seven of their last 11.

Tuesday's outing will give Lyles a chance to straighten out some of his crooked numbers. He's given up at least three earned runs in each of his starts since July 4, and four or more in four of the five. In that span, he's seen his ERA climb from 3.87 to 5.40, leaving the Astros with little margin for error when he takes the hill. He lasted just 4 2/3 innings in his last start against the Red Sox, surrendering eight runs on nine hits.

"My bad outings have been bad, real bad," Lyles said. "Offense came out [Tuesday] and put up some big numbers. I let it go, made the bullpen throw a lot of innings. It was a tough game to watch."

Colon, too, is coming off a forgettable outing in what has been an excellent 2013 campaign. He gave up five runs in 2 2/3 innings -- a season low in innings pitched -- in a loss to the Reds.

"He didn't look like he had his best stuff [against the Reds]," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "His velocity was down. He did have a little bit of a stomach ailment in the bullpen when he was warming up. He's had it before, so it was just a combination of things today. "He's also able to pitch without his best stuff at times. [Wednesday] is the first time we have not seen him do that."

Astros: Castro streaking

- Jason Castro, who did not play Monday against Darvish and the Rangers, has a career-best 10-game hitting streak going, and is batting .358 (15-for-39) over that stretch. He is 6-for-12 over his last three games.
- Lyles has allowed nine or more hits in each of his last three starts. That's tied for the second-longest run in franchise history, and it makes him the first Houston hurler to be that hittable since Wandy Rodriguez gave up that many hits between May 28-June 8, 2012. Lyles has given up 39 runs in his last eight starts, making for an 8.49 ERA during that span. Houston has lost all of those games, with Lyles getting the decision in five of them.

A's: Offense in hot stretch

- The A's have recorded 10 or more hits in four of their last five games, and are hitting .302 (56-for-185) with 34 runs scored over that span. That comes out to 6.8 runs per game over that stretch.
- The A's committed six errors in their four-game series against the Blue Jays, and have now made at least one error in eight of their last 11 games (12 errors total).

Worth noting

- The A's are 21-14 in one-run games.
- Since his promotion from the Minors on July 27, Astros rookie Robbie Grossman has recorded a hit in 11 of 14 games. He's hit .339 (18-for-53) with three homers and nine RBIs.

After brief absence from thumb injury, Villar back

By Chris Abshire / MLB.com

HOUSTON -- While the Astros may have been down three starters on Monday, one full-timer returned to the order.

Shortstop Jonathan Villar was back in the finale against the Rangers following a four-game break as he dealt with a sprained left thumb. Manager Bo Porter said the past two days were as much about facing a lefty, which would have required the switch-hitting rookie to bat right-handed. Villar said hitting from the right side was significantly more painful because of the pressure of the top hand on the injured thumb.

"We knew a few days ago that he'd have the last two days off, just because it affects him more when he swings right-handed and they had two lefties throwing," Porter said. "The plan was always to have him back today."

Villar injured the thumb sliding into third base during the fourth inning of Tuesday's 15-10 loss to Boston.

The Dominican Republic native pinch-ran and played the field for an inning during Saturday night's 5-4 loss to Texas.

Prior to the injury, Villar had played in 15 straight games since being called up from Triple-A Oklahoma City, swiping 10 bases during that span.

"It's good to have Villar back, not just from a speed standpoint and the havoc and he can create on the basepaths, but his defense has been missed at shortstop as well," Porter said.

Villar's replacement at shortstop, Jake Elmore, committed an error in both Saturday and Sunday's games, with each leading to an unearned run.

Astros send veteran reliever Wright to Rays

Lefty was team's longest-tenured player; Humber recalled to take spot

By Chris Abshire / MLB.com

HOUSTON -- The Astros continued their roster overhaul, trading veteran lefty Wesley Wright to Tampa Bay for cash considerations, the team announced on Monday.

Wright was called into manager Bo Porter's office by pitching coach Doug Brocail just prior to Monday's game, where general manager Jeff Luhnow delivered the news.

"I'm excited," Wright told MLB.com. "It's an opportunity to go pitch for a contending team and something I've always wanted to do, and to get this opportunity now is kind of shocking, but I'm also excited about it."

Taking Wright's roster spot is right-hander Philip Humber, who was called up from Triple-A Oklahoma City.

Wright was one of the lone veterans remaining in the youngest Major League clubhouse. The southpaw was the team's longest-tenured member, appearing in 71 games for the Astros in 2008 after they plucked him away from the Dodgers in the Rule 5 Draft. He was also the team's second-highest paid player, meaning left-hander Erik Bedard is the only remaining player making more than \$1 million (\$1.15 million).

Over five years and 286 appearances, Wright compiled a 4.44 ERA with a 10-15 record and two saves. This season, Wright was, at the very least, a stable component of a shaky Houston bullpen, going 0-4 with a respectable 3.92 ERA in 41 1/3 innings.

"The organization has been great to me and my family throughout the past six seasons," Wright said. "They gave me an opportunity to see what I can do at the big league level. I'm really grateful for the organization and the fans and the city. They were really supportive to me and my teammates. Even in the down years, they supported me and all I can say is thanks to the city of Houston and the fans."

Humber will meet the Astros in Oakland for Tuesday night's series opener vs. the A's. The righty already spent the first month and a half of the season with the Astros, going 0-8 in seven starts (nine games) with a 9.59 ERA to earn a lengthy Minor League stint.

He seemed to straighten his game out with the Redhawks, posting a 2.38 ERA with two walks and 14 strikeouts over his last seven relief appearances.

Crowe hitting well in rehab, but return unknown

By Chris Abshire / MLB.com

HOUSTON -- Between the Justin Maxwell trade, L.J. Hoes' arrival, Jimmy Paredes' yo-yo act from the Minors to the Majors and J.D. Martinez's shoulder injury, the Houston outfield has been in flux lately.

Trevor Crowe wouldn't mind shaking it up again, as he continues to pound the ball during his rehab assignment at Triple-A Oklahoma City.

Crowe sprained the AC joint in his right shoulder crashing into the wall against the Brewers on July 20, landing him on the 15-day disabled list.

He's missed a few more days than that, not even starting his Minor League rehab assignment until July 26.

"It was a tough injury from the standpoint that it's your throwing shoulder," said Astros manager Bo Porter. "That takes a little bit longer to heal, to do all the things you need to do as a baseball player. That shoulder is everything."

He's wasted no time getting back up to speed, hitting .388 with three RBIs, three steals and 11 runs scored during 13 games with the RedHawks.

So why is he still mired in the Minors, even as the Astros' lineup has been flooded with his fellow RedHawks over the past few weeks? "We want to make sure his arm is built up to the point where he can play the field consistently," Porter said. "He suffered a pretty rough injury. From all reports, he is back playing, but you do want to make sure he can make all the necessary throws."

Crowe hit .200 with one home run, five RBIs and 10 runs scored over 34 games with the Astros during May and June.

Darvish again blocks light at end of tunnel for Astros

By Brian T. Smith / Houston Chronicle

There will be a time when the Astros are a real baseball team.

When fans pulling for the home club, not an in-state division rival, fill Minute Maid Park and don't just scatter around to comprise a crowd of 18,712. When no-hitter and perfect-game watches don't begin after the third inning. When a cheap, mostly nameless squad isn't constantly associated with futility, failure and embarrassment. When the Astros of 1986 and 2005 are honored by the pride of 162-game achievement instead of the casual acceptance of 100-defeat seasons.

That time is not now. It hasn't been for three long, loss-filled, backward years. And after Rangers righthander Yu Darvish flirted with a perfect game against the Astros on Monday (his second such flirtation in just over four months) and came within five outs of a no-hitter in Texas' 2-1 victory, it became clearer than ever the Astros' lost 2013 season won't find meaning any time soon.

Take away Jonathan Villar's two-out walk during the sixth inning and Carlos Corporan's solo homer to right field with one out in the eighth, and the worst team in baseball could have again made bad history. Instead, the Astros (37-80) just lost, dropping their sixth consecutive contest while falling to 1-10 in their last 11 games and 8-33 during a nail-in-the-coffin slide that began June 23. And with it, the American League West-leading Rangers (69-50) swept the four-game series and captured their eighth consecutive victory. Optimism fading fast

The low-budget Astros have been a national joke since spring training. Although they insisted they were going to exceed critics' low expectations, they ultimately have supported the belief that a team must spend more than \$13 million to stay respectable in Major League Baseball. Monday was one of the strongest reminders to date that a roster filled with 14 rookies and a starting lineup that features five will often produce nothing but strikeouts, errors, blown saves and defeats until accrued on-the-field time becomes legitimate major league experience.

"It's obviously frustrating," said first baseman Brett Wallace, whose two strikeouts were part of Darvish's career-high 15. "We don't want to lose games, and it's hard to take moral victories at the big league level. It's hard to take small steps to look at the little victories."

Just as Darvish did April 2 at Minute Maid when he threw 82/3 innings of perfect ball in the second game of the season, the Rangers rightly confused and humiliated a weak lineup, which exited nine innings of one-hit ball Monday having extended its MLB lead in strikeouts (1,110).

Darvish initially fired a cutting, high-80s fastball that stroked the corners of the strike zone. Then he began calmly striking the mid-90s, blending in a cruel slider that left rookie center fielder Brandon Barnes claiming Monday's near no-hitter trumped April 2's brush with perfection.

"His wipeout slider, he can throw it three different ways. You never know when it's coming, so it takes you off his fastball, and he just drills a 95 mph fastball in there," Barnes said. "The difference I saw from last time was his (velocity) was up and his slider command was just spot on — the guy could throw it wherever he wanted to. ... When a guy has command of six or seven pitches, it's tough to try to just sit on one."

Darvish makes history

Darvish joined Pedro Martinez as the only pitchers since 1900 to record a 15-strikeout game and allow a homer as the only hit. He pocketed his 200th strikeout of the season during the fifth inning, erasing the K-prone Chris Carter with a weak check swing and tying Nolan Ryan's 1989 Rangers record for the fewest starts required (23) to reach the mark.

Through four outings and 292/3 innings against the Astros this year, Darvish has racked up 43 strikeouts (against eight walks) en route to a 3-1 record. He's become one of baseball's premier pitchers on a club targeting its fourth consecutive playoff appearance. The Astros? They don't have a clue.

"He doesn't just have control. This guy has command," Astros first-year manager Bo Porter said. "He can throw every pitch the way he wants to throw it, even out of the strike zone. Which, when you have that kind of repertoire, you're going to be up against it." Peak no longer visible.

The peak of the Astros' 2013 campaign was March 31, which marked the franchise's season opener and American League debut. A national television audience watched Bud Norris, Rick Ankiel and Justin Maxwell surprisingly take down the Rangers 8-2 before a sold-out Minute Maid Park.

Those names are gone, the Astros are now on pace for a franchise-record 111 losses, and Porter's club hasn't touched Ron Washington's team in Houston since. The Astros are 2-11 against the Rangers this year, with only one victory since Ankiel's pinch-hit, sixth-inning homer to right field March 31 momentarily turned Houston back into a baseball town.

During the Rangers' four-game sweep, Arlington blue and red drowned out orange and blue. There was a "Let's go, Rangers" chant, two blown saves, a four-run ninth inning Sunday and "Yuuuuuu" echoing throughout Minute Maid on Monday.

In 2015, when the prospects have arrived to stay and the Astros should again be relevant, Texas might have an in-state baseball rivalry.

In 2013, the Rangers have owned Houston, and Darvish has destroyed the Astros.

Astros to purchase rights of Mexican League outfielder

by Jose de Jesus Ortiz/ Houston Chronicle

The Astros have reached a deal with the Mexico City Diablos to purchase the rights of outfield slugger Leo Heras, pending a physical. Heras, a 23-year-old native of Tijuana, is likely to head to Class AA Corpus Christi if he passes his physical.

Heras, who is hitting .310 with a .519 slugging percentage, 11 home runs and 42 RBIs over 91 games this season, made his debut in the Mexican League in 2007 as a 17-year-old. He is a career .318 hitter in the Mexican League, which is considered the equivalent of Class AAA.

Heras hit a career-high 24 home runs and 64 RBIs last year over 112 games with the Diablos Rojos.

Rangers sweep Astros behind Darvish's near-perfect outing

by Brian T. Smith / Houston Chronicle

Yu Darvish was mostly untouchable, nearly perfect and regularly brilliant. And the Rangers righthander nearly finished Monday what he began more than four months ago at Minute Maid Park, allowing just one hit and striking out a career-high 15 in eight innings during a 2-1 victory against the Astros in an American League West matchup before an announced crowd of 18,712.

Carlos Corporan ended Darvish's no-hitter with a solo home run to shallow right field with one out in the eighth inning, lifting a 93 mph cutter out of the reach of Alex Rios.

Darvish joined Pedro Martinez as only the second pitcher since 1900 to record a 15-strikeout game and allow a homer as the only hit.

"He was spot on. When he's on, he's tough to hit. He leads the American League in strikeouts. His wipeout-slider, he can throw it three different ways. You never know when it's coming, so it takes you off his fastball and he just drills a 95 mph fastball in there," Astros center fielder Brandon Barnes said. "The difference I saw from last time was his (velocity) was up and his slider command was just spot on — the guy could throw it wherever he wanted to."

Closer Joe Nathan took over for Darvish in the ninth, recording his 35th save.

The Astros (37-80) lost their sixth consecutive game and are just 4-19 since the All-Star break.

The Rangers (69-50) swept the four-game series, improving to 11-2 against the Astros this season while winning their eighth straight contest.

Darvish held a perfect game against the Astros through 8 2/3 innings on April 2 at Minute Maid, losing the bid with two outs in the ninth when former Astros shortstop Marwin Gonzalez singled up the middle. The 26-year-old Rangers starter was perfect for 5 2/3 innings Monday before giving up a 3-2, two-out walk to rookie shortstop Jonathan Villar.

Astros rookie righthander Brett Oberholtzer entered the contest 2-0 as a starter and hadn't allowed a run during his initial 14 innings.

The Rangers quickly ended Oberholtzer's scoreless streak. Four of the club's first five hitters reached base, highlighted by back-to-back two-out doubles from Ian Kinsler and Adrian Beltre. A.J. Pierzynski's bloop single to shallow center field handed the Rangers a 2-0 first-inning lead.

Oberholtzer smoothed out during the next four innings, keeping the Astros within two runs and only allowing one hit while his pitch count reached 73.

But Darvish was untouchable. As a "Yuuuuu" chant began to echo around Minute Maid with each strikeout, the Astros sent 12 batters to the plate and all were erased. During the fifth inning, a weak Chris Carter check-swing strikeout marked Darvish's eighth K of the day and 200th this season. With the strikeout, the 26-year-old righty tied Nolan Ryan's 1989 Rangers club record for the fewest starts (23) in season required to reach 200 Ks.

Matt Dominguez and Corporan followed with strikeouts in the fifth, as Darvish erased the side and walked off the mound with 15 up, 15 down and 10 Ks on just 71 pitches (46 strikes).

No. 9 hitter Villar walked on a 3-2 count with two outs in the sixth to end Darvish's perfect game. Pierzynski was ejected by home plate umpire Ron Kulpa for arguing while Villar made his way to first. Backup catcher Geovany Soto took over to finish the game with Darvish.

Astros send Wesley Wright to Rays, add Philip Humber

by Brian T. Smith / Houston Chronicle

The longest-tenured member of the rebuilding Astros is no longer an Astro.

Lefthanded reliever Wesley Wright was sent to the Tampa Bay Rays on Monday for cash considerations.

Wright, 28, had been with Astros since 2008, joining the club in 2007 via the Rule 5 draft. He was one of only two veterans in a struggling bullpen and a respected clubhouse voice. Wright was 0-4 with a 3.92 ERA this season and pitched in a team-high 77 games in 2012.

"Just wanna say thanks to the Astros for taking a chance on me five years ago and giving me the opportunity to fulfill my dream," Wright tweeted after the deal.

The Astros also selected the contract of former Rice standout Philip Humber from Class AAA Oklahoma City. Humber, 30, struggled mightily as a starter earlier this year with the Astros, going 0-8 with a 9.59 ERA.

Carlos Corporan ends Yu Darvish's bid for no-hitter with HR in 8th

By Reid Laymance / Houston Chronicle

A controversial call on a pitch to Jonathan Villar ended Yu Darvish's bid for a perfect game in the sixth inning, and Carlos Corporan ended the no-hitter with a solo home run to right with one out in the eighth.

It was the second close-call for Darvish against the Astros this season. He took a no-hitter into the ninth against the Astros in the second game of the season only to have that broken up.

The Astros have been no-hit five times in their history.

First pitch: Facing Darvish, Astros try to prevent Rangers' sweep

by Brian T. Smith/ Houston Chronicle

The Astros haven't defeated the Rangers at Minute Maid Park this year since a March 31 season-opener. A Rangers victory Monday during a 1:10 p.m. contest would give Ron Washington's club a four-game series sweep and hand the Astros their sixth consecutive loss.

Astros lefthander Brett Oberholtzer (2-0, 2.53 ERA) faces Rangers righty Yu Darvish (11-5, 2.72) in an American League West matchup.

Oberholtzer is the first pitcher in franchise history to throw at least seven scoreless innings during his initial two starts.

Darvish is 3-1 with a 1.37 ERA during four starts since coming off the disabled list.

The Rangers won the initial three games of the series, including a 6-1 victory Sunday that featured four runs in the ninth inning.

The Rangers have won seven consecutive games and are 10-2 against the Astros this season.

Notes

Regular Astros starters catcher Jason Castro (sore hip) and second baseman Jose Altuve (strained left quad) are out of the lineup. Astro rookie shortstop Jonathan Villar is starting for the first time in five games.

Rangers (68-50): Martin CF, Andrus SS, Kinsler DH, Beltre 3B, Pierzynski C, Rios RF, Baker 1B, Gentry LF, Profar 2B.

Astros (37-79): Grossman LF, Krauss RF, Wallace 1B, Carter DH, Dominguez 3B, Corporan C, Barnes CF, Elmore 2B, Villar SS.

Astros report: Wright traded to contending Rays

By Brian T. Smith / Houston Chronicle

While Rangers righthander Yu Darvish again almost perfectly sliced through the Astros on Monday, a rebuilding club with the lowest active payroll in Major League Baseball got a little cheaper and less experienced.

Veteran lefthanded reliever Wesley Wright was sent to Tampa Bay for cash considerations. In turn, the Astros promoted former starter and Rice standout Philip Humber from Class AAA Oklahoma City.

Wright, 28, was the longest-tenured member of the Astros. He was 0-4 with a 3.92 ERA this year and appeared in a team-high 77 games in 2012.

"It's tough losing Wesley Wright, just because what it is he's meant to this organization," first-year manager Bo Porter said. "Throughout the entire time he's been here, since 2008, he's been great in the community, he's been a great teammate."

Wright joked Aug. 1 - the day after the non-waiver trade deadline - he wasn't sure how he'd survived the Astros' unprecedented rebuild.

The youngest team in baseball employs 14 rookies and few recognizable players and is just 8-33 since June 23.

"I don't know if it's good or bad, but I'll take it," Wright said. "It's an interesting place to be."

Now, a struggling Astros bullpen with the majors' worst save percentage (52) and 21 blown saves features five rookies and two starters-turned-relievers in Lucas Harrell and Humber (0-8, 9.59 ERA this season).

The Astros' payroll dropped to less than \$13 million with Wright's departure. Veteran lefthander Erik Bedard (\$1.1 million) is the only player on the 25-man roster making more than \$1 million.

Just say no when it comes to Altuve

At some point, second baseman Jose Altuve will likely learn there are extended benefits to not trying to play 162 games when his ailing body needs rest.

Until then, the Astros plan to control Altuve's yes-to-everything approach as the organization makes a concerted effort to protect one of its few long-term assets.

"It's mentally him thinking he's 100 percent when technically he's not. ... Going to ask him is probably not even an option anymore, because in his mind, he just wants to play every day," manager Bo Porter said. "From a manager's standpoint, you appreciate that. But at the same time, there has to be some kind of balance where you're being honest about your body and how you're feeling, and it's evident that he's not 100 percent."

Altuve wasn't in the starting lineup Monday as he continued to deal with a strained left quadriceps. He was thrown out twice during the previous two games while over-running and pushing himself into easy outs, and at times he appeared to be dragging as a defender. The 2012 All-Star leads the Astros in batting average (.282) and stolen bases (29), is tied for second in games played (107) and is having a solid third season. But the club wants Altuve to be strong in late September, not just the first half of the season. As a result, Porter said the Astros will begin telling their biggest star "no" a little more until Altuve learns how to better pace himself.

"It's affecting him running the bases; it's affecting him defensively," Porter said. "So we're going to have to take it out of his hands and protect him from himself."

Ump catches flak from Rangers

Before Carlos Corporan lifted a solo home run to shallow right field with one out in the eighth inning Monday, home plate umpire Ron Kulpa was drawing heat on the field and the Internet.

With Astros rookie Jonathan Villar dealing with a 3-2 count against Yu Darvish with two outs in the sixth and a perfect game on the line, Kulpa called a ball on the next pitch. Rangers catcher A.J. Pierzynski immediately expressed his displeasure and was soon ejected, replaced by Geovany Soto, who guided Darvish to a no-hitter through 7 1/3 innings.

When asked about the 3-2 call after the game, Kulpa told a pool reporter Darvish "had it down."

"Pierzynski didn't like the 3-1 pitch that I (called for a ball)," Kulpa said. "We had words about the 3-1 pitch. And then (Darvish) walked (Villar) on the very next pitch, and (Pierzynski) continued to argue on the pitch before, and he got ejected."

On deck: Astros at Oakland Athletics

When/where: 9:05 p.m. today and Wednesday, 2:35 p.m. Thursday; O.co Coliseum.

TV/radio: CSNH; 790 AM and 1010 AM (Spanish).

Pitchers: Astros (37-80) Athletics (67-50) Today Jordan Lyles (4-6, 5.40) B. Colon (14-4, 2.75)

Wed. Jarred Cosart (1-0, 1.36) J. Parker (8-6, 4.04)

Thurs. Erik Bedard (3-8, 4.28) Sonny Gray (0-1, 1.80)

Astros update: The club's rookie starters have combined for a 1.48 ERA in their last 10 starts, allowing just 11 earned runs in 66 2/3 innings. ... Lefthander Brett Oberholtzer allowed seven hits and two runs in 6 2/3 innings Monday during a loss to the Rangers. He's given up just two runs in his initial three starts (20 2/3 innings).

Athletics update: With Monday's 5-1 win at Toronto, Oakland is a game behind the Rangers for first place in the American League West. ... Oakland has won three of four heading into a nine-game homestand. ... The A's rank fourth in the majors in quality starts (69), fifth in batting average against (.242) and eighth in ERA (3.64).

Astros again foil Darvish's no-hit bid

By Richard Dean / CSN Houston

Yu Darvish flirted with perfection on a day he had no-hit stuff. The Texas Rangers right-hander came close, finishing with a 1-hitter and 15 strikeouts in eight innings. Carlos Corporan broke up Darvish's no-hit bid with a home run with one out in the eighth inning but the Rangers held on for a 2-1 win over the Astros. With the win, the Rangers extended their winning streak to a season-high eight games and a sweep of the four-game series at Minute Maid Park.

STARTING PITCHING

Brett Oberholtzer (2-1) wasn't in Darvish's class, but he was good. He was just overshadowed by Darvish. In 6 2/3 innings, the left-hander allowed only two first-inning runs. He gave up seven hits with six strikeouts and two walks.

Darvish (12-5) was brilliant, retiring the first 17 Astros before walking Jonathan Villar on 3-2 count. Through five innings Darvish had 10 strikeouts.

BULLPEN

Josh Fields relieved Oberholtzer and pitched 1 1/3 scoreless innings, allowing only one hit. Chia-Jen Lo pitched a scoreless ninth. Joe Nathan retired the side in order in the ninth for his 35th save.

AT THE PLATE

Until Corporan's seventh home run – a shot to right field – the only other Houston base runner had been the walk to Villar with two outs in the sixth inning.

The Rangers scored twice in the first inning off Oberholtzer. Adrian Beltre had a RBI double and A.J. Pierzynski followed with a run-scoring single.

INJURY REPORT

All-Star catcher Jason Castro was out of the lineup for a second consecutive game with a sore hip sustained in a collision at home with Alex Rios on Saturday. Castro is expected back in the lineup Tuesday at Oakland.

UP NEXT

The Astros start a nine-game road trip starting on Tuesday with three games at Oakland. Houston right-hander Jordan Lyles (4-6, 5.40 ERA) opposes RHP Bartolo Colon (14-4, 2.75 ERA).

Preview: Astros head to Oakland for three games

By CSN Houston Staff

After a 1-6 homestand, the Astros will begin a nine-game, three-city road trip in Oakland on Tuesday at 9:05 p.m.

The A's (67-50) have lost seven of their last 11 games but only sit one game back of the Texas Rangers in the American League West. Oakland owns Houston (37-80) this season, having gone 11-1 with 18 home runs and averaging 6.7 runs in the two team's four series meetings in 2013.

Bartolo Colon (14-4, 2.75 ERA) has played a big role in the A's success against the Astros this year, going 3-0 with a 1.89 ERA in his three starts against them while issuing no walks. With a win on Tuesday, the right-hander will join Detroit's Max Scherzer as the only pitchers to reach the 15-win mark in the majors.

Facing Oakland for the first time will be right-handed pitcher Jordan Lyles (4-6, 5.40 ERA) for the Astros. After giving up eight runs over 4 2/3 innings in his last start against Boston last Tuesday – a 15-10 loss – Lyles is 0-3 with an 11.17 ERA in his last four starts. He's allowed nine or more hits in each of his last three starts and 39 runs in his last eight starts.

What to watch for:

Astros catcher Jason Castro, who sat out Monday's game with a sore hip although not considered serious, is riding a career-best 10-game hitting streak and is batting .358 (15-for-39) during that span. He is hitting a team-best .375 with three home runs against Oakland this season.

Astros 2B Jose Altuve also sat out Monday's game versus the Rangers with nagging quad pain, but it's not considered serious. Since being recalled from Triple A Oklahoma City on July 27, Astros OF Robbie Grossman has hit safely in 11 of 14 games. He's hit .339 (18-for-53) with three homers and nine RBIs.

The A's hope OF Coco Crisp will return after being removed from Sunday's game against Toronto with a wrist injury and also missing Monday's game. In 11 games versus Houston this season, he's hitting a team-best .386 with four homers and 10 RBIs. Oakland's offense is on a roll. The A's have 10 or more hits in four of their last five games, hitting .302 (56-for-185) with 34 runs scored over that stretch.

Series pitching matchups:

Wednesday, Aug. 14 at 9:05 p.m. – RHP Jarrod Cosart (1-0, 1.36) vs. RHP Jarrod Parker (8-6, 4.04)

Thursday, Aug. 15 at 2:35 p.m. – LHP Erik Bedard (3-8, 4.28) vs. RHP Sonny Gray (0-1, 1.80)

Wright will be missed by teammates

By Richard Dean / CSN Houston

Wesley Wright has been a great representative of the Astros in the Houston community. He's also been an outstanding teammate and was one of few remaining veterans on the team.

During Monday's game with the Texas Rangers, the Astros assigned the left-handed reliever to the Tampa Bay Rays for cash considerations.

Astros coaches and players will miss the personable Wright, who likes to talk sports, especially Auburn football.

"Wesley Wright has an opportunity to go play for a pennant," said Astros manager Bo Porter. "He's going to a great organization. He will be missed in our clubhouse, but it's a great opportunity for him."

In replacing the 28-year-old Wright, the Astros will select the contract of 30-year-old right-handed pitcher Philip Humber from Triple A Oklahoma City. Humber, who will be used in relief, started the season in the Houston starting rotation. He'll join the team in Oakland on Tuesday.

"It could be long (relief) or short it all depends on the situation," said Porter.

In 54 relief appearances this season Wright was 0-4 with a 3.92 ERA. He had been with the Astros organization since being selected from the Los Angeles Dodgers in the Rule 5 Draft in Dec. 2007.

"He's a great guy, even when he struggles or does well," said Astros starter Brett Oberholtzer. "He's a great leader.

"To us he was like an uncle. We call (Erik) Bedard a grandfather. Wes is a great guy."

Astros center fielder Brandon Barnes said the team will miss Wright, who has been used primarily as a left-handed specialist over the last two seasons.

"It's tough losing a guy like Wes," said Barnes. "I wish him the best of luck. And going to a team in the playoff race, he deserves it and we're all happy for him."

Humber struggled as an Astros starter, but has pitched well in relief at Oklahoma City. Humber was 0-8 with a 9.59 ERA with the Astros. In his last seven appearances at OKC, Humber was 2-0 with a 2.38 ERA with 14 strikeouts and two walks in 11 1/3 innings. He last pitched Aug. 9, going two innings.

"He's been throwing the ball well as of late," said Oberholtzer, who has pitched at OKC this season. "He's another veteran we can look up to and look for some leadership."

Oberholtzer overshadowed by Darvish

By Richard Dean / CSN Houston

Most of the pitching attention on Monday at Minute Maid Park was centered upon Yu Darvish and rightfully so. Darvish didn't allow a base runner until a two-out walk to Jonathan Villar in the sixth, and allowed his only hit in the eighth, a one-out homer to Carlos Corporan.

Darvish's mound opponent was a little overshadowed. Brett Oberholtzer allowed only two first-inning runs but came away with the loss as the Astros fell to the Texas Rangers 2-1.

In flirting with perfection, and later with a no-hitter, Darvish struck out a career-high 15 in his eight innings. Oberholtzer couldn't control what Darvish was accomplishing.

"I don't look at that," said Oberholtzer (2-1). "My job is to throw strikes and keep (runs) off the board regardless of what the other guy is throwing."

And except for the two runs Oberholtzer allowed in the first inning, the left-hander did keep the Rangers from scoring. The Rangers, who won their season-high eighth straight game and finished their road trip 9-1, got a RBI double from Adrian Beltre and a RBI single from A.J. Pierzynski.

"With Beltre, I didn't bury my curveball and he shot it out there to left-center," said Oberholtzer. "Pierzynski, a 0-0 fastball that I wanted it down and away, left it over the plate. Two pitches there I didn't execute."

Oberholtzer allowed three hits in the first inning with a walk. He allowed only four more hits in his 6 2/3 innings.

"I'm a guy that likes to get in a groove," said Oberholtzer. "They got me for a two-spot early but I threw the ball well the rest of the game. They're an aggressive team. If you put the ball over the plate, they're going to swing. That's apparent in the first inning."

Oberholtzer struck out six and walked two. He threw 98 pitches, 69 for strikes.

"He continues to pitch well," said Astros manager Bo Porter. "He gave them two runs early. He settled in and put us in position with a chance to win the game against their best guy."

Monday was Oberholtzer's third major league start. In that span he has a 0.87 ERA with two earned runs in 20 2/3 innings.

"Obie pitched great," said Astros left fielder Robbie Grossman. "I just wish we could have scored more runs. Every time he gets the ball he gives us a chance to win. You can't ask for more than that."

Corporan on Darvish: 'He was unbelievable'

By Richard Dean / CSN Houston

There was a time when pitchers were told that they were at a disadvantage pitching at Minute Maid Park. Yu Darvish is the perfect example where that isn't the case.

For the second time this season against the Astros, the Rangers right-hander flirted with perfection, settling for a 1-hitter in eight innings of work that included a career-high 15 strikeouts. Darvish pitched no-hit ball for 7 1/3 innings.

Darvish's masterpiece, combined with a scoreless ninth inning from Joe Nathan for his 35th save, gave the Rangers a 2-1 win on Monday, extending the Rangers' win streak to a season-high eight games and gave them a sweep of the four-game series. The Astros, who have lost six straight, had only two base runners against Darvish (12-5), who earlier this season came within one out of a perfect game against Houston.

"He was unbelievable," said Astros catcher Carlos Corporan, whose one-out eighth-inning home run was the Astros' only hit. "He was changing speeds, working with his slider, down, up, away, inside, under the dirt."

On April 2 at Minute Maid Park, Darvish was one out away from a perfect game before Marwin Gonzalez singled up the middle. On Monday afternoon Darvish again flirted with perfection. He retired the first 17 batters before walking Jonathan Villar on a full count.

"He's got six different pitches, three different-type sliders and he can locate every single pitch," said center fielder Brandon Barnes, who was 0-for-3 with three strikeouts against Darvish. "And with a 95-mph fastball, it's tough to just pick a pitch.

"He located very well today and he got you to chase when he needed you to chase."

Darvish is 3-0 with a 1.52 ERA and 37 strikeouts in three starts at Minute Maid Park this year.

The Rangers, who went 9-1 on their road trip, scored two first-inning runs off Houston starter Brett Oberholtzer (2-1) that stood up with an RBI double from Adrian Beltre, followed by a run-scoring single from catcher A.J. Pierzynski. Pierzynski was ejected by home plate umpire Ron Kulpa with two outs in the sixth for arguing balls and strikes after Villar walked.

Pierzynski was still upset about ball 3 being called on a 2-2 count to Villar. A called third strike would have ended the inning and extended Darvish's perfect game bid. Darvish started to run off the mound thinking a called strike was going to be called.

That was one of the few things that didn't go Darvish's way. He stretched his major-league-leading strikeout total to 207. His strikeout of Chris Carter in the fifth inning was his 200th of the season.

"You're talking about a guy that has No. 1 starter stuff, knows how to use it," said Astros manager Bo Porter. "He throws all his pitches in any count.

"His first fastball in the game was 89 (mph). Three innings later he's throwing 96. It all comes from the same arm slot."

Corporan was the only Astro to have an answer for Darvish. Corporan's seventh home run of the season to right field was on a first-pitch at-bat.

"With Darvish, you can't sit. You just have to see the ball and hit," said Corporan. "I found a fastball right there. I extended my arm and I put a good swing on it. It's a situation where you have to hit early in the count because he was pretty good.

"For me hitting is a bonus. I like to take care of my pitching staff. If I hit it's fine with me but I'm (happier) if I got a win and my pitcher did a great job."

Astros ship Wesley Wright to Rays

By Howard Chen / CSN Houston

The Astros have assigned reliever Wesley Wright to the Rays for cash considerations.

The lefty had a 3.92 ERA in 54 appearances with the Astros this season. Philip Humber will take his place on the Astros roster from Triple-A Oklahoma City. In his last seven relief appearances for OKC, Humber had a 2-0 record with a 2.38 ERA with 14 strikeouts over 11.1 innings.

Carter showing why Astros stick with him

By Richard Dean / CSN Houston

Chris Carter has struck out 153 times, second-most in the American League in 106 games, and is hitting only .213.

Astros manager Bo Porter keeps Carter in the lineup because Carter provides the team with a home-run threat. And the big guy has delivered with home runs the past two games against the Texas Rangers at Minute Maid Park.

On Sunday, the Astros lost 6-1, averting a shutout when Carter connected on a changeup off left-hander Martin Perez with two outs in the ninth inning.

"If it all comes together he can be special for a long time," said Porter. "He reminds you why you stick with him."

Acquired from Oakland in February, the right-handed hitting Carter is playing on a regular basis in the major leagues for the first time this season. He's still a work in progress. Porter knows it, Carter, who struck out twice on Sunday, knows it.

"I've been taking a lot of swings in the cage," said Carter, who has a team-leading 21 home runs.

Carter, who was the designated hitter on Sunday, has homered in consecutive games six times in his career. The last time was May 7 and May 8 at the Angels.

On Saturday Carter connected on a fastball off left-hander Derek Holland on a homer to left field that measured 396 feet. Sunday's home run to left field was measured at 425 feet.

"I hit the one yesterday (Saturday) better," said Carter.

Yu Darvish takes no-hitter into 8th inning, strikes out career-high 15

By Associated Press

HOUSTON -- With every swing and miss, this looked as if it might be the day Yu Darvish pitched a no-hitter against the overmatched Houston Astros.

And then with one out in the eighth inning, Carlos Corporan ended Darvish's latest bid with a home run.

Darvish once again neared perfection versus Houston, striking out a career-high 15 and permitting only one hit in eight innings as the Texas Rangers won 2-1 Monday for their season-high eighth straight victory.

"A win's a win," Darvish said through a translator. "I'm just glad I was a big part of this win."

Texas won for the 13th time in 14 games and headed home atop the AL West.

In early April, Darvish (12-5) was one out away from a perfect game at Minute Maid Park before Marwin Gonzalez singled between his legs. Darvish joined Nolan Ryan as the only pitchers in team history to have more than one start of at least eight innings with one hit or less.

Darvish became the first pitcher to have two no-hitters broken up in the eighth inning or later since it happened to Justin Verlander in 2011.

Outfielder Alex Rios chased Corporan's drive to the wall, but had to watch as it sailed about five rows into the stands. Darvish simply looked around, and then wiped his brow with his arm before preparing to throw his next pitch.

"Well, I'd like to see it happen of course," manager Ron Washington said. "But those are professional hitters over there, too, and Corporan caught one."

Until the homer, Houston's lone runner came when rookie Jonathan Villar drew a two-out walk in the sixth. A pitch before the walk, Texas catcher A.J. Pierzynski was ejected for arguing with plate umpire Ron Kulpa on a breaking ball he called low.

"Was it a strike? I don't know," Pierzynski said. "Obviously I thought it was and Ron didn't, and I was upset we walked the guy and I said a bad word and I was ejected."

Darvish was perplexed by the actions of his catcher.

"When he got ejected, I thought, 'What is he doing?'" Darvish said with a laugh.

The two-time All-Star ace from Japan was sharp all game, retiring the last two batters in eighth and exiting after increasing his major league-leading strikeout total to 207.

"He used everything today: slider, curveball, cutter, fastball," Washington said. "He moved it around, kept them off-balance. When they were looking for breaking balls he was throwing fastballs and cutters and when they were looking for cutters he was throwing breaking balls."

"I was pretty locked in," Darvish said.

Darvish struck out 14 in four prior games this year, including his earlier gem at Houston. His 15 strikeouts on Monday matched his career-high from his professional career in Japan.

He is 3-0 with a 1.52 ERA and 37 strikeouts in three starts in Houston this season, and is 4-1 with a 1.31 ERA and 50 strikeouts in five starts since returning from the disabled list.

Joe Nathan pitched a perfect ninth for his 35th save.

The AL West-leading Rangers took a quick lead over the last-place Astros. With two outs in the first, Ian Kinsler and Adrian Beltre doubled and Pierzynski hit an RBI single off Brett Oberholtzer (2-1).

Oberholtzer yielded seven hits and two runs with six strikeouts in 6 2/3 innings for his first loss in three major league starts. The Houston hitters had no such luck with Darvish.

Darvish was strong from the start relying mostly on a four-seam fastball, sliders and a cutter against the Astros' inexperienced lineup. "He doesn't just have control. This guy has command," Houston manager Bo Porter said. "He can throw every pitch the way he wants to throw it, even out of the strike zone. Which, when you have that kind of repertoire, you're going to be up against it."

Darvish struck out the side in the first inning before getting two fly outs and a ground out in the second.

The 26-year-old righty fanned two each in the third and fourth innings, struck out the side in the fifth and the first batter of the sixth inning. His strikeout of Chris Carter to start the fifth was his 200th of the season, giving him a team record for fewest games (23) needed to reach the mark.

In the sixth, Darvish started walking off the mound after his close pitch to Villar. Pierzynski also began heading to the dugout, but Kulpa said it missed.

Pierzynski didn't like the call, started yelling in Kulpa's face and was quickly tossed. Geovany Soto took over at catcher and Darvish walked Villar on a full count.

Darvish, a two-time MVP in Japan, flirted with perfection last Sept. 3, too, retiring the first 17 batters at Kansas City.
Game notes

Injured Texas DH Lance Berkman is getting Monday off and will DH for Double-A Frisco on Tuesday and Wednesday and will be re-evaluate him after that. ... Neftali Feliz, who was expected to throw Saturday for Round Rock but did not pitch as a precaution because of mild right arm triceps tendinitis, has been shut down. Feliz has been rehabbing from Tommy John surgery last year. ... Darvish set rookie franchise records for wins (16) and strikeouts (221) last season. He finished third in AL Rookie of the Year voting behind winner Mike Trout and Oakland outfielder Yoenis Cespedes.
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Rays claim Wesley Wright

By Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. -- The Tampa Bay Rays have bolstered their bullpen, claiming durable lefty Wesley Wright off waivers from the Houston Astros.

The Rays made the move Monday. Tampa Bay is in the thick of the races for the AL East and the wild-card spots.

Wright is expected to join the Rays for Tuesday night's home game against Seattle.

The 28-year-old Wright is 0-4 with a 3.92 ERA and leads AL relievers with 54 appearances. He has struck out 40 in 41 1-3 innings with 16 walks.

Wright pitched in 77 games last year. He has spent six seasons in the majors, all with Houston, and was the longest-tenured player on the last-place Astros.

Elias Says...

By Elias Sports Bureau, Inc.

MLB

Darvish strikes again

From Elias: Yu Darvish struck out 15 batters, allowed one hit and issued one walk against the Astros on Monday, almost replicating his performance versus Houston on April 2, when he registered 14 strikeouts, gave up one hit (with two outs in the ninth inning, breaking up his perfect game) and did not walk a batter. No other major-league pitcher since 1900 won two games in his career in which he recorded at least 14 strikeouts, allowed no more than one hit and walked one or fewer batters. Darvish's 15 strikeouts gave him 207 for the season in 23 starts. That's the fewest starts into a season that a pitcher reached 200 Ks since 2002, when Curt Schilling met that mark in his 22nd start and Randy Johnson did so in start number 23, each for the Diamondbacks.

Texas Rangers

Albers makes it look easy

From Elias: Andrew Albers shut out the Indians on Monday night, after he threw 8 1/3 scoreless innings last Tuesday in his big-league debut. Albers is the first pitcher not to allow a run in either of his first two games in the major leagues, while pitching at least eight innings in each game, since Baltimore's Tom Phoebus began his career with consecutive shutouts in September 1966.

Minnesota Twins

Hamels throws complete-game win vs. Braves

From Elias: Cole Hamels entered Monday night's game with a 4-13 record, and he shared the major-league lead in losses. But he tossed a complete-game six-hitter to beat the Braves, 5-1. This was the latest calendar date in the expansion era (1961 to present) on which a pitcher with the most losses in the major leagues threw a complete-game win against the team with the best record in the majors.

Philadelphia Phillies

Cubs scoreless in last 32 innings at Wrigley Field

From Elias: The Cubs, who were shut out by the Reds on Monday night, have not scored in their last 32 innings at Wrigley Field, setting a franchise record for consecutive scoreless innings at home. The team's longest previous stretches without scoring in its own park were 31-inning droughts in 1917 and 1951. The Cubs' dry spell is the longest at home for any major-league team since the Angels were blanked for 33 straight innings in June 2004.

Chicago Cubs

Robertson retires 25 straight with bases loaded

From Elias: David Robertson struck out Mark Trumbo and Chris Nelson with the bases loaded in the top of the ninth inning to close out the Yankees' 2-1 victory over the Angels. Robertson has retired the last 25 batters he's faced with the bases loaded. That streak, which started in April 2011, is the longest of its kind for any major-league pitcher since the Giants' Jeff Brantley set down 30 straight batters with the bases full from 1989 to 1991.

New York Yankees

Kuroda has 1.31 ERA over last 10 home starts

From Elias: Hiroki Kuroda, who threw eight scoreless innings against the Angels on Monday night, has a 1.31 ERA over his last 10 starts at Yankee Stadium. Only three other Yankees pitchers had an ERA that low over 10 home starts in one season: Allie Reynolds in 1952 (1.27), Whitey Ford in 1955 (lowest 10-game span: 1.06) and Steve Kline in 1972 (lowest 10-game span: 1.00).

New York Yankees

Clutch Callaspo

From Elias: Alberto Callaspo's two-run double in the ninth inning gave the Athletics a 3-1 lead in their victory over the Blue Jays, just one day after Callaspo's double with a tie score in the eighth inning brought home the decisive run in Oakland's victory against Toronto. The only other players this season who in back-to-back games produced a game-winning RBI with an extra-base hit in the eighth inning or later are Chris Davis and Paul Goldschmidt. Callaspo is the first Athletics player to do that since Mark McGwire in 1988.

Oakland Athletics

Twins last 22 runs scored on homers

From Elias: Brian Dozier's solo home run and Trevor Plouffe's two-run shot accounted for the Twins' scoring in Monday night's 3-0 win over the Indians. Minnesota's last 22 runs have been scored on home runs, the longest such streak by a major-league team since the Phillies scored 22 straight runs with homers back in 2002.

Minnesota Twins

Royals' best 20-game stretch since the summer of 1980

From Elias: The Royals defeated the Marlins on Monday night and are now 17-3 in their last 20 games. It's Kansas City's best 20-game stretch since 1980, when they went 17-3 from July 31 through August 20. George Brett hit .468 (37 for 79) with 22 runs scored and 25 RBI while playing in each of those 20 games.

Kansas City Royals

Phegley's two run-scoring hits highlight White Sox win

From Elias: White Sox catcher Josh Phegley, batting ninth in the lineup, was 2-for-4 with an RBI single in the fifth inning and another run-scoring single in the eighth inning of a 6-2 win over the Tigers. Entering the game, White Sox catchers had the lowest batting average this season for any major-league team at that position (.198) and the club's ninth-place hitters had the lowest batting average among American League teams in that slot (.181).
Chicago White Sox

Another 4-hit game for Rockies rookie

From Elias: Nolan Arenado was 4-for-5 on Monday night against the Padres, after he had four hits in a game versus the Reds in June. The only other rookies with multiple four-hit games this season are Junior Lake and David Lough, with two apiece.

Colorado Rockies

Gonzalez extends RBI streak

From Elias: Adrian Gonzalez was 3-for-4 with a run batted in, helping the Dodgers defeat the Mets and extending his streak to seven straight games with an RBI. Gonzalez is the first Dodgers player to drive in a run in seven consecutive games since Adrian Beltre did so in eight straight contests in 2004.

Los Angeles Dodgers

RedHawks Rally Falls Short in Tucson

Early seven-run deficit too much to overcome as OKC drops third straight

By Oklahoma City RedHawks

Tucson, Ariz. - The Tucson Padres jumped out to a seven-run lead through three innings and held off a fight from the Oklahoma City RedHawks to win 7-5 before 1,620 Monday night at Kino Stadium.

With the loss, the RedHawks (69-54) have dropped four of five on their current road trip and have lost three straight games for the first time since June 23-25.

The Padres (64-59) wasted no time, putting four runs on the board in the first inning. With a runner at first and none out, Daniel Robertson sent a soft line drive to shallow center field. George Springer attempted to make a diving catch but missed, as the ball rolled all the way to the wall for an RBI triple. Robertson then scored on a sac fly by Dean Anna to make it 2-0.

With runners at second and third and two out, the RedHawks elected to intentionally walk Scott Moore in order to face Chris Robinson. Robinson then sent a two-run single into right field to extend the lead to 4-0.

Tucson added three more in the third, taking advantage of two Oklahoma City errors and pushed the lead to 7-0. The RedHawks had committed just one error in their previous nine games combined.

The RedHawks were able to break through in the sixth after a nice two-out rally. After having none on, the RedHawks strung three straight hits together, including a two-run single by Jon Singleton to make it 7-2.

The comeback continued in the eighth with three more runs. Brandon Laird launched a two-run homer, and Che-Hsuan Lin provided a two-out RBI single to pull the RedHawks within two runs at 7-5.

With two runners still on base, Tucson reliever Kevin Quackenbush got Trevor Crowe to ground out and end the inning.

The RedHawks threatened again in the ninth. Jimmy Paredes and Laird each collected singles to put the tying runs on base with one out. However, Padres closer Miles Mikolas retired the next two batters to seal the victory and earn his 23rd save.

Tucson received a strong start from Robbie Erlin (4-3), who allowed two runs and seven hits over seven innings. The lefty struck out four and walked three.

Paul Clemens battled through 5.1 innings after the rocky start and was saddled with his first loss with the RedHawks. Clemens (2-1) allowed seven runs (five earned), eight hits, and three walks. For the second straight start, he did not register a strikeout. Clemens did finish strong, though, retiring eight of his final nine hitters. He and reliever Eric Berger combined to hold the Padres scoreless with just one hit after falling in the 7-0 hole.

The RedHawks will look to break their losing skid when they meet the Padres at 9:05 p.m. central time. Live coverage begins at 8:35 p.m. on AM 1340 "The Game," 1340thegame.com, or through the free IHeartRadio mobile app.

Foltynewicz Finding His Way

Hard-Throwing Right-Hander Draws Comparisons

By Chris Blake / Corpus Christi Hooks

100 MPH

It's a number that elicits oohs and aahs at ballparks around the country. When triple digits flash on stadium radar gun displays, some elite hurlers come to mind. Names like Bob Feller, Nolan Ryan and Randy Johnson. And the Houston Astros hope they have a pitcher whose name can be added to that list: Mike Foltynewicz.

The 21-year-old from Minooka, Ill., has shown flashes of brilliance, frequently hitting 100 MPH in three months with the Corpus Christi Hooks. He's also displayed some wildness, issuing 45 walks over 86 1/3 innings.

In his last start, Wednesday against Northwest Arkansas, Foltynewicz dominated the Naturals into the fifth inning before allowing a solo home run.

"I think he lost focus a little bit," pitching coach Gary Ruby said. "But he threw a no-hitter through five and a third and that wasn't even his best stuff. He really labored with his command, he missed down a lot."

Ruby was encouraged by the nine groundball outs "Folty" induced, a sign the right-hander is learning to pitch to contact instead of trying to blow hitters away with triple-digit heat.

"The progress he's making is he understands what's down in the strike zone," Ruby said. "He's still got a ways to go with his command in and out, there's no question about that. His breaking ball is getting better; his change-up has been much, much better. So, step-by-step he's becoming a polished pitcher that'll be ready for the big leagues."

Foltynewicz has worked especially hard on a change-up this season to go with a slider and curveball. While he'll unleash a will-breaking bender on occasion, finding the curve consistently hasn't been easy in 2013.

"The curveball has been my go-to pitch the last probably two or three years in pro ball. It's one of those times where I can't find it these past couple months," Foltynewicz said. "It happens, it's baseball. So I'm just going to have to keep practicing."

Selected by the Astros with the 19th overall pick in the 2010 draft, Foltynewicz learned early that he had a special arm.

"Probably around eighth grade, going into high school freshman year. All the coaches saying I had a good arm for my age. I liked playing the outfield and infield and hitting and all that, but they just said you're going to have to start focusing on pitching because you have a better arm than a lot of the kids your age."

Foltynewicz pitched his first full season of pro ball in 2011 for the Lexington Legends of the South Atlantic League and struggled, going 5-11 with a 4.97 ERA in 26 starts. He walked 51 and struck out 88 in 134 innings, trying to overpower opposing hitters most of the summer.

"It didn't really work out for me because those guys can hit it anywhere, it doesn't matter how hard you throw," Foltynewicz said. "The biggest part was commanding my fastball, which I'm still practicing on getting better at."

The jump from high school to professional baseball at a young age took its toll, too.

"The mental part of the game was tough my first year. I didn't play more than 60 games in a year my whole life and then you get thrown into 140. That was a big drain on my body and my arm."

Set to repeat with Lexington in 2012, Foltynewicz worked hard with Legends pitching coach Dave Borkowski on the mental side of pitching. The results were exceptional.

Foltynewicz started 27 games and went 14-4 with a 3.14 earned run average en route to earning Astros Minor League Pitcher of the Year honors. Baseball America named him Houston's fifth-best prospect before the 2013 season.

Foltynewicz made his Double-A debut for the Hooks May 6 at San Antonio and allowed one hit in five shutout innings with nine strikeouts. His best performance came July 24 at Whataburger Field, also against San Antonio, when he tossed eight scoreless innings and struck out eight, throwing 108 pitches.

High pitch counts have chased Foltynewicz from games, but he understands what he needs to do to improve.

"You've got to throw the ball over the middle of the plate and let them hit it, you got eight guys out there for a reason and that's what we're working on too," he said. "Getting that off-speed more effective so my fastball is better in the later innings."

Ruby offered Foltyniewicz high praise, comparing him to a young Bartolo Colon, whom he coached in Cleveland's system at Triple-A Buffalo in 1996-97.

"Mike is a little better athlete and he's got better secondary pitches than Bartolo did," Ruby said. "He's about the best comparison. Second would be Cosart."

That would be former Hook Jared Cosart, who made his Astros debut July 12 and has posted a 1.36 ERA in five major league starts. Ruby said the two hard-throwing right-handers could one day anchor Houston's rotation. For those who couldn't get enough of starting flamethrowers like J.R. Richard, Mike Scott, Roy Oswalt, and yes, Ryan, that's good news.

JetHawks beat Mavs in rubber game

Perdomo's three-run homer ties game as Lancaster wins

By Jason Schwartz / Lancaster JetHawks

ADELANTO, Calif. - Carlos hit a game-tying three-run homer in the fourth inning and the JetHawks went on to beat the High Desert Mavericks, 9-8, in the rubber game on Sunday afternoon at Mavericks Stadium.

Perdomo tallied three hits in the game including an RBI-single in the that scored Delino DeShields who led off the game with a double. Perdomo eventually scored on a Chris Epps fly ball to give Lancaster a 2-0 lead.

High Desert came back with a Pat Kivlehan three-run double to take the lead.

Dan Gulbransen hit his first home run with the JetHawks in the second inning to tie the game.

The Mavericks went on to score two in the second to retake the lead and one in the third on a Patrick Brady home run to go up 6-3. They scored all six runs against starter Colton Cain (1-0) who allowed five earned runs over six innings of work. The left-hander settled down to throw scoreless innings in the fourth, fifth and sixth which set the stage for the come back.

Perdomo tied the game with the home run n the fourth inning and Lancaster broke the tie in the sixth inning on an Andrew Aplin sac-fly to left field. Tyler Heineman and Gulbransen added RBIs later in the inning to put the JetHawks up by three.

Gera Sanchez made his team debut with two scoreless innings and Travis Ballew, who allowed a two-run homer to Steven Proscia, survived a ninth inning scare to finish the game and notch his 19th save.

The JetHawks (31-19, 70-50) head home to take on the Inland Empire 66ers and High Desert Mavericks in a six-game homestand. First pitch on Tuesday is at 7:05 p.m.

Don't miss a moment of the 2013 season as the JetHawks look to repeat as Cal League Champions. 2013 Cal League postseason tickets and other great ticket packages are on sale now. To order, call (661) 726-5400 or visit jethawks.com.

Rattlers blow out Bandits in series finale

Quad Cities loses first series in three weeks but remains 1 1/2 games behind Cedar Rapids

By Marco LaNave / Quad Cities River Bandits

Wisconsin Timber Rattlers right-hander Austin Ross kept the Quad Cities River Bandits hitless for 5 1/3 innings, while his offense scored seven runs on 10 hits in the third and fourth innings combined, building a lead that stood for a 9-1 victory in front of 2,292 at Modern Woodmen Park Monday night.

The Timber Rattlers had 15 hits, and five players had multi-hit games, led by second baseman Alfredo Rodriguez, who went 4-for-5 with three runs scored. Rodriguez doubled to start the third inning against Quad Cities right-hander Mark Appel (1-1), who had retired the first six batters he faced. Catcher Tyler Roberts singled to put runners at first and third bases, and shortstop Orlando Arcia hit into a fielder's choice that brought in the first run. Center fielder Tyrone Taylor singled, and left fielder Michael Reed hit an RBI single for a 2-0 lead.

In the fourth inning, right fielder Max Walla hit a leadoff double against Appel. First baseman Parker Berberet singled to put runners at first and third bases, and Rodriguez added an RBI single on the first three pitches of the inning. Roberts made it 4-0 with a sacrifice fly,

and Arcia singled and went to second base with the throw from the outfield. Center fielder then hit a two-run double, extending the margin to 6-0 and ending Appel's night after 3 1/3 innings. Left-hander Mitchell Lambson allowed Taylor to score on third baseman Mike Garza's RBI single, setting the nine hits and seven runs as the highest totals against Appel in any of his eight professional starts. Lambson worked the next three innings for Quad Cities (30-19 second half, 68-50 overall) and kept the Timber Rattlers (22-28, 51-64) from extending the lead. His 3 2/3 innings tied his longest outing of the season.

Meanwhile, Ross (1-0) retired the first 11 River Bandits and gave up the first baserunner on his only walk to shortstop Carlos Correa with two outs in the fourth inning. In the sixth inning, third baseman Austin Elkins hit a one-out single for the team's first and only hit against Ross, who recorded four strikeouts.

The Timber Rattlers bullpen opened with right-hander Chris Razo, who allowed an infield single to River Bandits catcher Roberto Pena and RBI double by Elkins in the eighth inning for the home team's only run. Left-hander Taylor Wall worked a scoreless ninth inning.

Right-hander Jamaine Cotton allowed an unearned run in each of the eighth and ninth innings. Taylor hit a sacrifice fly to bring in Rodriguez in the eighth, and Berberet hit an RBI single to score first baseman Matt Garza for a 9-1 lead. It was the largest score by a River Bandits opponent since Cedar Rapids scored 12 runs June 12. Wisconsin was the first team in three weeks to win a series over Quad Cities. The River Bandits had won a season-high five straight series since losing two of three in Lake County July 20-22.

After the last off day of the season Tuesday, the River Bandits start a three-game series in Clinton at 7 p.m. Wednesday. River Bandits left-hander Josh Hader (1-0) is scheduled to face LumberKings right-hander Rigoberto Garcia (0-4).

UP NEXT: The first 2,000 fans to Modern Woodmen Park Saturday night will receive a bobblehead of Minnesota Twins first baseman and former River Bandit Justin Morneau, courtesy of Mediacom and the Dispatch-Argus. The 7 p.m. game kicks off a seven-game home stand through Friday, Aug. 23. Single-game tickets are on sale at the River Bandits box office at Modern Woodmen Park, by phone at 563-324-3000 and online at www.riverbandits.com. Season ticket and mini-plan packages start at just seven games and begin at less than \$50. Call a River Bandits account representative today to choose your seats and get the details of our various mini-plan packages.

ABOUT THE BANDITS: The River Bandits ownership is making one of the biggest improvements to Modern Woodmen Park since the ballpark was first built back in 1931! A new Ferris wheel, standing 112 feet over the playing field, is planned for next spring, along with a carousel and other new games and attractions. This season, the team just unveiled a new 300-foot long dual zip line, a rock climbing wall, a Mediacom Frog Hopper, and a number of new bounce houses. The team also boasts a new major league affiliate, the Houston Astros, and fans can see the first team in Minor League Baseball history with back-to-back No. 1 overall draft picks - 2012 top pick Carlos Correa and 2013 top pick Mark Appel, as well as 2012 first-round draft choice Lance McCullers. With new rides, new attractions, new improvements, a new affiliate and future major league stars, the second half of this season is one every fan will not want to miss!

'Cats end homestand on high note, win 11-5

Tri-City takes series from Jamestown with season-high run total

By Matt Appel / Tri-City ValleyCats

TROY, NY- A night after the ValleyCats offense was quiet for the first time in nearly a week, the 'Cats came back to score their most runs in a game all year long, beating the Jamestown Jammers 11-5 on Sunday to cap off their most successful homestand of the year. The 'Cats scored early and often in their victory Sunday, as they had four different multi-run innings. Conrad Gregor, who extended his hitting streak to seven games, got the scoring started in the first with an RBI single that brought home James Ramsay. The next batter, Michael Martinez, hit his eighth home run of the season to dead center off Jamestown starter Dovydas Neverauskas (3-3), putting an exclamation mark on the inning, and putting the 'Cats on top, 3-0.

After Tri-City starter Evan Grills (5-0) gave up a run in the top of the second, the offense struck for three more runs in the bottom half. Adam Nelubowich scored on a wild pitch, and Tyler White drove home two with a single, giving the 'Cats a 6-1 lead.

With the victory, Grills is now tied for the most wins in the league with five. The left-hander went five innings, allowing five hits and three runs.

The Jammers had cut the ValleyCats' lead to 6-3 going into the bottom of the fifth when Tri-City broke through again. Consecutive RBI singles from Ronnie Mitchell and Jake Rodriguez added two runs to the 'Cats total, giving them an 8-3 lead.

That inning, Mitchell was called out on a play at the plate in which he appeared to be safe. 'Cats manager Ed Romero was subsequently ejected by home plate umpire James Pattison for arguing the call. It was Romero's second ejection of the year.

For good measure, the 'Cats added three more in the eighth inning to establish a new season-high mark for runs in a game. Thanks to a throwing error on a pickoff attempt that plated one run, and two run-yielding wild pitches, the ValleyCats scored three times, with the benefit of just one hit.

Ramsay, White, Mitchell, and Nelubowich all had two hits for the 'Cats (32-22), which finished up its homestand by going 5-1, scoring at least eight runs in all five wins. In four of the six games, Tri-City scored at least ten runs.

A sellout crowd of 4,693 watched the 'Cats take the rubber match of its series with Jamestown (32-20) on NFL Night at Joseph L. Bruno Stadium. The ValleyCats, and the rest of the league, are off until Wednesday, as the ninth annual New York-Penn League All-Star Game will be played Tuesday at Dodd Stadium in Norwich, CT. Chris Cotton, Michael Feliz, Chan Moon & Andrew Walter are the ValleyCats representatives.

Astros split two games with Cardinals

By Hunter Reed / Greeneville Astros

Johnson City, TN - The Greeneville Astros (33-18) and the Johnson City Cardinals (26-25) met at Cardinal Park on Monday night to complete their suspended game from July 22 and to play their regularly scheduled game. As it turned out, the Cardinals came back to defeat the Astros in the previously suspended game, 7-5. Then, the Astros responded by doubling up the Cardinals 8-4 in the ensuing seven-inning match.

At the end of the night, the first place Astros still held a seven-game lead in the Appalachian League West Division over the Johnson City Cardinals, who are currently in third. Meanwhile, the second-place Kingsport Mets (29-20) had their game with the Princeton Rays postponed for rain. Therefore, the Astros maintained their three-game lead atop the division as well.

At the time of the suspension on July 22, the Astros were leading 5-4 with one out in the bottom of the fifth inning and the bases loaded for the Cardinals. That is where play resumed on Monday.

Prior to the rain stopping play exactly three weeks ago, the Astros had a five-run second inning to take the initial lead in the game. Chase McDonald had a two-run homer for the first score, Jack Mayfield followed with a RBI double and, finally, Juan Santana connected on a two-run single.

Over the next three innings, the Cardinals gradually chipped away at the Astros' lead until rain halted the action. The Cardinals scored on a ground out with the bases loaded in the third inning. In the fourth inning, a solo homer from Justin Ringo and a Vaughn Bryan RBI single cut further into the lead. Then, with the bases loaded in the fifth, the Astros walked in a runner just before the game had to be suspended with the Astros holding on to a one-run lead at 5-4.

When the game resumed on Monday, multiple players had to be substituted in the game due to various roster changes for both teams over the past three weeks. Once that was resolved, Richy Pedroza grounded into a force out that scored a run for the Cardinals to tie the game at 5-5 by the end of the inning.

After a scoreless sixth inning, the Cardinals broke the tie and took the lead in the seventh inning. First, they got a leadoff solo home run from Rowan Wick. Then, after Justin Ringo doubled, Richy Pedroza followed with another double to score a second run in the inning and give the Cardinals a 7-5 lead and eventual win.

With the loss, the Astros' string of 13 consecutive wins between July 11 and July 27 was interrupted and will officially go down as a 10-game win streak.

Kyle Grana (1-0), who was making his Appalachian League debut, picked up the win for the Cardinals after pitching 1.1 innings, giving up one hit and striking out one. Meanwhile, Zach Loraine got his first save of the season after closing the game in the ninth inning with one hit and one strikeout as well.

After a short break, the regularly scheduled game began with the Cardinals taking an early 3-0 lead in the first inning. To lead off the inning, the Cardinals had four consecutive singles with two of them, by Justin Ringo and Ronnierd Garcia, each knocking in a run. Then, with one out and the bases loaded, Steve Bean knocked in a run as he grounded into a force out.

Over the next few innings, the Astros responded well with seven runs. In the second inning, after Darwin Rivera doubled to lead off, Marc Wik singled and moved Rivera to third. Then, Wallace Gonzalez doubled on a fly ball to center field to plate two runs and pull the Astros within one run of the Cardinals at 3-2.

In the third inning, the Astros tied the game when Marc Wik singled on a line drive to left field to score Angel Ibanez. Then, the Astros took the lead when Cristian Moronta connected on a deep ball that just hit the top of the high wall in Johnson City's right field or it would have been a home run. As it turned out, Marc Wik and Wallace Gonzalez both scored on the hit but Moronta was thrown out trying to get a double.

In the bottom of the third inning, the Cardinals did manage to get a sacrifice fly from Rowan Wick to score Justin Ringo. However, the Astros still held a one-run lead with more to come.

In the fourth inning, Darwin Rivera hit a two-run single for the Astros. Then, a few innings later in the seventh, the Astros tacked on one more score when Thomas Lindauer knocked in a run to give the Astros an 8-4 victory.

Astros' starter Edison Frias (3-3) earned the win. After a tough start to the game, he pitched well as he went five innings and gave up nine hits, four runs and struck out three. Then, Sebastian Kessay and Chris Munnely finished the seven-inning game with a scoreless inning of work each.

The Astros return to Johnson City to face the Cardinals on Tuesday in game two of the series. For more information on the Greenville Astros, please visit www.greenvilleastros.com or call (423) 638-0411.

Callaspo delivers winning hit in second straight game

Straily pitches 7 1/3 innings of one-run ball in duel with Happ

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

TORONTO -- After owning a one-run lead for the first seven innings of Monday's rare matinee at Rogers Centre, the A's lost it and found themselves having to fight back to regain it.

They've done it many time before. And they did it again with help from the new guy.

Alberto Callaspo, who made a costly error in the eighth that allowed the Blue Jays to tie the game, rebounded quickly from the miscue and laced a go-ahead two-run double to right field off closer Casey Janssen for a 3-1 lead that ultimately turned into a series-clinching 5-1 victory.

It marked the second straight day Callaspo was responsible for the decisive run for the A's, who finished 3-3 on what started out in Cincinnati as a discouraging road trip.

"To finish 3-3 on the road trip, that's good, because we hadn't won a series in a while," Brandon Moss said. "We played better. Our offense, for a few games, it looked really good, and I think that's important for us because, for the most part, our pitching's always there. It's just scoring enough runs, and hopefully this is a sign of things to come for us."

Callaspo was hitless in his first 11 at-bats with the A's, following his trade from the division-rival Angels, and Moss was thinking about scoping out a rabbit's foot for his new teammate "because he was so unlucky."

"When he first got here, he was swinging the bat great, he just wasn't getting any hits," Moss said. "He's been around for a while and knows what he's doing, has professional at-bats. I don't think there's any surprise he's been playing well, that he's getting big hits. I think what's more surprising is how unlucky he was when he first got here."

"I'm starting to feel a lot better," Callaspo said. "I'm glad I had the chance and was able to contribute to the team."

Right-hander Dan Straily did his part, too. And considering Oakland's starting rotation has been in flux, the righty's gem of an outing was all the more encouraging.

Straily had not completed five innings in any of his previous three starts before going a career-high 7 1/3 innings against the Blue Jays, allowing one run on just six hits with three walks and five strikeouts.

"I feel like we needed it," Straily said. "The team needed it, especially after yesterday, taxing the back end of the bullpen a little bit. Going into today, the mindset was throwing as hard as I can for as long as I can. I was able to execute pitches, keep the ball down in the zone, and that's something I haven't been able to do the last few times out."

Straily's struggles in recent weeks coincided with inconsistency from lefty Tommy Milone, who was optioned to Triple-A Sacramento in favor of top pitching prospect Sonny Gray. Like Milone, Straily appeared to be on the bubble, making Monday's outing significant. Yet Straily didn't get the win.

That's because the A's waited until the ninth to break a 1-1 tie with four runs after not scoring since Chris Young led off the game against lefty J.A. Happ with a home run on the 10th pitch of the at-bat.

Josh Donaldson led off the ninth with a base hit and, one out later, advanced to third on Moss' double. Righty Janssen opted to intentionally walk Josh Reddick, paving the way for Callaspo's game-changing hit. Stephen Vogt added on with an RBI single and Eric Sogard's ensuing sacrifice fly gave the A's even more insurance.

Callaspo's heroics more than made up for his error in the eighth, when Ryan Cook's potential inning-ending double-play ball off the bat of Jose Bautista hit off the third baseman's glove and into the outfield, allowing the Blue Jays to score their only run.

"That's a tough error," Donaldson said. "This turf, some balls stay true, and others it's like a bouncy ball. It hits and just keeps going, and that's what looked like happened on that ball. But, the error's forgotten about because he had the big hit right there."

"It always atones for it, when you end up getting a big hit like that," manager Bob Melvin said. "It gets you close to your team. It's very difficult to come to a club late in the year and feel comfortable. The more you do that in those types of situations, the more comfortable you feel, the more part of it you feel."

A's rally in ninth inning to beat Toronto Blue Jays

By John Hickey / Oakland Tribune

TORONTO -- The A's put on a show Monday for a team they might meet if they get to the playoffs.

Not Toronto. The Blue Jays won't get there, and the A's 5-1 victory on the strength of a four-run ninth-inning rally is just one more piece of evidence why.

A handful of the Boston Red Sox were sitting behind home plate. The Sox, owners of the best record in the American League East, had the day off and play the Blue Jays at the Rogers Centre on Tuesday.

Former A's outfielder Jonny Gomes was there. And Dustin Pedroia. And Jarrod Saltalamacchia.

"In a great city like this they come to the ballpark?" A's first baseman Brandon Moss said, laughing. "It's like, 'I'm going to be on TV.' They play in Boston.

Don't they get enough attention?"

On this day, they were vying to get the A's attention during the game.

"They were telling me to hit a home run," right fielder Josh Reddick said. "I told them I didn't know if I could. I'd already hit five."

Reddick's five homers in the first two games of this series had earned the A's only a split. Two-run doubles by Alberto Callaspo in the eighth inning Sunday and in the ninth inning Monday broke late ties and enabled the A's to win the series and salvage a 3-3 trip. Callaspo started 0 for 11 with the A's, but since he is 7 for 13 with five doubles. He is a third baseman asked to play second base for the most part, but Monday he was at third base when he muffed a potential double play ball in the eighth inning that allowed the tying run to score.

So all he did was come up with the bases loaded in the top of the ninth and rifle his second double of the game to right field, bringing home the first two runs of a four-run uprising.

"In his first few games, he was hitting the ball hard, but he got nothing," Moss said. "I told him I was going to get him a rabbit's foot. But he's a professional hitter who does whatever it takes. So we're not surprised to see him getting these big hits."

Callaspo was downcast over not fielding the ground ball that could have been an inning-ending double play in the eighth. Come the ninth, it was ancient history.

"I'm glad to get a chance and to contribute to my new team," Callaspo said. "It's a great feeling."

A's players have said from the time of the July 30 trade how much they liked what they saw from Callaspo when he was playing for the Angels. The A's had to give up former first-round draft pick Grant Green to get the veteran infielder.

"He's making the trade look good," third baseman Josh Donaldson said. "He's a solid player, scrappy. What's impressed me the most is how well he's played second base."

With manager Bob Melvin wanting to get Donaldson's feet off the hard Rogers Centre artificial turf for a day, Callaspo started at third for the first time since the trade.

The grounder by Juan Bautista that kicked off Callaspo's glove was hit hard. More than that, Donaldson said, it was a product of tricky playing conditions.

"That's a tough error," Donaldson said. "Some balls here hop true, and some are like bouncy ball."

A's starter Dan Straily, who had a shutout at the time, gave Callaspo a pass, too.

"I'm sure he felt bad about it," Straily said. "It's a game of failure. But he got the big hit after that."

The A's lost infielder Adam Rosales to the Rangers for the second time in two weeks when Texas claimed him on waivers. Since July 31, the A's put Rosales on waivers, the Rangers claimed him, the Rangers put him on waivers, the A's claimed him, the A's put him on waivers, and the Rangers claimed him. He will at least be reunited with his car, which is still in Texas after having been shipped there after the first Rangers claim.

Straily threw a season-high 71/3 innings and his 94 pitches were two fewer than he threw over 42/3 innings two starts ago in a loss to the Blue Jays.

The A's played knowing that center fielder Coco Crisp (left wrist) and catcher Derek Norris (back spasms) were not available. The A's will decide Tuesday if a roster move or two is needed before the start of a three-game series with the Houston Astros.

After being one of two A's players on the Rogers Centre turf all four games, Yoenis Cespedes is expected to be the designated hitter Tuesday against the Astros.

The A's will get a look at disabled catcher John Jaso (concussion) and disabled starting pitcher Brett Anderson (stress fracture, right foot) on Tuesday. Anderson will throw a simulated game.

TUESDAY'S GAME

Houston (Jordan Lyles 4-6) at A's (Bartolo Colon 14-4), 7:05 p.m. CSNCA