



Cobb's complete effort goes unrewarded

By Rick Eymer, MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Rays right-hander Alex Cobb pitched eight innings, his longest outing since coming off the disabled list two weeks ago, and he was spectacular.

However, A's rookie Sonny Gray and the Oakland bullpen were just a bit better, and the Rays were on the wrong end of a 2-1 decision to the Athletics on Saturday night at O.co Coliseum.

"We're pitching well and we're catching it," Rays manager Joe Maddon said. "The offense has to pick it up. We've got good offensive players; we need to get these guys right."

With the loss, the Rays dropped to 1 1/2 games behind the A's for the first Wild Card spot in the American League and 4 1/2 games back of Boston in the AL East.

"This is a new situation for us," Rays third baseman Evan Longoria said. "In the past we've found ways to win. This simply can't happen or we're going home at the end of September."

Longoria continues to lead the Rays with 72 RBIs, even though he's been in a little slump lately.

"There's no doubt I am frustrated," he said. "I had a good week-and-a-half a couple of weeks ago, and it seems like I can't put it all together over a long period. It's eluded me. I'm doing the same things. We've had individuals who have been hot, but as a team it's getting pretty frustrating."

James Loney recorded two hits for the Rays, who have lost six of seven and have seemingly lost the ability to produce much offense.

The Rays scored 89 runs this month, their fewest ever in August. They failed to plate at least 100 runs in a month for the first time in over four years.

"You just have to stay positive," Longoria said. "You keep thinking it will come to an end. I hope we can have one of those breakout games and then put together 15 games in a row where the offense is all together."

Cobb allowed two runs on five hits, walking four and striking out seven in a complete-game loss.

Coco Crisp led the A's with three hits, including a home run, and drove in both runs.

"I felt great the whole game," Cobb said. "Obviously the home run to Coco was a tough one. I felt like I executed that pitch, but he's a good hitter and he's owned me my whole career. I have to find a new way to pitch to him, maybe make up a pitch."

The Rays rallied for a run in the ninth, with Desmond Jennings knocking in Wil Myers, who reached base on a double against A's closer Grant Balfour.

"We've lost two one-run games the last two nights. It happens," Maddon said. "You stay with the boys and keep encouraging them."

Former Rays catcher Stephen Vogt hit his first career triple off Cobb in the sixth, leading to the A's first run.

Cobb could only shake his head.

"It was the first time I've had to pitch against him," Cobb said. "He's caught me throughout my career. It was kind of weird, but I'm happy for him."

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Notebook: Gimenez back with Rays after battling injury

By Rick Eymer, MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Rays catcher Chris Gimenez endured a frustrating season with Triple-A Durham for the chance to make it back to the Major Leagues.

Gimenez, who has spent parts of the past four years in the Majors, was back in the Tampa Bay clubhouse Saturday night, even though he's not eligible to play until Sunday.

Gimenez was among a group of players brought to Oakland who will be activated Sunday when rosters expand.

Delmon Young, Josh Lueke and Luke Scott were also brought up and will be available for the final month of the season.

Gimenez spent a month and a half on the disabled with an injured right hand during the first part of the season.

"It hasn't been right since," Gimenez said. "I've struggled to hit. I had to battle through it. It was mentally tough because I was brutal."

Gimenez, who has a .267 batting average over 10 Minor League seasons, was hitting .224 for Durham this year.

"I still feel it once in a while but I finished strong, and now I hope I can fit right in here," Gimenez said.

Gimenez spent most of the day on an airplane from Atlanta to San Francisco. After checking into the team hotel, he made his way to Oakland.

Gimenez grew up in Gilroy, about an hour's drive south of O.co Coliseum. He'll have plenty of family in attendance for Sunday's game.

"It's funny, my three best friends all live in San Francisco, but as it worked out, they are all out of town," Gimenez said. "My mom and dad are coming in, my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and I'm sure a lot of other people."

Gimenez grew up an A's fan watching "Bash Brothers" Mark McGwire and Jose Canseco play at the Coliseum.

"Mark McGwire was my favorite player," Gimenez said. "The Bash Brothers were in their prime. This is where I grew up watching baseball."

Rays manager Joe Maddon said Gimenez will help give him more flexibility in late-inning maneuvers.

Young to join Rays for finale in Oakland

OAKLAND -- Delmon Young's flight touched down about the same time the Rays took the field for batting practice on Saturday.

Released by the Phillies on Aug. 14, Young signed with the Rays eight days later.

He returns to the club with which he began his professional career in 2003, when he was selected No. 1 overall by the Rays in the First-Year Player Draft. He has also played for the Twins and Tigers.

"He has a knack for driving in runs," Rays manager Joe Maddon said. "He'll be used primarily as a designated hitter and pinch-hitter. He'll get a chance to make an impact."

Moore's return to determine rotation order

OAKLAND -- Rays manager Joe Maddon remained mysterious regarding Sunday's starter, saying he will name him after Saturday's game.

"We have to decide when Matt Moore will go, whether it's the second or third [of September], and then fill in from there," Maddon said. "It will all fall into place after tonight's game."

Moore, who is on the disabled list with left elbow soreness, threw four innings in a rehab start on Thursday, making Tuesday a distinct possibility, with David Price slotted into Wednesday's start.

"It all depends on what happens tonight," said Maddon, who would not reveal whether Sunday's starter is already with the team.

Extra bases

- Scott (back spasms) was evaluated before Saturday's game and given clearance to be activated Sunday.
- Desmond Jennings was dropped into the nine-hole in the batting order Saturday while Yunel Escobar was placed in the second spot. Maddon said it was a combination of Jennings struggling and Escobar swinging a hot bat.
- Jeremy Hellickson, who was optioned to Triple-A Durham following his loss to the Royals five days ago, threw a bullpen session Saturday and will be recalled Tuesday.
- Friday's loss to the A's meant the Rays will have a losing record in August for the first time in seven years.

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A's seek sweep in potential Wild Card preview

By Cash Kruth, *MLB.com*

The Rays and A's begin the season's final month atop the American League Wild Card standings, with Oakland holding a 1 1/2-game lead over Tampa Bay for the top spot.

The A's closed August on a high note -- winning six of eight -- while the Rays sputtered, dropping six of their last seven. Sunday's series finale at O.co Coliseum is the final meeting of the season between the two clubs.

"For us, you eye the finish line, especially when you get to Sept. 1. So every game has a little bit of a different feel," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "[Friday] that was certainly the case. Playing these guys, one of the better teams in all of baseball, close game, two great pitchers: It did have a playoff type atmosphere to it."

The A's -- also two games back of the Rangers in the AL West -- send right-hander A.J. Griffin to the mound Sunday as Oakland looks for the sweep. Griffin earned the win in his last outing despite giving up four runs on seven hits. He continued to get bit by the long ball, serving up two home runs to the Tigers.

He'll face a much different offense Sunday, as it's the bats that have been Tampa Bay's undoing during its recent slide. The Rays are batting .217 with only one home run in their past seven games, including a .190 mark with runners in scoring position.

The Rays will try to break that trend for right-hander Jamey Wright, who was officially named the starter following Saturday's 2-1 loss. It will be the 38-year-old's first start since July 2007.

Wright has a 2.97 ERA in 54 appearances over 57 2/3 innings this season for the Rays.

Rays: Four to join squad

- Outfielder Delmon Young, right-hander Josh Lueke and catcher Chris Gimenez traveled to Oakland on Saturday and will be added to the roster on Sunday, when Major League rosters expand to 40. Designated hitter Luke Scott, on the disabled list since Aug. 18 with back spasms, also will be activated.

- The Rays' 49 errors are second fewest in Major League history through 134 games behind this year's Orioles (40).

A's: The streak goes on

- Saturday's win allowed the A's to close August with a 14-13 record, the ninth straight month Oakland finished .500 or better dating back to last June. It's the longest such streak in franchise history since a 10-month stretch from June 2002 to September 2003.

- Melvin said he expects three players to join the A's on Sunday when rosters expand, though he did not reveal names. More callups are expected Tuesday after the Minor League seasons end.

Worth noting

- Oakland's Brandon Moss is batting .333 with seven home runs and 14 RBIs in his past 11 games.

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Slumping Rays lose to Athletics again

By Marc Topkin, *Times Staff Writer*

OAKLAND, Calif. — Ghosts from the Rays' past have been popping up all year, with Oakland's Stephen Vogt on Saturday becoming the latest former teammate to beat them.

But more haunting as they head into the final month of this season of grand expectation has been their lack of offense, evident again in Saturday's 2-1 loss to the A's, and a primary reason they lost for the sixth time in their past seven games.

"We haven't been coming through," third baseman Evan Longoria said. "That simply can't happen or we're going to be going home at the end of September. That's the bottom line."

Alex Cobb gave the Rays a solid start, except for the triple he allowed to Vogt and a solo homer to Coco Crisp, but it went to waste as the Rays managed only seven hits and the one run.

The Rays (75-59) dropped 4½ games behind the American League East-leading Red Sox and 1½ behind the wild-card-leading A's. In what may be of more importance, they are 3½ ahead of the Yankees for the second wild-card spot.

"We have to offensively stir it up a bit more somehow," manager Joe Maddon said. "That's been the mantra right there: We haven't hit enough."

They have 16 runs in the seven games, with a team average barely above .200. The right-handed hitters have been particularly bad, as Longoria (2-for-his-last-23), Wil Myers (1-for-23) and Desmond Jennings (5-for-39) are all struggling, and the signs of frustration are becoming obvious.

"We have to get those guys right," Maddon said.

Longoria said it's been a trying time.

"There's no doubt I'm frustrated," he said. "I'll just speak for myself. I had a good week and a half a couple weeks but it just seems I haven't been able to put it all together for a good amount of time. I don't know what it is, I wish I could figure it out. I'm doing all the same things, working the same way. For whatever reason, it's just eluded me. It seems to be that way for the rest of the guys offensively. We've had good stretches where guys individually have been really good, but as a team it's been pretty frustrating for the past at least a month."

The numbers back that up, as the Rays scored only 89 runs in August, the first time they didn't total at least 100 in a month since July 2009, and their lowest scoring August ever.

Vogt had three stints with the Rays during the 2012 season, but they never saw him get a hit, his 0-for-25 the longest hitless streak to start a career in Tampa Bay franchise history.

He was traded to the A's at the start of this season, got called up in late June and, after seven more tries, got that first big-league hit in his third game, and a home run at that. He had gotten 19 more hits since then, but since the first one, none could have felt as good as the triple he laced off the rightfield wall just out of the reach of a leaping Wil Myers to open the sixth inning Saturday. He then scored on Crisp's single.

"It's a happy feeling," Vogt said. "To contribute to a win is huge for me personally. ... It's fun to play against them and see familiar faces across the way."

Cobb got off to a rough start, giving up a single to Crisp on his first pitch, paying no attention as Crisp swiped second then walking Josh Donaldson. That prompted a visit from pitching coach Jim Hickey, and whatever he said certainly worked as Cobb allowed only four more hits in the complete-game loss though the two runs.

"Cobb was fantastic," Maddon said. "You keep the other team to two points you'd like to believe you can win a lot of those games and we just haven't been able to conjure it up."

A's rookie starter Sonny Gray, a product of Vanderbilt like David Price, was tough on the Rays, striking out five of the first six, though based on the hitters' reactions he was getting help from home-plate umpire Manny Gonzalez.

Though the Rays eventually created opportunities, against Gray and the Oakland bullpen, they couldn't cash in, going 1-for-10 with runners in scoring position, leaving nine on.

They were shutout into the ninth, when they came up short again. Myers ended an 0-for-22 with his first extra-base hit since Aug. 15, a one-out double off closer Grant Balfour, another ex-Ray. James Loney walked, but Jose Lobaton lined out on the first pitch. A wild pitch advanced Myers to third, and Jennings singled him in, but Kelly Johnson bounced out for the final out.

"We've really pitched well, we've caught it," Maddon said. "It's just a lack of hitting. The offense really needs to pick it up a little bit."

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Jamey Wright to start for Rays

By Marc Topkin, Times Staff Writer

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Rays' pitching plans for today and the rest of the week were dependent on who pitched Saturday.

And since RHP **Jamey Wright** wasn't needed, he will start today as the Rays preferred to use what will be a combination of several relievers rather than RHP **Roberto Hernandez**, who they felt didn't match up well against the lefty-laden A's.

"I'm looking forward to it," said Wright, who last started in 2007. "No biggie. It's not like I'm going to go out there and go five, six innings or anything."

With that sorted out, manager **Joe Maddon** said they next will set up the rest of their rotation for after RHP **Chris Archer's** Monday start.

The biggest issue there is whether to have LHP **Matt Moore** make his return from the disabled list Tuesday, with LHP **David Price** pitching on regular rest Wednesday, or fill in Tuesday, potentially with Hernandez, then pitch Moore and Price, lining both up to face Boston next week.

The immediate rotation plans apparently will not include RHP **Jeremy Hellickson**, who was optioned to Class A Charlotte last week to get some rest.

Hellickson threw a bullpen session on Saturday and did well, Maddon said, and is expected to rejoin the Rays on Tuesday, but won't necessarily pitch yet. "We just want to get him back and get him strong and then we'll figure out the next step," Maddon said.

HAPPY TO BE HERE: C **Chris Gimenez** didn't have much success in a frustrating, injury-marred season at Triple-A Durham, hitting .224 in 94 games, and is eager to put that behind him today when he is added to the Rays roster.

"None of that really matters now," Gimenez said. "I ended up still getting here, I'm ecstatic to be here, excited to be part of the playoff race again."

The Rays also will add DH **Luke Scott**, who had been on the DL with back spasms; RHP **Josh Lueke**, who has been up three times previously; and DH **Delmon Young**, who was signed Aug. 22 and has been working back into form at Double-A Montgomery.

Gimenez was even more excited to rejoin the Rays in Oakland, near his Gilroy, Calif., hometown. And since he isn't eligible to play until today, he planned to watch Saturday's game from the stands with his parents, **Paul** and **Pam**, which he hadn't done since the 1990s.

"I could have stayed down here (in the clubhouse) and watched the game but I thought it'd be cooler to sit there with my mom and dad," he said. "It's been a really long time."

BIG-HEADED WIL: Rookie OF **Wil Myers** was as surprised as anyone to see his face — actually a large blown-up version — displayed prominently among thousands of Clemson football fans during ESPN's Saturday *College GameDay*. Myers saw a mention on Twitter and checked out the linked photo. "Honestly, I have no idea who it could be," said Myers, who is from North Carolina and considers himself a South Carolina football fan. "No clue. I thought it was kind of funny though."

RIDING THE RAILS: A large number of Rays players — yes, including Price — took the BART train Saturday from their San Francisco hotel to the stadium in Oakland, avoiding the long bus ride and traffic due to the weekend closing of the Bay Bridge. "No problem," Price said. Meanwhile, the bus ride Saturday took only about an hour, much better than the 1:45 on Friday.

MISCELLANY: RH reliever **Jesse Crain** (shoulder strain) played catch again with no issues, aiming to throw off the mound by the end of the week. ... Young will wear No. 15; the numbers he wore previously are taken by veterans — 26 by Crain, 35 by Wright. ... Price ended up with a tough loss Friday, his third when posting a quality start (six or more innings, three or fewer earned runs); all other Rays have three total.

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Rays: Rodney laughs off bathroom trap

By Marc Topkin, Times Staff Writer

Rays at A's

When/where: 4:07 today; O.co Coliseum, Oakland, Calif.

TV/radio: Sun Sports; 620-AM

Probable pitchers

Rays: RH Jamey Wright (2-2, 2.97)

A's: RH A.J. Griffin (11-9, 3.94)

On Wright: Announced as the starter after Saturday's game, makes his first start this season after 54 relief appearances. Last started a major-league game in 2007, when he made nine starts for Rangers.

On Griffin: Seems to be in decline since July 1, going 5-3 in 11 starts but with a 4.55 ERA and allowing 17 homers in 65½ innings. Was 6-6, 3.56 in first 16 starts. Had no decision in one 2012 start against the Rays.

Key matchups

Rays VS. GRIFFIN

Kelly Johnson 0-for-3

Matt Joyce 1-for-2, HR

Ben Zobrist 1-for-3

On deck

Monday: at Angels, 9:05, Sun Sports. Rays — RH Chris Archer (8-5, 2.81); Angels — TBA

Tuesday: at Angels, 10:05, Sun Sports. Rays — LH Matt Moore (14-3, 3.41) or RH Roberto Hernandez (6-13, 4.95); Angels — TBA

Wednesday: at Angels, 10:05, Sun Sports. Rays — LH Matt Moore (14-3, 3.41) or LH David Price (8-6, 3.30); Angels — TBA

Thursday: at Angels, 10:05, Sun Sports. Rays — LH David Price (8-6, 3.30) or RH Alex Cobb (8-2, 2.97); Angels — TBA

Rays disabled list

- DH **Luke Scott**, back spasms, 15-day, eligible Aug. 30
- OF **Brandon Guyer**, broken finger, 15-day, eligible Aug. 17
- LHP **Matt Moore**, elbow soreness, 15-day, eligible Aug. 13
- RHP **Jesse Crain**, shoulder strain, 60-day, eligible Aug. 29
- RHP **Jeff Niemann**, shoulder surgery, 60-day, out for the season
- RHP **Juan Carlos Oviedo**, elbow surgery, 60-day, out until September

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Rays eager to have Delmon Young join lineup

By Marc Topkin, Times Staff Writer

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Rays have big plans for Delmon Young.

Young rejoins the Rays today, and manager Joe Maddon said he will be a key part of their lineups as the DH against all left-handed starters and some right-handers.

"He's going to get a chance to make an impact," Maddon said.

Young, 27, was released by the Phillies on Aug. 14 and signed by the Rays on Aug. 22, then played seven games at Double-A Montgomery, hitting .233 (7-for-30), with a homer on Friday as a parting shot, and three RBIs.

The Rays are counting on him to add some life to a lineup that has been struggling and also to be a key pinch-hitter.

"I'm looking forward to having him here," Maddon said. "He's always had a knack for driving in runs, he knows how to do that, he always did. As a kid his first year that we had him that I was involved (2007), he had 90-some RBIs with minimal homers (13). ... There's a certain subset that knows how to drive in runs with singles and doubles, and he's one of those guys."

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Rays Tales: Ranking AL contenders

By Marc Topkin, Times Staff Writer

The Rays enter September today having met their primary goal, for the sixth straight season, of playing meaningful games over the final month of the season. Now the onus is on them to make it a September to remember. The five AL playoff teams — three division winners and the two wild cards that meet in a one-game play-in — will come, in some combination, from this group of nine teams. As of now the Rays are battling on two fronts: trying to run down the Red Sox for the AL East title and to beat out the A's, Orioles, Indians, Yankees and Royals for the wild-card spots. But that can change if the other division races tighten up, and suddenly they could be competing with the Rangers or Tigers. So here's a look at the nine-team AL playoff field, how they're doing, what their schedules look like, their chances* to make the playoffs and how we rank them as of now (all records through Friday):

1. Tigers (79-56)

What's happening: Best overall collection of talent on the mound and field, but there has to be some concern over **Miguel Cabrera's** health, **Justin Verlander's** lack of dominance and the back end of the bullpen.

What's left: 26 games, 11 at home, 10 vs. contenders. After three at Boston starting Monday, they play last 22 vs. noncontenders and Royals.

Chances: 99.8

2. Rangers (78-56)

What's happening: Have been rolling, winning 22 of 29 through Friday, riding a strong rotation (including former Ray **Matt Garza**) and a lock-down bullpen, and not — yet, anyway — missing suspended slugger **Nelson Cruz** much.

What's left: 27 games, 14 at home, 16 vs. contenders. Arguably toughest remaining schedule, with six vs. A's, four at Rays, three with NL's Pirates.

Chances: 96.3

3. Red Sox (80-56)

What's happening: AL's most productive offense and strong team chemistry can take them far, but holes in rotation — pending the return of **Clay Buchholz** — and a suspect bullpen led by **Koji Uehara** could be haunting.

What's left: 25 games — 13 at home, 19 vs. contenders. Sox will have to earn it, with upcoming 16-game stretch of Tigers-Yankees-Rays-Yankees-O's.

Chances: 98.3

4. A's (76-58)

What's happening: Have the usual relatively unknown though extremely successful pitching staff but didn't do anything to bolster offense that looks a little thin, with **Yoenis Cespedes** slumping and **Josh Reddick** hurt.

What's left: 27 games, 15 at home, seven vs. contenders. After Rays today, six games with Rangers are biggest challenge. Last 13 vs. Angels, Twins, Mariners.

Chances: 89.4

5. Rays (75-58)

What's happening: Starting pitching and defense are going to have to carry them, as the bullpen remains shaky and the offense inconsistent, though August pickups **David DeJesus** and **Delmon Young** might help.

What's left: 28 games — 11 at home, 15 vs. contenders. After this West Coast trip, Rays play 14 of last 20 vs. Red Sox, Rangers, O's and Yankees.

Chances: 85.8

6. Indians (71-63)

What's happening: Pitching, including revived former Ray **Scott Kazmir**, has kept them in the race under **Terry Francona**, but the offense doesn't look deep enough. The addition of **Jason Kubel** may help a bit.

What's left: 27 games, 15 at home, 10 vs. contenders. It looks pretty easy, but after facing O's this week don't play anyone they are chasing so tough to gain ground.

Chances: 13.5

7. Yankees (71-63)

What's happening: They've finally gotten healthy and the offense — fueled by the unstoppable **Alfonso Soriano** — is showing signs of explosiveness, but it doesn't seem they have the starting pitching to stick around much longer.

What's left: 27 games — 14 at home, 15 vs. contenders. Fifteen games vs. Red Sox (seven), Rays, Orioles are challenging, 12 vs. last-place teams won't be.

Chances: 6.7

8. Orioles (71-62)

How they're looking: Addition of **Michael Morse** makes imposing lineup even more so, and defense has been tidy, but they don't have the pitching — starting (4.67 ERA) or relieving (3.73, 22 blown saves) — to win.

What's left: 28 games — 14 at home, 18 vs. contenders. As if 15 games vs. Red Sox, Rays and Yankees weren't tough enough, they also have three at Indians.

Chances: 9.6

9. Royals (69-65)

What's happening: Borderline if they are even contenders, but the Rays connections alone make them worth watching, and AL's best pitching staff makes them potentially dangerous if offense can get going.

What's left: 27 games, 13 at home, 15 vs. contenders. Six games with Tigers are essentially all must-wins, as are six with Indians, three with Rangers.

Chances: 0.7

* Percentages based on BaseballProspectus.com computer simulations, through Friday

Key series

Sept. 2-4: Rangers at A's, Tigers at Red Sox, Orioles at Indians

Sept. 5-8: Red Sox at Yankees

Sept. 9-12: Yankees at Orioles

Sept. 10-12: Red Sox at RAYS

Sept. 13-15: Yankees at Red Sox, A's at Rangers

Sept. 16-19: Rangers at RAYS

Sept. 17-19: Orioles at Red Sox

Sept. 20-23: Orioles at RAYS

Sept. 24-26: RAYS at Yankees

Sept. 27-29: Red Sox at Orioles

A date to remember

How the Rays have stood starting September during their six-year run:

Sept. 1 Finish

W-L Pos-GB W-L Pos-GB

2008 84-51 1 +5.5 97-65 1 +2.5

2009 71-59 3 -11.5 84-78 3 -19

2010 81-51 2 -1 96-66 1 +1

2011 74-61 3 -9 91-71* 2 -6

2012 71-61 3 -4.5 90-72 3 -5

2013 75-58-x 2 -3.5 91-71# ? -??

* won AL wild-card; # projected; x-through Friday

Rays rumblings

The Rays have known there would be a day they would see **David Price** on the mound in another uniform, but who knew it would be a Vanderbilt football uniform? ... The St. Petersburg election results seem good for the Rays, even though the Pier issue lingers, as both mayoral finalists have indicated a willingness to let them explore Tampa stadium options, and further talks should clarify those positions. ... An *ESPN the Magazine* feature on pitching coach **Jim Hickey** dubs him, for some reason, The Hoss Whisperer. ... Boston's **Clay Buchholz** is on track to come off the DL to face the Rays on Sept. 10. ... Manager **Joe Maddon** said the team already has a theme planned for the Sept. 13-15 trip to Minnesota.

Got a minute? David DeJesus

Best meal you can make?

Grilled chicken, and some kind of pasta with it.

Must-see TV?

The *Amazing Race* this season, no plugging involved! (His wife, Kim, is one of the contestants.)

Singer/band you'd like to be on stage with?

Probably Lecrae (a Christian hip-hop artist, whose *Tell The World* is DeJesus' walkup song)

All-time favorite movie?

I have two — *Major League* (the first one) and *300*.

Celebrity crush?

I answered that when I was in Chicago and got in trouble, but I'll still go with (model) Adriana Lima.

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Another difficult outing out West for Rays

By Roger Mooney, Tribune Staff

OAKLAND, Calif. — They remain a chipper bunch during this recent slide down the standings, but the frustration of wasted at-bats and missed scoring opportunities and losing, of course the losing, crept into their game Saturday night.

Both Ben Zobrist and Evan Longoria tossed their bats in disgust and anger after recording outs during the eighth inning, Zobrist with a fly ball to right field and Longoria with a strikeout that left the tying run at second base.

Longoria slammed his helmet to the ground for good measure.

The Rays lost 2-1 to the A's at the Oakland Coliseum to fall 1½ games behind them in the wild-card standings and 4½ back of the first-place Red Sox in the American League East.

Alex Cobb lost for the first time since returning from the disabled list but deserved better.

Much better.

Cobb allowed two runs on five hits in eight innings.

The first run came in the sixth inning, when former Ray Stephen Vogt tripled off the right-field scoreboard and scored on a single by Coco Crisp.

Crisp, who scored the winning run Friday in the eighth inning, had another big eighth-inning hit — this one a home run to right field — that gave former Rays closer Grant Balfour some room to work with.

Balfour needed a cushion after allowing a run in the ninth on a single by Desmond Jennings.

The loss was the sixth in the past seven games for the Rays. They completed August with an 11-15 record for their first losing August since 2006.

And the Rays extended their West Coast losing streak to five.

Cobb was at his best since returning from the injury. He conjured up memories of his night in Detroit in June when he held the Tigers scoreless for 7^a innings.

This time, it was five scoreless innings of one-hit ball.

Crisp led off the first inning with a single and easily stole second base, getting such a big jump on Cobb that it appeared Cobb didn't remember he was on base.

Cobb then walked Josh Donaldson, prompting one of the quickest, if not the quickest, visit to the mound this year by pitching coach Jim Hickey.

Whatever was said worked, because Cobb retired the next three batters, on two strikeouts and a grounder to third base.

That began a run where Cobb retired 12 straight batters.

Seth Smith singled to start the fifth, but he was doubled off first base to end the inning when Jennings ran down a drive by Eric Sogard then got the ball back to the infield before Smith could make it back to first.

Meanwhile, A's rookie Sonny Gray looked pretty good for someone making his seventh appearance and fifth start of his career.

Gray held the Rays to five hits in 6^a scoreless innings, striking out seven along the way.

James Loney had a pair of hits against Gray, and Jose Lobaton doubled with one out in the fifth, but the Rays just couldn't get that big hit — a common theme during their recent slide.

The Rays got something started with two outs in the fourth inning when Longoria singled and Matt Joyce drew a walk. But Wil Myers struck out.

Joyce singled to start the sixth inning but was erased when Myers grounded into a double play. Loney kept the inning alive with a single, and Gray was done for the night.

Dean Doolittle came on and walked Lobaton. That brought up the slumping Jennings, who was dropped to ninth in the order for the first time this season.

Jennings flied out to center field to end the inning. It was the third straight at-bat in which Jennings stranded a runner at second base.

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Rays' Wright to start against left-handed A's lineup

By Roger Mooney, Tribune Staff

OAKLAND – Rays manager Joe Maddon announced after Saturday's 2-1 loss to the A's that the Rays are going to start Jamey Wright in this afternoon's series finale.

The reason is to keep Roberto Hernandez away from the left-handed heavy A's lineup.

Lefties are hitting .305 against Hernandez this season. Lefties are batting just .205 against Wright.

Wright will begin a parade of relievers as the Rays try to salvage the final game of this series.

"I'm looking forward to it," Wright said. "It should be fun."

Wright hasn't started a game since Aug. 25, 2007, when he was a member of the Rangers.

He has made 54 relief appearances for the Rays this season, none longer than three innings, which he did twice.

How innings can he pitch?

"One to start," Wright said. "Then we'll see what happens."

If Hernandez isn't needed today he could slide into Tuesday's slot and start against the Angels. Hernandez has pitched well against the Angels over his career. He allowed three runs in 6 2/3 innings to the Angels Aug. 27 at Tropicana Field and was in line for the victory until Fernando Rodney blew the save in the ninth inning.

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Rays Notebook: Pen could carry load today

By Roger Mooney, Tribune Staff

OAKLAND, Calif. – Rays manager Joe Maddon did not announce the starter for today's game before Saturday night's game, because who starts today was based on who was needed to pitch Saturday.

Confusing? Not really.

RHP Roberto Hernandez is scheduled to pitch today, but the Rays would rather he didn't face the left-handed-heavy A's lineup. Lefties are batting .305 against Hernandez this season.

To avoid what has the potential to be a heavy bullpen day, the Rays could just use all relievers. LHP Alex Torres, LHP Cesar Ramos or RHP Jamey Wright could find themselves throwing multiple innings, with one of the three used as the starter. The bullpen will be a little thicker today when RHP Josh Lueke is added as part of the first wave of September call-ups.

RHP Chris Archer will start Monday in Anaheim. If Hernandez is not used today, he could find himself starting Tuesday in Anaheim. That would allow LHP Matt Moore to rejoin the rotation Wednesday and push LHP David Price back one day, a move that will set up Moore, Price and RHP Alex Cobb to face the Red Sox on the upcoming homestand.

Welcome back, DY

DH Delmon Young will be added to the roster today, along with C Chris Gimenez and Lueke. DH Luke Scott will return from the disabled list.

The plan is for Young to DH against left-handed pitchers and select righties.

"Just trying to pick the right moments to play against the righties, and he will play against the lefties," Maddon said. "He will get a chance to make an impact."

Jennings dropped to ninth in order

CF Desmond Jennings, who entered Saturday's game batting .114 since returning from the disabled list after breaking the middle finger on his left hand, batted ninth for the first time this season.

Maddon moved SS Yunel Escobar to No. 2 in the order to get a hotter bat in front of 2B Ben Zobrist and 3B Evan Longoria.

Jennings said before the game that his finger is not an issue with his slump.

"I just think it's more of a timing issue having been off for a bit, and he's not quite comfortable yet," Maddon said.

E Zobrist?

Zobrist's team-record streak of consecutive errorless games at second base ended at 81 on Friday after his throw to first to start the fifth inning sailed past James Loney.

Price walked the next batter, Chris Young, then allowed a one-out, three-run homer to Kurt Suzuki to give the A's a 3-1 lead in a game they won 4-3.

"I don't think (Price) walks Chris Young unless that error is made," Zobrist said. "He was just cruising until that point. I just threw it a little bit too hard and too high. It just got away from me. It happens every once in a while. It's kind of a bummer that it really cost us."

It was Zobrist's first error since May 13. It was his first throwing error since Sept. 24, when he was playing shortstop.

Where's Rodney?

Closer Fernando Rodney was locked in the dugout bathroom for about 15 minutes during the eighth inning Friday. O.co Coliseum security frantically searched for a key while Rays players and staff tried to kick the door in and break the lock with a weighted bat.

"He was a locked-in closer (Friday) night," Maddon said.

Meanwhile, the Rays scored twice during the rescue effort to tie the score at 3.

"It was pretty funny, actually," Maddon said. "And we should have sent him back in there for another two runs, we'd have been fine."

Eventually the doorknob was broken and Rodney was freed. A new doorknob was in place before Saturday's game.

"Umpires looking in. Players looking in. What's going on there?" Maddon said.

"It was pretty entertaining. Hey, listen, it got us back in the ballgame."

Newsworthy

RHP Jeremy Hellickson threw a bullpen session Saturday and will join the team Tuesday, said Maddon, who added he is not sure when Hellickson will return to the rotation. ... The plan for RHP Jesse Crain is to throw off the mound when the road trip reaches Seattle. That would put him on pace to return by the final week of the season.

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Gimenez back, ready to fill any role Rays need

By Roger Mooney, Tribune Staff

OAKLAND, Calif. — Chris Gimenez was happy to be back at the O.co Coliseum on Saturday, happy to be back with the Rays, happy to be back at an A's game with his mom and dad.

It's been a while for both.

Gimenez was placed on the taxi squad Saturday along with Luke Scott, Delmon Young and Josh Lueke. All four will be added to the roster today, the first day rosters can expand from 25 to 40.

"I just hope I can come up here and fit right in and kind of keep it going," Gimenez said. "If not make somebody laugh. I'll be down at the end of the bench if Joe (Maddon) wants me. I'm good at making a few people laugh every once in a while. Team morale, that's what I'm here for."

Gimenez was allowed to take batting practice Saturday but could not watch the game from the dugout. So he decided to watch the game from the stands with his folks, Pam and Paul.

Gimenez, who grew up about 60 minutes away in Gilroy, said he hasn't been to an A's game with his parents since the Bash Brother days in the 1990s.

"Gosh, it's been a really long time," Gimenez said. "After you get a certain age you're playing travel ball."

Gimenez, who played 42 games with the Rays last season, played well enough this spring to earn the second catching job with Jose Molina. But Gimenez had one option remaining, and Jose Lobaton didn't, so Lobaton made the Opening Day roster.

Gimenez went back to Triple-A Durham, expecting to get called back to the Rays at some point this season.

Didn't happen.

Molina and Lobaton stayed healthy, and Lobaton made improvements in his game both behind the plate and with the bat.

So Gimenez remained at Durham. And got hurt.

He tore the sheath around the tendons in his left hand while swinging the bat, an injury that lingered long after Gimenez came off the disabled list.

"It just hasn't been right," he said. "It's been, honestly, a struggle to hit. For so long, your hand is used to being in a certain spot, and when you get it there you feel like you're getting stabbed. It's not a fun feeling."

Gimenez played in 94 games for Durham. He hit .224 with three home runs and 22 RBIs.

"I feel it every once in a while," Gimenez said of the injury. "I get a zinger every once in a while. This last month to month-and-a-half has been considerably different for me. I started to get my swing back again, and I had more consistent at-bats. I started to hit the ball harder, and those are things I look to as good indicators of where I need to be."

Maddon said he doesn't anticipate Gimenez getting many starts this month. Gimenez's presence will allow Maddon to pinch hit or pinch run more for Molina and Lobaton in later innings, knowing he has a third option at catcher.

Gimenez said he's fine with that. He's more than happy to offer high-fives to his teammates and advice to Maddon from his seat in the dugout.

"I was the best bench coach in the International League this year," Gimenez said. "(Bulls) Charlie (Montoyo) won Manager of the Year and I told him it was three-quarters because of my bench coaching skills. I told him I would give him a quarter of that."

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Archer keeping mind and body sharp

By Roger Mooney, Tribune Staff

OAKLAND, Calif. — On a sun-splashed Friday afternoon at the O.co Coliseum, home to the Oakland A's, Chris Archer laced up his spikes, took his glove and a water bottle to the bullpen mound and pitched to Mike Trout, Erick Aybar, Mark Trumbo and the rest of the Angels lineup.

"That's the way I handle my business," Archer said before throwing his between-starts bullpen session.

So much of Archer's game is about visualization. Visualizing throwing the right pitch in the right count against the right hitter. Visualizing the hitter's reaction.

Today, one day before he faces the Angels in Anaheim, Archer will throw 10 or so pitches in the bullpen, then visualize himself throwing another 50 to make himself feel as prepared as possible to take the mound against the actual batters.

"I was throwing bullpens in high school and simulating, this sounds crazy, I was simulating facing Albert Pujols, Alex Rodriguez, Josh Hamilton," Archer said. "I was simulating facing these people in high school. Why would I change anything now?"

Here is one thing Archer has not visualized this season: Winning the American League Rookie of the Year award.

"I only think about it when someone asks me about," he said.

And how often is that?

"Not often," he said.

But Archer, who turns 25 this month, is quietly building a case for himself.

He has become one of the more dependable starters on a team known for starting pitching.

He heads into Monday's start 8-5 with a 2.81 ERA in 17 starts.

Those eight wins are tops among American League rookies, and his 2.81 ERA is tops among AL rookie starters.

No other AL rookie has thrown two complete games, let alone two complete-game shutouts. His 102½ innings are the second-most among AL rookie pitchers.

He and David Price have been the Rays' most dependable starters since July.

And because manager Joe Maddon said Archer will finish the season without any pitch-count or innings restrictions, Archer will play a big role in the playoff chase.

Most of the Rookie of the Year talk this summer centered around another North Carolina product who came to the Rays in a blockbuster offseason trade. And Wil Myers seemed like a lock to reach the lofty preseason goals set by pundits who thought before the season began that the only question surrounding Myers' Rookie of the Year pursuit would rest on when he made his major-league debut.

But Myers' recent slump has taken some shine off his candidacy, though he certainly can rally with a strong September.

Meanwhile, the deep-thinking, well-read Archer is preparing himself for the most intense month of his baseball career by preparing his mind as well as his body.

He will pitch more innings this year than he has in any of his eight professional seasons. He never has pitched deep into September because the minorleague seasons don't run that long. And he never has had a starring role in a big-league pennant race.

Archer's takeaway from his first extended run in the major leagues is this:

"I've learned the power of the mind," he said. "I knew what it could do for me away from the game, and this is the first year I learned how important it can be for me in baseball."

He has learned that if he's not 100 percent committed to an at-bat, the batter will, without fail, reach base.

He has learned to be 100 percent committed to each pitch during each start, and he has to be committed to each throw he makes between his starts.

"People say practice makes perfect. No," Archer said. "Perfect practice makes perfect."

Yogi Berra said 90 percent of baseball is half mental. Archer said it's all mental. Also, it's all physical.

"So it's 100 percent/100 percent," he said.

And Archer mixes both as he prepares for his next start.

Not only is he honing his pitches during his bullpen sessions, he's trying to retire the major-league hitters he visualizes standing at the plate.

The Rays were preparing Friday to play the A's. Archer headed toward the bullpen to face Trout and Co.

"I'm going to face all of them right now in my mind," he said.

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Rays' Fernando Rodney gets trapped in dugout restroom

By Andrew Astleford, Fox Sports Florida

It's not everyday you go to the ballpark and see someone locked in a dugout restroom.

On Friday night, that's exactly what happened to Tampa Bay Rays closer Fernando Rodney at O.co Coliseum.

As the Rays batted in the eighth inning, during a 4-3 loss to the Oakland Athletics, four stadium employees huddled near the restroom door before one pried it open to free Rodney from his strange predicament.

Rodney was stuck for about 15 minutes. For his part, he walked out smiling. He received high-fives from teammates such as Sean Rodriguez and Matt Moore after he regained his freedom.

"The door locked, I don't know how," Rodney told the *Tampa Bay Times*. "I'm yelling, 'Hey unlock this, someone's in the bathroom.' ... It was hot inside, I could only hear the crowd with the game, I can't see what's going on.

"It was weird."

The Rays' rallied when Rodney was locked in. The production stopped, however, once he rejoined his team.

Coincidence?

"Kind of an interesting moment, kind of a fun moment," Rays manager Joe Maddon told the newspaper. "That was when we rallied. We should have kept him in there."

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