**ASTROS DAILY CLIPS**

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[**A’s rally in late innings to top Astros**](http://blog.chron.com/ultimateastros/2014/04/19/as-rally-in-late-innings-to-top-astros/)

By: [Evan Drellich](http://blog.chron.com/ultimateastros/author/evandrellich/) / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND, Calif. – The Astros are committed to a closer by committee, even if Saturday was the hardest loss to take yet.

And they’re not alone. Astros righty Chad Qualls gave away a two-run lead in the ninth inning of a 4-3 walkoff loss to the A’s on Saturday. A’s outfielder Josh Reddick ended the day with a one-out single to right-center field that scored Yoenis Cespedes.

Saturday was Qualls’ first outing in eight days because of an illness that’s been picking off Astros players one by one.

“We’re going to continue to go with the guys that are down there,” Astros manager Bo Porter said. “That’s all we can do. We can’t go with somebody that’s not down there.

“We don’t have defined roles, so what else can we do (other) than what we’re doing.”

What’s notable about these two teams is that the A’s, too, are employing a closer-by-committee approach. Their first-named closer, Jim Johnson, had a terrible start to the season.

Instead of having a set ninth-inning pitcher, both teams are using a pool of a few pitchers and playing the matchups.

At least for a time, it can be an effective solution. There’s doubt it could be a permanent solution.

“If we have success with it, there won’t necessarily be a reason to change it, because there are advantages to having the flexibility to be able to use any pitcher at any time,” A’s assistant general manager Farhan Zaidi said, “and also being unpredictable from the opponents’ standpoint. If we’re playing a team and (A’s manager Bob Melvin) knows they have a righthanded closer, he can start thinking about which pinch hitters he’s going to save to hit in the ninth.

“If he doesn’t know who’s throwing the eighth and who’s throwing the ninth, that’s a disadvantage.

Bullpen trend cyclical

“It seems like there’s a six-year cycle where everyone thinks they’re going to have a closer by committee, but it never really sticks. I don’t think you’re going to see the role of closer disappear any time soon.”

Astros relievers are having trouble, whether the role structure is to blame.

Losers of six in a row, the Astros had a 3-1 lead when Qualls entered in the ninth inning. A’s shortstop Jed Lowrie, the focal point of the bunt brouhaha from the night before, started the inning with a homer to right.

Alberto Callaspo tied the game with a single four batters later, and the next batter was Reddick.

“It’s frustrating, especially for me,” said Qualls, who allowed three hits and a walk. “We had a chance to win the game. (Astros starter Brett Oberholtzer) pitched his heart out. He’s been battling sickness as well and he did a hell of a job.

“To come away with nothing, to have them celebrate on the field, is never a good feeling.”

Qualls said that feeling sick early in the week was “definitely not an excuse,” and that his sinker was flat.

The last time the Astros won a game was a week ago Saturday, in Arlington, 6-5 in 10 innings against the Rangers. They had a blown save then, too, but they came back to win.

Long-ball victims

Consider that for all the talk of an improved bullpen this winter, the Astros’ bullpen entered the day with the sixth-highest ERA in the majors, 5.14.

They’ve allowed nine home runs now, one of the highest totals.

Is the committee to blame?

Qualls pointed to the fact the Astros haven’t been in a position to set up their bullpen as they want of late.

“When you’re down there, you know that ultimately you’re going to go in there and get guys out,” Qualls said. “If we’re winning games and we’re going the way that we’re supposed to go, everyone generally knows when they’ going to throw.

“Last night was pretty tough with (Jarred Cosart) going one-third (of an inning). We have to fill a bunch of innings and guys get strained going back to back of multiple innings. The bullpen just gets worn down.

“You’d like to know when you’re going to go in and you have a general idea.

“But for the most part, you just go out there, you just do your job. You’re in the big leagues for a reason, that’s because you get guys out. It’s not that big of a deal.”

Relief in sight?

It’s a big enough deal, though, that both of these teams are likely to find a defined closer at some point this year.

“Honestly, I don’t think that’ll be the case (that the closer disappears entirely), because there are advantages to a certain structure at the end of the games,” Zaidi said. “I think all players are sort of creatures of habit and routine, and so you know, we recognize that there’s some benefit to player A knowing he’s throwing the seventh, player B knowing he’s throwing at the eighth and player C throwing the ninth.

“What you would like is for those three players to know that they’ll be throwing one of these three innings, so you can take advantage of matchups and have them pitch to the three hitters that you think have they have best chance against.

“That’s something that Bob’s done really well this year so far, whether by design or not.

“It’s sort of the way we’re running things now.”

[**Singleton repeatedly shows he is ready for the big leagues**](http://blog.chron.com/ultimateastros/2014/04/19/singleton-repeatedly-shows-he-is-ready-for-the-big-leagues/)

By: [Evan Drellich](http://blog.chron.com/ultimateastros/author/evandrellich/) / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND, Calif. — He’s not knocking on the door, he’s knocking it down.

Astros Class AAA first-base prospect Jon Singleton, 22, hit his seventh home run of the season Saturday, the second straight day he homered. The left-handed swinger has three long balls in his last four games. He entered the day hitting .349 with a 1.200 OPS.

What good timing, too: Saturday was the first day the Astros could have promoted Singleton and guaranteed that he couldn’t become a free agent until after the 2020 season. Indications are that Singleton won’t have a tremendously long wait to join the club — it shouldn’t take weeks for him to get here — but he also does not have the same body of work at Class AAA Oklahoma City that George Springer did when Springer was promoted.

Springer wasn’t good only this year, but last year as well. Singleton struggled last season with a .220 average in 73 games for OKC.

Singleton had a great performance in winter ball in Puerto Rico, and while his spring training was poor, he’s destroying the ball now.

The Astros’ offense has been flat-out the worst in the majors, and that includes a designated hitter who’s hitting .132 in Chris Carter, as well as a first-base platoon that hasn’t had anyone take the bull by the horns.

The Astros would be hard-pressed — if not foolish — to keep Singleton down for long now that his potential free agency year has been pushed back, but they also want to give a fair shake to players like Marc Krauss.

Elsewhere in the minors, outfield prospect Delino DeShields suffered a left cheek fracture because of an errant pitch on Friday.

DeShields was taken to the hospital, and pictures of the injury that circulated online showed his face to be severely swollen. Astros general manager Jeff Luhnow said it was not yet known how long DeShields would be out.

[**Astros report: Oberholtzer continues to keep the Astros in games**](http://blog.chron.com/ultimateastros/2014/04/19/astros-report-oberholtzer-continues-to-keep-the-astros-in-games/)

By: [Evan Drellich](http://blog.chron.com/ultimateastros/author/evandrellich/) / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND, Calif. — Astros lefty Brett Oberholtzer has a 3.04 ERA in four starts and he hasn’t allowed more than three runs in any outing. His last two tries, against the Rangers and A’s, he’s allowed just one run.

Go figure, then, that he personally is 0-3 while the team is 0-4 on days he has the ball.

“That’s out of my control,” Oberholtzer said after 5 2/3 innings of one-run ball against the A’s. “We lost today, 4-3, and you know, it was a tough break. That’s baseball.”

Oberholtzer left the park early Friday because he was sick, like several other Astros. He watched Friday’s starter Jarred Cosart last for just one out at the team hotel, and knew the bullpen couldn’t afford a terribly short start. Oberholtzer worked around eight hits, striking out three and walking two.

“All week I was under the weather. Last two days I felt probably the roughest,” Oberholtzer said. “Getting out of bed, get in the hot tub, get myself ready to come out and pitch. … I knew I had to come in and suck it up for the team, and make some quality pitches and try to go as deep as I can into the ball game and give the team an opportunity to win.”

Oberholtzer called himself reliever Anthony Bass’ No. 1 fan, because Bass escaped a bases-loaded jam in the sixth inning after Oberholtzer left. The Astros led 3-1 at the time.

Oberholtzer’s gone at least five innings in each of his first 13 career starts, tying the Astros’ club record.

**Astros can't hold lead in ninth in loss to A's**

*Qualls allows three runs after 'pen stymies rallies in sixth and eighth*

By: Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- As his teammates shuffled quietly between the trainer's room, the shower and their lockers, Astros reliever Chad Qualls sat solemnly in front of his locker in full uniform with his head down and in deep thought.

Qualls was one of the Astros' biggest offseason acquisitions, brought back to Houston to help avoid the stomach-punching scenarios like the one that unfolded in the ninth inning on Saturday afternoon.

The A's rallied for three runs in the bottom of the ninth off Qualls, winning the game on a walk-off RBI single by Josh Reddick, to send the Astros to their sixth consecutive loss, 4-3, at sunny O.co Coliseum.

"It's a tough loss, especially playing as well as we played leading up to that ninth inning," Astros manager Bo Porter said. "We didn't close it out."

The blown save was the second in four games for the Astros, who made beefing up their bullpen a priority in the offseason, with the acquisitions of Qualls, Matt Albers, Anthony Bass and Jesse Crain, who is on the disabled list. Houston blew a league-high-tying 29 saves last year.

The Astros have been using a closer-by-committee setup this season, with Qualls getting his shot Saturday. He's certainly no stranger to the role, having saved 36 games in a two-year span with Arizona in 2009-10.

It was his first game action in more than a week. He had spent all day Wednesday at home in Houston ill, and was still regaining his strength upon arriving in Oakland early Friday. It was the same sickness that afflicted several of his teammates, including Saturday's starter Brett Oberholtzer.

"It's frustrating, especially for me," Qualls said. "We had a chance to win the game and [Oberholtzer] pitched his heart out and he's been battling sickness as well and he did a hell of a job. To come away with nothing and to have them celebrate on the field is not a good feeling."

Qualls started the ninth with a 3-1 lead, and promptly gave up a solo homer to Jed Lowrie, whom he had never faced. The next two batters reached on Josh Donaldson's walk and Yoenis Cespedes' single. Qualls recovered to strike out John Jaso before Alberto Callaspo roped a game-tying single to center, setting the stage for Reddick's heroics.

"That's one of the best characteristics of this team," Lowrie said. "We had that last year and we're off to a good start this year of really grinding out those last inning at-bats and making it tough on the other guys, never making it easy on them."

Qualls said his sinker was flat, and it was telling. After posting a 77.7-percent ground-ball rate -- the best of his career -- last season with the Marlins, none of the four balls the A's hit in the ninth inning Saturday were on the ground.

"I don't know if I was trying to generate more power," Qualls said. "I haven't been out in a while and everything else had been going on this week. My sinker had been flat, and looking back on it, I didn't get any ground balls, which is super uncharacteristic of myself.

"Obviously, I'll get it locked in and get it back to the way I was throwing. I felt I was in such a groove there. I got bitten by the sickness everybody was getting. That's definitely not an excuse. We've got to go out there no matter what and get the job down."

Oberholtzer, who was sent home from the ballpark on Friday because he wasn't feeling well, pitched well enough to win once again. He worked around eight hits in 5 2/3 innings, but still hasn't won in four starts this season despite a 3.04 ERA.

He has pitched at least five innings in his first 13 Major League starts, which ties a franchise record.

"I knew I had to come in and suck it up for the team and make some quality pitches and try to go as deep as I can in the ballgame and give the team an opportunity to win," he said.

The bullpen recorded some big outs in support of Oberholtzer. Bass got Lowrie to pop out with the bases loaded and end the sixth, and Albers pitched out of a jam in the eighth. Astros relievers have a 5.34 ERA this season and have allowed seven runs in 10 1/3 innings in two games against the A's.

"We're going to continue to go with the guys that are down there," Porter said. "That's all we can do. We can't go with somebody who's not down there. The guys down there are going to have to get it done."

Jonathan Villar paced the Astros offensively with a solo homer in the third inning -- his third of the season -- and a fifth-inning double, which led to an unearned run. Villar also made a terrific defensive play in the hole at shortstop in the second, backhanding a ball off the bat of Nick Punto and throwing him out.

Houston native Scott Kazmir pitched eight innings for the A's, allowing six hits and three runs in a no-decision.

"I thought he pitched great again," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said. "At times we didn't play great behind him. And we'll continue to work on it. He doesn't let that stuff bother him. Threw over a 100 pitches today basically in the same fashion we've seen him every time. He certainly didn't deserve to get a loss."

**Chavez seeks first victory as A's go for sweep**

*Peacock makes first start for Astros in series finale*

By: Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

Brad Peacock's return to the rotation comes against some Oakland players with whom he is quite familiar.

Peacock, who pitched 9 2/3 innings over four games out of the bullpen for the Astros to start the season, will make his first start of 2014 when the Astros try to snap a six-game losing streak Sunday in the series finale against the A's. Peacock took the rotation spot of Lucas Harrell, who was designated for assignment last week.

"I'm definitely excited to get back to my routine and I've been working hard and hopefully I can pick up where I left off last year," said Peacock, who is friends with several A's players.

That's because Peacock spent the 2012 season in the rotation for Oakland's Triple-A affiliate in Sacramento, going 12-9 with a 6.01 ERA. He was traded to the Astros prior to last season and was 4-3 with a 3.67 ERA in his final 12 games (nine starts) last year.

"I guess it's just more confidence," Peacock said. "At the beginning of [last] year, I didn't trust my fastball and was throwing it all over the strike zone. This year I'm ready to go. My arm feels great and I'm ready to get out there."

The Astros' struggling offense will be facing one of the game's best pitchers of the moment. He's not a household name, but A's right-hander Jesse Chavez has absolutely dominated in his first three starts, posting a 1.35 ERA, which ranked seventh in the American League entering Saturday.

Opponents are batting just .200 off Chavez. The Astros are only hitting .195 as a team.

Chavez has allowed just one earned run in each of his first three starts, striking out 22 with just two walks in 20 innings, yet he's still looking for his first win. The righty has fanned a career-high nine in each of his last two starts, both of them extending seven innings.

His only mistake in his most recent outing against the Angels was a home run to Albert Pujols.

"That's exactly what we've seen," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "That's the way he's been pitching for us, even in Spring Training."

Chavez is 0-0 with a 0.92 ERA in 15 career appearances against Houston, all in relief.

Astros: Porter doesn't plan change at closer After reliever Chad Qualls gave up three runs in the ninth inning in Saturday's 4-3 loss to the A's, Astros manager Bo Porter was asked if he planned to restructure his bullpen. Houston has been going with a closer-by-committee setup, with Qualls, Matt Albers and Josh Fields handling closing duties based on matchups and availability.

"We're going to continue to go with the guys that are down there," Porter said. "That's all we can do. We can't go with somebody who's not down there. The guys down there are going to have to get it done."

Qualls said more defined rolls are nice, but at the end of the day the job of the relievers is to get outs in any situations.

"For the most part, when the phone rings -- you'd like to know when you're going to go in or have a general idea -- but you go out there and do your job," Qualls said. "You're in the big leagues for a reason, because you get guys out. It's not that big of deal."

A's: Crisp expected back in lineup Sunday Coco Crisp has been in and out of the A's lineup for much of the past two weeks because of injuries to his left wrist and hamstring. The wrist, specifically, has affected his right-handed swing, which is why he was held out of action against Astros lefty Brett Oberholtzer on Saturday. But he's expected back in the leadoff spot for Sunday's finale.

"I'm just trying to be careful with him," manager Bob Melvin said. "This is a guy we don't want to lose for a significant period of time. We've come a long way with the injury, and we just want to make sure he's as close to 100 percent as we can get."

Crisp has reached base safely via hit or walk in each of his eight starts.

Worth noting • Oakland's defense has not been up to par, with an AL-high 18 errors in its first 17 games. The A's committed two in Saturday's contest for the third straight game and have made at least one error in each of the last eight games, their longest streak since June 2011 (nine games).

• Astros rookie outfielder George Springer extended his hitting streak to four games with a ninth-inning double on Saturday that nearly cleared the fence. He's the first Astros player to record hits in his first four Major league games since 2011.

• The A's have a 22-5 all-time record against the Astros, which is the best by a Major League club against another club among teams that have played each other at least 20 times.

• A's outfielder Yoenis Cespedes has a 14-game hitting streak against the Astros, dating to May 24 of last year.

**Venezuelan Astros root for NBA countryman**

By: Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Astros teammates and Venezuela natives [Marwin Gonzalez](http://mlb.mlb.com/team/player.jsp?player_id=503556), [Jose Altuve](http://mlb.mlb.com/team/player.jsp?player_id=514888) and [Jesus Guzman](http://mlb.mlb.com/team/player.jsp?player_id=461882) were focused on watching Saturday's NBA playoff game between the Brooklyn Nets and the Toronto Raptors while in the clubhouse Saturday morning.

The three aren't huge NBA fans, but the game featured the lone Venezuelan player in the NBA -- Greivis Vasquez of the Raptors.

"We met like four years ago when I was playing winter ball and he was watching my team in Venezuela, Caracas," Gonzalez said. "Since then, we've talked and had a relationship."

When the Astros were in Toronto earlier this month, several of the team's Venezuelan players met Vasquez at the team's hotel and stayed up until 4 a.m. talking about life and sports.

"I support every single person from my country, whatever he's doing here," Altuve said. "He's doing a really good job with the Toronto Raptors, and I wish him the best of luck."

Gonzalez said Vasquez has a huge following in Venezuela because he's the lone NBA player from the country.

"Everybody in Venezuela roots for him and is paying attention to what he does and how he does every day," Gonzalez said. "If you think about it, MLB players, we have like 70 maybe [from Venezuela]. He's the only one [in the NBA]. Everyone's watching."

**Prospect DeShields sidelined by cheek fracture**

By: Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Astros outfield prospect Delino DeShields Jr. is expected to be out several weeks after suffering a broken cheekbone when he was hit in the face by a 90-mph fastball in Double-A Corpus Christi's game in Frisco, Texas, on Friday night.

Astros general manager Jeff Luhnow said Saturday that DeShields, the Astros' [seventh-ranked prospect](http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/prospects/watch/y2014/index.jsp?c_id=hou#list=hou), has a non-displaced maxillary sinus fracture in his left cheek. DeShields was to be further evaluated later Saturday, but the team didn't know how long he'd be out.

"He's lucky, considering," Hooks manager Keith Bodie said. "It could have been horrific, could have been catastrophic. He never saw the ball out of the pitcher's hand and took a 90-mph fastball right in the face. You can imagine how lucky we are that he's only got a fracture of his cheekbone. His head looks like a beach ball right now."

Bodie said DeShields was released from the hospital early Saturday morning and spent the night at the team hotel, where teammates kept a close eye on him. Bodie said DeShields was resting with no problems, other than some major swelling.

"I'm sure that when we get back to Corpus they may want to take a look at him in Houston and go from there," Bodie said. "He's going to be around us today, and we need to keep an eye on him. He did OK through the night, and that's good news. Hopefully he's on the road back to being mended."

Bodie suggested that the fact DeShields didn't see the pitch could be a silver lining.

"So it doesn't leave any lasting impressions imprinted in his mind in the future, where he might be leery," Bodie said. "On the other hand, it was just a horrible thing to see. It's going to be a very uncomfortable road back for him."

DeShields, 21, went 1-for-3 and is hitting .259 with two homers and four RBIs this season as the Hooks' starting center fielder.

DeShields hit .317 with five homers, 54 RBIs and 51 stolen bases last season at Class A Lancaster. Following the season, he made the move back to center field after playing a few seasons at second base.

**Springer reaches out to injured DeShields**

By: Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- As one of his closest friends and a former roommate of Delino DeShields Jr., Astros outfielder [George Springer](http://mlb.mlb.com/team/player.jsp?player_id=543807) took some time late Friday to talk via phone with DeShields, who sustained a fractured cheekbone when he was hit in the face by a pitch while playing for Double-A Corpus Christi.

"I talked to him just to see if he was doing OK, and make sure he was all right, and he's in good spirits and he wants to get back out there," Springer said. "He knows that he's going to have to hang out for about a month or so."

DeShields was placed on the disabled list and is expected to miss a few weeks of action. Springer said he couldn't tell anything was wrong with DeShields while talking to him.

"He seemed like he was in good spirits," Springer said. "He didn't really say anything bad about it. He just said it happened and he just said he got hit. I didn't really see it until he sent me a picture, and it looks bad. But he's a tough kid. He'll be fine."

Astros manager Bo Porter said he sent DeShields a text message.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with him and we hope that he recovers and everything is OK," Porter said. "It's always very concerning when you get hit in the face area. A lot can happen there."

**Singleton among Houston prospects with big day**

By: Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

While Astros fans at the big league level are getting a taste of what the farm system can produce in the form of [George Springer](http://mlb.mlb.com/team/player.jsp?player_id=543807) currently, there was plenty of action on Saturday to whet the appetites further for those hungry for more.

The apparent next in line for a callup, first baseman Jon Singleton, has continued to make Triple-A Pacific Coast League pitching look like batting practice. The No. 48 ranked prospect on [MLB.com's Top 100 list](http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/prospects/watch/y2014/) and No. 4 on the [Astros' Top 20](http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/prospects/watch/y2014/#list=hou) has been on an absolute tear, especially with the long ball. On Saturday in Memphis, Singleton homered and drove in three runs in a 6-2 Oklahoma City win over the Redbirds.

The long ball was the sixth Singleton has hit in the past 10 days. He now leads all of Minor League Baseball in RBIs with 23, and he's tied for second in home runs with seven. He's tied for the lead in extra-base hits (14), while he's second in total bases (52) and third in slugging percentage (.776). In his last 10 games, Singleton has hit .409/.469/.955 with six homers and 16 RBIs.

Singleton is far from the only Astros prospect who made some noise on Saturday. There was plenty of action to watch down in the Class A Advanced California League as well.

No. 1 Astros prospect (No. 8 overall) Carlos Correa went 3-for-3 with a double, a triple and two runs scored. The former No. 1 overall Draft pick, hitting third in the Lancaster lineup, is now hitting .281/.338/.469 over his first 16 California League games.

His offensive worked helped support another fine pitching performance by No. 9 prospect Vincent Velasquez. Last week's [Pipeline Pitching Prospect of the Week](http://mlb.mlb.com/news/article/ari/mlb-pipeline-prospect-of-week-as-chad-pinder-and-astros-vincent-velasquez?ymd=20140414&content_id=72032730&vkey=news_mlb) went five shutout innings to improve his record to a perfect 4-0 on the season. Velasquez gave up just one hit and three walks while striking out four. The 2010 second-round Draft pick now has a 1.29 ERA over 21 innings, having allowed just seven hits while striking out 23.

Worth noting

• Outfielder [Alex Presley](http://mlb.mlb.com/team/player.jsp?player_id=502100), who was scratched from the lineup on Friday because of flu-like symptoms, was likely unavailable Saturday. "He was at the early stages of the bug, it's probably going to be a couple of days before he was ready to go," Porter said.

**A's rally to beat Astros 4-3**

By: Howard Chen / CSNHouston

Strong starting pitching, stellar defense, and some opportune hitting added up to an Astros 3-1 lead. Then, the ninth inning happened. Josh Reddick capped off a three-run rally with a walk-off hit as the A's beat the Astros 4-3.

TURNING POINT

Chad Qualls entered the game in the ninth and encountered trouble immediately. The leadoff home run by Jed Lowrie got it going.

STARTING PITCHING

Brett Oberholtzer never really allowed the A's to get into a good groove. He allowed eight hits over his 5.2 innings, but Oakland never truly threatened for a big inning. The lefthander lowered his season ERA to 3.04.

BULLPEN

Anthony Bass continued his strong momentum from the last time out with 1.1 hitless and scoreless innings in relief. Matt Albers did his part too. Qualls, though, couldn't get those final three outs.

AT THE PLATE

Jonathan Villar had himself a ballgame. He had two hits for extra bases, one a home run and the other a double. He also stole third and scored on the play when his hustle forced an Oakland error. The bottom half of the order had a much improved game, as Chris Carter, Matt Dominguez, and L.J. Hoes started to piece together hits and get on base. George Springer had his first extra-base hit of his career, a double that nearly was his first big-league home run.

IN THE FIELD

Dexter Fowler had the web gem of the game with a diving grab in center field in the seventh. Villar made a nice play himself in the second inning.

UP NEXT

Brad Peacock takes the hill on Sunday for his first start of the season. He got some action out of the bullpen last Thursday. His opponent will be Jesse Chavez, who has a 1.35 ERA after three starts. Chavez has given up a total of three earned runs in 20 innings.

**Owens, RedHawks Roll Through Redbirds**

By: Oklahoma City RedHawks

Rudy Owens doesn't allow a hit or walk over five scoreless innings as RedHawks take series opener in Memphis

Oklahoma City RedHawks

Memphis, Tenn. - Rudy Owens threw five scoreless and hitless innings, and Jon Singleton delivered a three-run homer as the Oklahoma City RedHawks opened their series in a Memphis with a 6-2 win over the Redbirds at AutoZone Park Saturday night.

Owens (2-0) was brilliant before exiting the game after hitting his innings limit at the end of fifth inning. He held the Redbirds

scoreless and hitless, and although he did not issue a walk either, Owens was not perfect since there was one error committed behind him.

The lefty retired 15 of the 16 batters he faced and finished with four strikeouts, using just 54 pitches to get through his start.

At the plate the RedHawks (11-6) struck for an early pair of runs in the top of the first inning. Robbie Grossman led off the game with a double and took third base on a wild pitch. Ronny Torreyes then brought Grossman home with an RBI single to make it 1-0.

Later in the inning, Domingo Santana hit a two-out RBI double to push the early edge to two runs.

The game stayed 2-0 for several innings as Owens kept Memphis (8-8) quiet. The RedHawks picked up the scoring again in the sixth. With two on and none out, Singleton ripped a three-run, line drive home run to right field to make it 5-0. It was Singleton's league leading seventh homer of the season and his second in as many games.

Memphis collected its first hit on a one-out double by Jermaine Curtis in the bottom of the sixth off Mike Foltynewicz. Curtis would score later in the inning on a sac fly by Randal Grichuk.

The RedHawks got the run right back during the next inning. Oklahoma City started the inning with three straight hits, the last of which was an RBI single by Torreyes, who along with Robbie Grossman, finished with a game-high three hits.

Oscar Taveras connected on a solo home run in the bottom of the seventh for the Redbirds, but that would round out the scoring for Memphis.

Redbirds starting pitcher Angel Castro (1-2) picked up the loss, surrendering four runs and seven hits over five-plus innings. He struck out four and did not allow a walk.

The RedHawks pitching staff once again did not allow a walk, making 36 consecutive innings without a walk that was not intentional.

With the win, Oklahoma City improved to 4-0 in road series openers. Tasked with playing 16 of their first 20 games on the road to start 2014, the RedHawks clinched a winning record in the 16-game stretch by winning their ninth road game Saturday night. They also claimed a victory for the seventh time in their past nine games at AutoZone Park.

**Riders Run Away in Game 3**

By: Corpus Christi Hooks

FRISCO - Rehabbing Texas Ranger Matt Harrison authored eight shutout innings Saturday night as Frisco blanked Corpus Christi 6-0 at Dr Pepper Ballpark.

The RoughRiders have notched 10 wins in a row, establishing a franchise record.

Frisco jumped out to an early advantage thanks to a four-run first inning. With two away, Jordan Brown worked a walked. Jake Smolinski then put a pair in scoring position thanks to a double down the left-field line. Trever Adams was next and served a single into centerfield for a 2-0 Riders lead.

A fielding error by shortstop Jio Mier and a single from Tomas Telis put Frisco up by four.

Hooks starter Ross Seaton yielded two more hits until he left in the fifth.

Drew Robinson followed Seaton's exit and belted a two-run home run to right off lefty Luis Cruz for a 6-0 advantage.

Harrison needed just 55 pitches to work thru his final six innings. He walked one and permitted three hits, striking out five.

Harrison threw 54 of 86 pitches for strikes.

Corpus Christi sends the tandem of Matt Heidenreich (0-0, 9.72) and lefty Tommy Shirley (1-2, 2.03) to the mound Sunday. Frisco sends Jerad Eickhoff (1-0, 2.25) to the hill. First pitch 2:05.

**Hooks shut out by RoughRiders, see losing streak hit five**

By: Caller.com Staff

FRISCO — The Hooks’ slide continued Saturday, with their offense hitting its lowest point of the season.

The Frisco RoughRiders blanked Corpus Christi 6-0 at Dr Pepper Ballpark, extending the Hooks’ (8-7) losing streak to a season-worst five games. Frisco will try to sweep the four-game series Sunday afternoon.

During the skid the Hooks have scored just seven runs. Saturday marked the first time Corpus Christi has been shut out this season.

Matt Harrison, the Texas Rangers pitcher in Frisco on a rehab assignment, tossed eight innings of three-hit ball. Corpus Christi’s only hits were a double by Nolan Fontana and singles by Jio Mier and Matt Duffy.

Meanwhile, Frisco (11-4) got all the offense it needed with four first-inning runs off Hooks starter Ross Seaton.

With two outs, Seaton issued a walk to Jordan Brown. Frisco promptly took advantage of the free pass, with Jake Smolinski doubling to put runners on second and third. A walk to Drew Robinson then loaded the bases and Trever Adams followed with a two-run single up the middle.

Ryan Rua then reached on an error by Hooks shortstop Jio Mier, with Robinson scoring. Tomas Telis then singled through the left side to plate Adams with the inning’s final run.

With one out in the fifth, Seaton hit Smolinski with a pitch. Luis Cruz relieved Seaton and Robinson greeted Cruz with a two-run home run down the right-field line to make it 6-0.

**JetHawks do it all in 7-1 win over Mavs**

*Velasquez gets fourth win as Meredith, Correa produce at plate*

By: Lancaster JetHawks

LANCASTER, Calif. - The JetHawks excelled in all facets of the game on Friday night as they rolled to a 7-1 victory over the High Desert Mavericks before a festive crowd of 3,834 at The Hangar.

Starter Vince Velasquez (4-0) set the tone with a strike out to start the game and the JetHawks bats put the Mavs in an early hole with three runs in the first inning.

Tony Kemp led off with a single and was promptly doubled home by Ruben Sosa who picked up his first extra-base hit with Lancaster. Sosa then attempted to steal third and scored when catcher Steve Baron's throw sailed into left field.

Brandon Meredith capped the inning with a solo home run to give the JetHawks the early advantage.

Velasquez took it from there. The right-hander didn't allow a hit over the first three innings and induced two inning-ending double play grounders after issuing walks to Mavericks hitters.

Velasquez went five innings and allowed just one hit while striking out four and walking three. The Pomona-native picked up his Cal League best fourth win and lowered his ERA to 1.29.

Lancaster gave tandem starter Kyle Westwood some breathing room in the sixth inning. Carlos Correa doubled with one out and Dan Gulbransen followed with a walk to bring Meredith to the plate. Meredith blasted a ball off the batter's eye in dead centerfield to put the JetHawks up 6-0. It marked the first multi-homer game for Lancaster this season.

Mavericks starter Matt Anderson (1-2) was charged with five runs over 5 1/3 innings to pick up the loss.

Correa continued his solid night in the eighth inning with a triple and later scored on a wild pitch. He finished 3-for-3 with and was just a home run shy of the cycle.

Westwood notched his second save of the season, allowing just one run over four innings to close out the game.

The tandem of Velasquez and Westwood has started the season a combined 5-0 with a 1.60 ERA and a 0.73 WHIP.

With the win, the JetHawks (11-6) moved back into a first place tie with High Desert (11-6).

Lancaster is off on Sunday and will embark on its second road trip of the season on Monday night in San Bernardino where the JetHawks will begin a four game series with the Inland Empire 66ers. Lance McCullers and Kyle Smith are scheduled to pitch in the 7:05 p.m. game at San Manuel Stadium.

**Mistakes cost Bandits as Silver Hawks sweep**

*Quad Cities drops third straight after committing four errors and allowing five unearned runs in 7-6 loss*

By: Marco LaNave / Quad Cities River Bandits

The South Bend Silver Hawks broke a 2-2 tie with four unearned runs in the third inning and held off the Quad Cities River Bandits' late rally for a 7-6 win and three-game sweep of the home team in front of a season-high 3,597 at Modern Woodmen Park Saturday night.

For a third straight game, South Bend (9-7) reached the scoreboard first. Shortstop Andrew Velazquez led off by reaching on catcher's interference by Brett Booth, making his River Bandits debut. Designated hitter Jamie Westbrook singled against right-hander Jandel Gustave (1-2), and first baseman Daniel Palka drove a two-run triple down the left-field line for a 2-0 lead for the visitors.

Quad Cities (7-9) rallied to tie the game in the second inning against Silver Hawks right-hander Ben Eckels (1-2). First baseman Conrad Gregor doubled down the first-base line, and Booth drove him in with a chopper into center field in his first Midwest League at-bat. Left fielder Jon Kemmer singled to right field to move Booth to second base, and two groundouts eventually brought in Booth for a 2-2 tie.

The pivotal third inning began with Westbrook's groundball that shortstop Chan-Jong Moon misplayed. Gustave threw a wild pickoff to first base, allowing Westbrook to reach second. With one out, Palka singled Westbrook to third. Catcher Jose Queliz then grounded to Moon, whose throw to first was wide to allow the go-ahead run to score and Palka and Queliz to reach second and first bases, respectively. Center fielder Chuck Taylor doubled to left field to score Palka, and third baseman George Roberts' two-run single made the score 6-2. Gustave was removed after 2 1/3 innings in which he allowed six runs - one earned - on five hits and one walk with three strikeouts.

River Bandits right-hander Tyler Brunnemann entered for the last two outs of the third inning and retired all eight batters he faced.

Meanwhile, Quad Cities began a rally in the third inning, with center fielder Brett Phillips and third baseman Tyler White drawing consecutive one-out walks. Gregor singled to right fielder Zach Esquerra, who threw out Phillips at home plate, as white reached third base. White later scored on a wild pitch, but the River Bandits lost a chance for more when Kemmer grounded out with two men on base. Eckels kept the 6-3 lead the rest of his outing. He lasted five innings, allowing three earned runs on five hits and a walk with three strikeouts.

Booth reached base all four plate appearances and closed the deficit to 6-4 in the sixth inning when he walked against right-hander Austin Platt and came around to score on a sacrifice fly by second baseman Jobduan Morales. But South Bend stretched the lead to 7-4 when Palka homered leadingagainst left-hander Kent Emanuel to break up a string of 14 consecutive batters retired by

Quad Cities pitchers.

In the bottom of the eighth, Gregor reached on an error by Silver Hawks second baseman Josh Parr. Booth then doubled down the left-field line, and Kemmer lined a two-run single to right-center field while advancing to second base on the throw home. With the tying run at second base, Platt escaped with a groundout and two strikeouts. Left-hander Daniel Gibson worked around a two-out single by White for a scoreless ninth inning and his third save that finished the River Bandits' first sweep loss since a three-game set at Clinton Aug. 14-16, 2013.

After going 5-7 in first-half inter-division play, Quad Cities will open a four-game series in Clinton at 6:30 p.m. Monday to start a seven-game road stretch. River Bandits left-hander Evan Grills (0-0) is scheduled to face Silver Hawks right-hander Edwin Diaz (1-0).

UP NEXT: Markdown Monday opens the next River Bandits homestand on April 28. Bleacher and berm tickets, as well as hot dogs, peanuts, popcorn and nachos are $2 each. Gates open at 5:30 p.m. for the 7 p.m. game against the Clinton LumberKings. Tickets are available at www.riverbandits.com. To order any of the ticket plans - with new lower prices - call the River Bandits box office at 563-324-3000. Season ticket and mini-plan packages start at just seven games and begin at less than $40. Call a River Bandits account representative today to choose your seats and get the details of our various mini-plan packages.

**Elias Says**

By: Elias Sports Bureau

Four K's in four plate appearances for Trout

From Elias: [Max Scherzer](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/28976/max-scherzer) allowed one run and three hits and struck out nine Angels - including [Mike Trout](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/30836/mike-trout) three times - in Detroit's 5-2 win on Saturday afternoon. Scherzer is the second pitcher to strike out Trout three times in a game, joining Oakland's [Tommy Milone](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/31706/tommy-milone) (September 23, 2013).

Trout struck out in all four plate appearances on Saturday ([Joe Nathan](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/4044/joe-nathan) K'd him in his final plate appearance). That marked the first time that Trout struck out in each of his trips to the plate in any game in which he had more than one plate appearance in his career.

Holt

Red Sox first triple of the season is a game winner

From Elias: [Brock Holt](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/30841/brock-holt) broke a 2-2 tie with a run-scoring triple in the bottom of the seventh inning, Boston's first three-bagger of the season, in the Red Sox 4-2 victory over the Orioles at Fenway Park on Saturday afternoon. The Red Sox streak of 17 consecutive games to start a season without hitting a triple is the third longest in the team's franchise history. Boston went 22 games without a triple to begin the 1968 season and went 19 straight games without a three-bagger at the start of the 1990 season.

Correia

Correia fails to beat the Royals again

From Elias: [Kevin Correia](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/5580/kevin-correia) allowed five runs in six innings of work and took the loss as the Twins dropped a 5-4 decision to the Royals on Saturday afternoon. Correia is now winless in eight career starts (0-4) against Kansas City in his career. Only one other active pitcher has made at least eight starts against the Royals and does not have a win against them: [Jose Quintana](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/32106/jose-quintana) (0-3).

Lynn

Lynn's first extra-base hit contributes to a victory

From Elias: [Lance Lynn](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/30820/lance-lynn) earned his fourth victory of the season and helped his own cause with a run-scoring double in the second inning in the Cardinals' 4-3 win over the Nationals on Saturday afternoon. Lynn's double was the first extra-base hit of his major-league career in what was his 115th lifetime at bat. The only active players who had more at bats without any doubles, triples or homers entering Saturday's action were [Ubaldo Jimenez](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/28625/ubaldo-jimenez) (273) and [Tom Gorzelanny](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/6449/tom-gorzelanny) (216).

A's rally for three in the ninth to beat Astros

From Elias: The A's scored three runs in the bottom of the ninth inning and beat the Astros, 4-3, in Oakland on Saturday afternoon. Oakland has now won seven games in which they trailed by at least two runs when coming to bat in the ninth inning since the start of the 2011 season. That is tied with Tampa Bay for the most such wins for any team over the last four seasons.

Buehrle

Buehrle continues his incredible start to the season

From Elias: [Mark Buehrle](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/4454/mark-buehrle) pitched seven shutout innings and won his fourth straight start to begin the season in Toronto's victory over the Indians on Saturday. Buehrle is the first pitcher in the Blue Jays' franchise history to win each of his first four starts of a season while allowing one or fewer run in each appearance. Over the last 15 seasons, only three other American League pitchers have started a season in that fashion: Cleveland's [Cliff Lee](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/5353/cliff-lee) in 2008, Kansas City's [Zack Greinke](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/5883/zack-greinke) in 2009 and Oakland's [Brett Anderson](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/30041/brett-anderson) in 2012.

Alvarez

A two-hit shutout and a run-scoring hit for Alvarez

From Elias: [Henderson Alvarez](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/31047/henderson-alvarez) tossed a two-hit shutout and drove in a run with a single in the sixth inning to lead the Marlins to a 7-0 win over the Mariners on Saturday. Only one other Marlins pitcher has allowed two or fewer hits in a shutout and produced a run-scoring hit in the same game: [Ricky Nolasco](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/6491/ricky-nolasco), who blanked the Giants on two hits and drove in two runs with a double in a 6-0 win on August 19, 2008.

Braun

Braun hits two homers, including the game winner

From Elias: [Ryan Braun](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/28721/ryan-braun) hit two home runs - including one that gave the Brewers the lead in the ninth inning - to lift Milwaukee to an 8-7 win over the Pirates on Saturday night. It was the 20th time Braun hit two home runs in a game, but it was only the first of those instances in which the second of those homers gave the Brewers a lead in the ninth inning or later.

Rays pound Yankees for the second straight night

From Elias: After pounding out 16 hits in an 11-5 win over the Yankees on Friday, the Rays put up 16 more hits against Yankees pitching in a 16-1 win on Saturday. Tampa Bay is the first team in nearly 26 years to produce at least 10 runs and 16 hits in consecutive games against the Yankees, since the Angels did it against New York on August 27th and 28th in 1988.

Stults

Stults stifles Giants

From Elias: [Eric Stults](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/28591/eric-stults) allowed only one run in six innings of work and earned the win in the Padres 3-1 victory over the Giants on Saturday night. Stults entered the contest with a 5.21 career ERA against the Giants, which was the highest among active pitchers who have made at least a dozen starts against San Francisco.

Kouzmanoff

Kouzmanoff has at least one hit in each of his 10 games with the Rangers

From Elias: [Kevin Kouzmanoff](http://espn.go.com/mlb/player/_/id/28585/kevin-kouzmanoff) contributed to Texas' 6-3 win over the White Sox with a home run in the eighth inning giving him a 10-game hitting streak to start his career with the Rangers. Only two other players had at least one hit in each of their first 10 games with the Rangers: Fred Manrique (11 in 1989) and Alex Johnson (10 in 1973).

**Reddick's walk-off single caps rally in ninth**

*Lowrie's homer, Callaspo's single sets up final act in three-run inning*

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Josh Reddick's bats had been in hiding. So, too, had his confidence.

Both were on display in the grandest of ways on Saturday, when the A's right fielder continued to dig his way out of an early-season hole with the walk-off single in Oakland's 4-3 victory over the Astros at O.co Coliseum.

For two days, Reddick has been pulling from a stash of bats that had mistakenly been stored above Alberto Callaspo's locker. In that time he's 6-for-9, after starting the year 4-for-41.

"Other than that," said Reddick, smiling, "it's just been hard work.

"It feels good again. The first week I was going up there thinking, 'How am I even going to touch this baseball?' It's a great turnaround, a great feeling to be back in the box with some confidence."

As a team, the A's never seem to lack any -- no matter the deficit, no matter the inning.

Slowed by poor defense and a weak showing at the plate with runners in scoring position for most of Saturday's game, they waited until the ninth to do most of their good work.

Down 3-1 entering the frame, the A's plated three in the inning to complete the comeback and enjoy their second straight win over the Astros, who have dropped six straight to fall to 5-13.

The A's, who got eight solid innings from Scott Kazmir, are an American League-best 12-5 with two walk-off wins to their name already. They have 26 total since the start of 2012.

"That's one of the best characteristics of this team," said Jed Lowrie, who started the comeback in the ninth with a leadoff homer to right field. "We had that last year, and we're off to a good start this year of really grinding out those last-inning at-bats and making it tough on the other guys, never making it easy on them."

Perhaps it was fitting that Lowrie, involved in a dustup with Houston manager Bo Porter on Friday night, kept the drama alive for another day with a his shot off right-hander Chad Qualls, who had never faced the shortstop before.

Josh Donaldson walked, and Yoenis Cespedes followed with a single, setting up Alberto Callaspo's game-tying hit one out later.

That's when Reddick stepped to the plate and delivered the difference-maker, a sharp RBI knock to right-center field.

"We often talk about guys who are in deep slumps, and sometimes it only takes one game where you get a couple of hits or a couple of balls up, you start to feel a lot better about yourself," said manager Bob Melvin. "He had good swings today, certainly that last one. He's not trying to hit a homer there, just trying to get the ball in the air. He hit that as squarely as you can hit it.

"It's just more confidence than anything. His swings had been good, his balance had been pretty good. The only two times I've seen him off-balance were the first two swings that inning where he was out front a little. You could see him talking to himself and he stayed within himself, and that's what we want to see him do, let the ball travel and get a good look at it."

The A's were just 2-for-10 with runners in scoring position before the ninth, having stranded 12 baserunners to that point, their only other run coming in the third against lefty Brett Oberholtzer on back-to-back doubles from Daric Barton and Craig Gentry.

Moreover, they made two more errors, including a throwing miscue from catcher Derek Norris that led to a run in the fifth, to give them an AL-high 18 on the season.

Dan Otero, who pitched a scoreless ninth, recorded the win, but Kazmir's day was not to be overlooked.

The southpaw allowed just two earned runs (three total) on six hits with no walks and five strikeouts in a season-high eight innings.

He finished eight innings just once last year, on July 24.

"It's great, early in the year, to be going deep in the games and still have quality pitches from my first pitch to my last pitch," said Kazmir. "It's huge, and to be able to get quick outs like that and reduce my pitch count each inning was important."

The $22 million lefty has been outstanding for the A's, allowing a combined five earned runs with 24 strikeouts next to just four walks in 27 1/3 innings over his first four starts.

He's also quickly picked up on their knack for the dramatic.

"If we're close enough, we feel like it's only a matter of time," Kazmir said. "Even if we get their best guy, we still feel like we can pull it out."

"We seem to get our best at-bats late in games, so even though it wasn't pretty for a while early on, that's why we play to 27 outs," said Melvin. "Every at-bat in the ninth inning was fantastic."