



In Rays We Trust

By Gabe Kepler, Fox Sports

The perception that the Rays received a paltry haul is based on the precedent set by the 2012 deal in which they acquired Wil Myers, Jake Odorizzi, Mike Montgomery and Patrick Leonard from the Royals. We are now two years down the road, and prospects are overvalued by the industry.

My grandfather remembers when he could buy a bottle of Pepsi for a nickel. He's still pissed off about the price hike. Regardless of how he feels about it, when he walks into a 7-Eleven, he will leave thirsty if he's not willing to pony up a buck fifty. When he does crack, everyone his age points and yells "How could you spend six quarters on soda!"

Now, back to the future.

This column isn't meant to draw attention to the value of Drew Smyly, Nick Franklin and Willy Adames. Many others have done that already. We've seen comparisons to David Price from the perspectives of both wins and monetary value. I don't need to tell you that the perceived winners of deals don't necessarily hold up in hindsight. We already know that. Yawn.

Let's step back from baseball for a moment. When elite companies - like Apple or Annie's Natural Foods - release less than stellar earnings reports or unsavory news, as investors, we have a choice. We can panic and sell our positions at a loss or we can examine why the landscape seems less fruitful than before. Stepping back from the ledge, we should trust the history of the company and remember why we invested in the first place. Sometimes, taking a small step back is needed for bigger steps forward.

Historically, exceptional companies are built by the actions of stellar executives and employees. We learn to trust them based on their body of work. We aren't necessarily privy to their proprietary information, but we know their job is to be smarter than us when it comes to their strategies. I'm not advocating blind faith. We should always question and challenge the process. However, I am suggesting that we display some level of confidence in the men and women steering the ship if they've continually given us reason to.

Turning back to baseball, I remember watching the great Todd Helton work in the cage in the early 2000s. He would tweak his swing for reasons incomprehensible to casual fans. In the immediate plate appearances after, his timing and rhythm looked off. The spike in production would come, but only after a few days of growing pains. Helton put up better than 160 wRC+ in the two previous seasons. We, as a team, trusted him to make the adjustments he needed. He was going to produce because by that point, he knew how to do so and was willing to work tirelessly and efficiently. He'd proven that throughout his career.

The Rays, and a few other elite baseball teams, are like Helton – proven and trustworthy.

If you're listening to talk radio, you may think Andrew Friedman watched a few Nick Franklin highlights, checked out Drew Smyly's projections for the next five years, and perhaps called up a scout who saw Adames in the Midwest League for a game or two. A quick note to Rays' president Matt Silverman for approval, a phone call to Dave Dombrowski to execute the deal, and you're envisioning Friedman leaning back in his office chair, satisfied and smug.

This scenario couldn't be farther from the truth. The baseball community suggesting that the Rays took pennies on the dollar for David Price is akin to assuming that we know scouting, player development, and our sport's analytics better than a group which has historically outperformed the industry.

Friedman and the Rays don't mind. They are not looking to tell us how they get from point A to point B. When you have a machine that runs on a more efficient, cheaper fuel, it's not prudent to show your competition the blueprint.

We do know a few things. These elements, crucial to the Rays' success, are not proprietary, but certainly aren't universally understood. Countless scouts, front office personnel, player development employees, and analytics specialists worked tirelessly to determine if this deal was the best available.

The Baseball Operations department lost sleep poring over possible outcomes. Studies were performed. Packages were weighed against each other. Qualified baseball men sat in AL Central ballparks watching Smyly pitch and in the Northwest observing Franklin. Adames was thoroughly scrutinized. Teammates were polled. Character checks were performed. Data was utilized not only from 2014, but many years before.

Perhaps someone outside the Rays organization has a better read on David Price. Remember though, this is a group that has had him since his baseball infancy. They've watched him develop as a pitcher, a teammate, and a man. They supported him publicly through some PR hiccups and assisted in his growth process. Ask yourself this: Who is better equipped to evaluate the piece they parted with and his value?

Have the Rays earned your faith? They've had six straight winning seasons out of the last six, a feat only two other clubs can claim - the Cardinals and Yankees. We know about the loot those two organizations have dropped. Of course, the Rays have done this without their payroll ever eclipsing \$79 million.

As an investor, blind faith is never worthy of applause, but paying attention to the companies Warren Buffett is buying and selling is an exercise with merit. When he makes a move that doesn't immediately hit home, I don't throw my hands up in frustration, I lean in and pay attention.

I haven't seen Willy Adames play yet, but I just bought a bunch of shares.

Rays lose to Angels to finish homestand

By Matt Baker, Tampa Bay Times

ST. PETERSBURG — The Rays' first problem in Sunday's 7-5 loss to the Angels was unexpected, with usually steady starter Jake Odorizzi having one of his worst outings of the season.

The second was part of a troubling trend, with the Rays' hitters leaving 12 runners on base and continuing to struggle with the bases loaded.

The result was the Rays' third loss in four games and their first losing series in a month heading into a three-city, 11-day road trip.

"We had opportunities to win this game," manager Joe Maddon said, "and we frustratingly did not."

Odorizzi put them in a bad spot early, quickly ending his streak of allowing three or fewer runs at nine starts.

After seven innings without a walk in his last start, 12 of Odorizzi's first 20 pitches were balls, and he walked two of the Angels' first three batters. The other, Mike Trout, blasted an RBI double to left-centerfield in front of a Tropicana Field crowd of 25,877.

"Started off bad," Odorizzi said, "and it didn't get any better."

He needed 36 pitches to get his first out, on Howie Kendrick's baserunning mistake. By the time Efen Navarro blasted an RBI double in Odorizzi's 46-pitch first inning, he had given up five earned runs — as many as he had allowed in his past three starts combined.

"It was just one of those days where you make some bad pitches and it finds holes," Odorizzi said after his three-inning outing, his shortest as a Ray. "And then you make a good pitch, it finds holes, too."

The Rays (54-57) didn't have the same luck on offense. They stranded multiple runners in the second, fourth and seventh innings and continued a season-long trend of failing to capitalize on bases-loaded opportunities.

"Bases loaded's not a good play for us," Maddon said.

They faced those chances in two different innings, each with one out. In the fourth, Jose Molina's sacrifice fly scored the only run before Kevin Kiermaier popped out.

In the seventh, Cole Figueroa sandwiched a bases-loaded walk between Sean Rodriguez's strikeout and Kiermaier's inning-ending grounder on the first pitch he saw from Joe Smith.

"It's just one of those things where I can't really put a finger on to what's the difference," Kiermaier said. "It's just one thing where I know I need to be a lot better in bigger situations like that."

Kiermaier, and the rest of the Rays, who were 3-for-13 with runners in scoring position and entered Sunday hitting .230 with the bases loaded — third worst in the league.

Maddon could point to those opportunities for both losses to the Angels. The Rays had the bases loaded with no outs in Friday's ninth inning but came away scoreless in a 5-3 defeat.

"We've had plenty of opportunities to win the games we have lost," Maddon said. "We just couldn't get it done."

Rays push back Ryan Hanigan's return

By Matt Baker, Tampa Bay Times

ST. PETERSBURG — C **Ryan Hanigan** (left oblique) isn't any closer to rejoining the Rays.

A day after Hanigan went 1-for-3 at DH in a rehab assignment for advanced Class A Charlotte, the Rays announced they will shut him down for about a week.

"We just want to make sure that this is right," manager **Joe Maddon** said. "He's still sore. We don't want to push it."

Hanigan had hoped he'd be ready to come off the DL on Friday. Then he had expected to start at catcher for Charlotte today. The Rays haven't announced a timetable for his return, and they continue to be cautious about rushing him back too quickly from his second stint on the DL this season.

Meanwhile, OF **Wil Myers** (right wrist) is scheduled to work out today with Charlotte and Tuesday with the Gulf Coast League Rays. If all goes well, he could begin a rehab assignment in Triple-A Durham this weekend.

LONGO GOES SHORT: 3B **Evan Longoria** executed the first sacrifice bunt of his career during the fifth inning.

With no outs, his bunt moved **Ben Zobrist** and **Matt Joyce** to second and third, respectively. The maneuver paid off, at least to some degree. **James Loney** followed with a sacrifice fly before **Yunel Escobar** flied out to end the inning.

"I think that was him demonstrating the team concept right there," Maddon said of Longoria, who entered Sunday 30-for-97 (.309) with runners in scoring position this season.

"Maybe he wasn't seeing (Angels starter **Jered Weaver**) good. Yeah, I was surprised."

ON COBB: RHP **Alex Cobb** has found his old form and begun to look like a pitcher Maddon has called one of the best in the league.

Entering tonight's scheduled start at Oakland, Cobb has given up only one run and eight hits in his previous two games. He's coming off a 12-strikeout performance against the Brewers on Tuesday.

With his mechanical fixes behind him, Cobb doesn't plan to change anything today as the staff's presumptive leader after the **David Price** trade.

"That's weird that I would be considered the veteran guy," Cobb, 26, said. "I feel like I just got here. ... There's nothing more that you try to do, and if you try and do more, you're setting yourself up for failure."

LONG OUTING: A 19-minute power delay caused by a nearby lightning strike was only one reason why a game that began at 1:41 p.m. didn't end until four hours later.

Howie Kendrick fouled eight two-strike pitches off Rays starter **Jake Odorizzi** before singling in a run in the first, and Rays 2B **Logan Forsythe** drew a 13-pitch walk to load the bases in the seventh.

GOOD DEEDS: The Rays' wives raised more than \$22,000 for Smile Train, an international charity providing free surgery for children with cleft lips and palates, by riding stationary bikes during Saturday's game. Loney and his wife, **Nadia**, presented a \$70,000 check to the Guardian ad Litem Foundation of Tampa Bay to support the organization, which helps abused and neglected children.

LOOKING SHARP: The Rays dressed in formalwear for their road trip to Oakland. Highlights included camouflaged vests from some of the coaching staff and LHP **Jake McGee's** all-orange tuxedo and top hat.

It's the team's fifth themed road trip of the season and the 33rd since Maddon introduced the idea in 2008.

MISCELLANY: Loney's second consecutive three-hit game extended his on-base streak to 22 games, tied for the second longest of his career. ... Joyce celebrated his 30th birthday with three walks and a single. ... The Pirates signed INF **Jayson Nix**, who was released by the organization last week.

Rays Notes: Road trip vital to Rays' wild card push

By Nick Williams, Tribune Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG — The Rays feel they can still do something special this season, but that might depend on how they perform during a 10-game trip that begins tonight in Oakland.

The Rays are attempting to become the fourth team in major-league history to fall 18 games below .500 and return to .500. The Rays were last a .500 team in April when they were 10-10.

The trip opens with three games against the A's, who hold the best record in baseball, followed by a three-game series against the Cubs and finally four games against the Rangers.

The Rays went 5-0 on their last trip, sweeping the Twins and Cardinals following the All-Star break.

"We've turned into a really good road team," Rays manager Joe Maddon said. "We're actually a better road team that we are a home team. We'll take this show on the road and see what happens."

The Rays are attempting to become the first team to rally from 18 games below .500 to reach the postseason. In 1914, the Boston Braves climbed from a 12-28 hole and went 82-31 the remainder of the season before sweeping the Philadelphia A's in the World Series.

"We had a big road trip a couple of weeks ago when we went 9-2, so it's one of those things where we're staying motivated and coming hard every day and holding our heads held high," OF Kevin Kiermaier said. "Hopefully we can keep the same

thing going for this one and win each series. That's what we're trying to do, and stay within grasp of everything with this playoff race that everyone's going for the last two months."

The Rays have been two games shy of .500 three times since July 26.

Are the playoffs still within reach?

"No doubt," Maddon said. "Absolutely. I really feel strongly about that."

Cobb aims for sixth win in row

RHP Alex Cobb is on a roll.

And if the Rays are to get back to .500, they'll need Cobb to continue at his current pace.

Cobb, who starts tonight in Oakland, has won five straight decisions, tying his career-high streak for the third time.

In his last start, a 5-1 win over the Brewers, Cobb had a season-high 12 strikeouts for this seventh win of the season.

"I feel comfortable with my mechanics right now," Cobb said. "Every time you're going out, I would say 90 percent of the battle is against yourself.

"Obviously when there's a really good hitting team like Oakland, you have to make sure you're extra sharp and mentally go along with the game as long as you can and try not to make any dumb mistakes out there, repeat pitches to the same guy multiple times or whatever the case may be."

Noteworthy

With his leadoff double in the second, 1B James Loney extended his on-base streak to 22 consecutive games. ... 3B Evan Longoria had his first career sacrifice bunt in the fifth to move Ben Zobrist to third and Matt Joyce to second. Zobrist scored on Loney's sacrifice fly. ... There was a 19-minute delay in the top of the third after lightning struck a nearby power substation, causing some lights to go out at Tropicana Field.

Odorizzi, Rays' bats struggle in loss to Angels

By Nick Williams, Tribune Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG — Tampa Bay Rays pitcher Jake Odorizzi categorized Sunday's 7-5 loss to the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim as "just one of those days."

But boy, was it ever a bad one.

It took 46 pitches for Odorizzi to get out of a five-run first inning against the Angels, a beginning that proved too much for the Rays to overcome as Tampa Bay lost the third of its last four games before an announced crowd of 25,877 at Tropicana Field.

The Rays are now three games under .500 (54-57) entering a 10-game road trip that begins Monday at Oakland.

In that first inning, Odorizzi (7-9) gave up four hits while walking two batters. Odorizzi was pulled after the third inning for right-hander Kirby Yates, his shortest start in a Rays' uniform and did not record an out until his 36th pitch.

"It was just one of those days where you make a bad pitch and (they) find holes, make good pitch (they) finds holes, too. Today was a tough day overall for me. I started off bad and it didn't get any better in the first inning. It was just a tough inning. When you start the game off like that, five runs, it doesn't give your team any help from the start."

In 82 pitches on the mound, Odorizzi finished with three walks, eight hits allowed, one strikeout and five runs, all earned.

"Jake did not have his day," Rays manager Joe Maddon said. "It just wasn't going to work out for him today. He's been pitching really, really well for us. Leadoff walk and then two-strike (Mike) Trout double and one and on. I really though he was going to have a pretty good day the way he's been pitching."

Trailing 7-2 in the bottom of the seventh inning, the Rays rallied to score three runs to cut the deficit to 7-5. First baseman James Loney batted home Matt Joyce on a RBI single, Evan Longoria scored from third base on a wild pitch thrown reliever Kevin Jepsen and with the bases loaded, pinch hitter Cole Figueroa was walked by right-handed pitcher Joe Smith to score Loney for the third run.

Grant Belfour pitched a scoreless eighth inning and Jake McGee retired the side in the top of the ninth to give Tampa Bay's offense a fighting chance, but the Rays were held to one hit by Smith and Huston Street in the final two innings to end the game.

Scoring with runners in position continued to be an Achilles Heel for the Rays, who left 12 batters stranded Sunday.

"That's the tale of the tape right there," Maddon said. "We had plenty of opportunities."

With the bases still loaded in bottom of the seventh, Kevin Kiermaier grounded out to first. Kiermaier was 0-for-2 Sunday with bases loaded and has one extra base hit in his last 17 games.

"It wasn't my day at the plate to shine which is unfortunate because I had runners in scoring position a couple of times," Kiermaier said. "I know left a lot of guys on base and that really hurts because it's something you need to take advantage of in games like that and I didn't."

Yates pitched two perfect innings with three strikeouts, but what followed was a 1 1/3 inning, inefficient performance from Jeff Beliveau that allowed two more runs on four hits.

Loney went 3-for-4 with two RBI and two runs scored to lead the Rays, who could muster only one run after loading the bases twice in the fourth inning. Loney scored on a RBI sacrifice fly by catcher Jose Molina in the fourth inning and in the fifth, Ben Zobrist scored on Loney's sac fly.

Angels starter Jered Weaver (12-6) scattered six hits through six innings with three strikeouts and four walks and Trout went 3-for-4 with two RBI, a run and a double for the Angels.

In their high-scoring first inning, Trout batted home Kole Calhoun on a RBI double and later scored on former Devil Ray Josh Hamilton's RBI single. Erick Aybar singled to load the bases and what followed was a RBI single from Howie Kendrick to score Albert Pujols, a David Freese sac fly to score Hamilton and a RBI double from Eren Navarro to score Aybar.

Odorizzi roughed up as Rays drop rubber game

By Bill Chastain, MLB.com

ST. PETERSBURG -- An odd homestand drew to a close on Sunday, when the Rays took a 7-5 loss to the Angels at Tropicana Field.

The Rays (54-57) have now lost three of four, dropping to 8 1/2 games behind the American League East-leading Orioles, who defeated the Mariners on Sunday. They also lost a chance to gain ground for the AL's second Wild Card spot, as the Blue Jays lost to the Astros.

The Rays departed after the game for a three-stop, 10-game road trip to Oakland, Chicago and Texas, where, ultimately, their fate could be determined.

Carrying a five-series winning streak into their weekend set, the Rays were dealing with the departure of David Price. For the length of the weekend, the team appeared to be adjusting to the new order while clinging to the idea they can remain relevant without their best pitcher.

Jake Odorizzi got off to a rough start. The Rays right-hander delivered the first pitch of the game at 1:41 p.m. and did not record the first out of the inning until 2:01 p.m.

Before the first had run its course, the Angels had scored five runs, sent nine men to the plate and Odorizzi had thrown 46 pitches -- a career-high for a single inning.

"We had good counts the whole first inning and took advantage of it," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said.

A frustrated Odorizzi called Sunday's start "one of those days where you make some bad pitches and they find holes."

"You make a good pitch, it finds holes, too," Odorizzi said. "You just have to fight through it. Today was just a tough day overall for me. Started off bad, didn't get any better. The first inning was just a tough inning. When you start off a game like that, a five spot in the first just doesn't give our team any help from the start."

Odorizzi got an early hook after throwing 82 pitches through three innings. He allowed five runs on eight hits and three walks en route to his ninth loss of the season.

"Jake just did not have his day," Rays manager Joe Maddon said. "It wasn't going to work for him today ... I really thought he was going to have a good day based on how he's been pitching."

The Rays loaded the bases against Jered Weaver in the fourth and only scored once, via a Jose Molina sacrifice fly. They got busy again in the fifth, when Ben Zobrist singled to lead off the inning and Matt Joyce walked, bringing cleanup hitter Evan Longoria to the plate.

Surprising everyone in the ballpark, Longoria dropped a bunt in the direction of third base. Weaver managed to make a nice play on the ball, throwing out Longoria at first. But the sacrifice put the runners in scoring position. James Loney then flied out to center field to drive home the Rays' second run to cut the Angels lead to 5-2.

Mike Trout singled home a run in the sixth and David Freese had a sacrifice fly in the seventh to push the lead to 7-2.

In the seventh, Loney singled home a run, Longoria scored on a wild pitch by Kevin Jepsen, and Cole Figueroa drove in another when he drew a walk against Joe Smith with the bases loaded to narrow the gap to 7-5. Unfortunately for the Rays, Kevin Kiermaier grounded out on the first pitch he saw to end the inning.

"It was a good pitch to hit," Kiermaier said. "I was looking for something over the plate, and I should have done more but I didn't. I knew he was going to come right there with the fastball and try to get ahead. He threw me a pitch that I could handle but I didn't take advantage of. ... It's something you need to take advantage of in games like that, and I didn't."

Weaver earned his 12th win of the season, allowing two runs on six hits, and four relievers followed to seal the win.

"When push came to shove, we got some big outs all afternoon," Scioscia said.

While the Rays hitters did manage to push across five runs, they left 12 runners on base and went 3-for-13 with runners in scoring position.

"We had plenty of opportunities and had the right guys up at the right time today," said Maddon, noting that the offense just didn't thrive Sunday, particularly with the bases loaded.

Hanigan to be shut down for seven days

By Bill Chastain, MLB.com

ST. PETERSBURG -- Ryan Hanigan, who is on the disabled list with a left oblique strain, will be shut down from all activity for seven days, according to Rays manager Joe Maddon.

Hanigan was the designated hitter for Class A Charlotte on Saturday and went 1-for-3 with a walk and two runs scored. He was back in the clubhouse for a day off on Sunday and was tentatively scheduled to catch for Charlotte on Monday before the change of plans.

"We don't want to rush it," said Maddon, noting that Hanigan was feeling something in the oblique.

Hanigan went on the disabled list on July 17. Earlier in the season, he had another stint on the DL while recovering from a tight right hamstring.

Hanigan came to the Rays in a three-way deal with the Reds and D-backs on Dec. 3. He is hitting .212 with four home runs and 27 RBIs in 61 games for the Rays this season.

Pitching staff adjusting to life without Price

By Bill Chastain, MLB.com

ST. PETERSBURG -- Alex Cobb seemed taken aback when a reporter pointed out he was the senior member of the starting rotation since David Price got traded.

"That's weird that I'd be considered the veteran guy," Cobb said. "Feels like I just got here."

Despite his new standing, Cobb said he's not going to act or operate any differently.

"The feel in the clubhouse has been passed down to us," Cobb said. "It's been established many years ago. It's just our job to continue that. It's a good thing we've got going. I'd say the only thing that we have to do as a group, when we do have new guys coming in, just welcome them. Let them know that the No. 1 thing is to feel comfortable here. Nobody walks on eggshells around here.

"We're all a big group of friends that goes out and plays baseball. Now, with Drew [Smyly] coming in, we're trying to get that point across -- and it's going really smoothly. ... There's nothing more that you try to do. If you try to do more, you're setting yourself up for failure."

Cobb called Smyly "a great guy."

"Seems like he's going to fit in really well for us," Cobb said. "Just really down to earth. Doesn't take himself too seriously. I think that's the No. 1 thing you have to be able to do in this locker room is not try to be super serious. ... He's real down to earth. Acceptance of the Rays' clubhouse seems right up his alley."

Cobb, Samardzija face off in series opener

By Erik Bacharach, MLB.com

With David Price shipped off to the Tigers before the July 31 non-waiver Trade Deadline, Monday night will represent the first time Alex Cobb takes the hill as Tampa Bay's ace.

Cobb will oppose Jeff Samardzija and the Athletics at O.co Coliseum, as he looks to build upon a string of dominant starts. The 26-year-old right-hander is 3-0 with a 1.31 ERA and 24 strikeouts over his last three outings.

"The last couple of games, Cobber's been about as good as he can be," Rays manager Joe Maddon said. "That changeup, right now, is pretty spectacular."

Cobb battled a strained left oblique earlier this season that affected his performance. But he's put any lingering injury concerns aside with his recent play.

"He started off [the season] so well," said Maddon. "The injury came back. He's been finding his way. Now, all of a sudden, he's found his way. Missing him and Matt Moore and what they're able to do for a long period of time, we had to fight through that moment, also. How many wins are in there that we didn't get? I don't know, but I think there were some wins that we didn't get. But, right now, I think Cobb is throwing the ball as good as I've seen him."

"I feel comfortable with my mechanics now," Cobb said. "Every time you go out, 90 percent of the battle is against yourself. Obviously, when you're going up against a really good hitting team like Oakland, you have to make sure that you're extra sharp. [You] have to mentally go along with the game as long as you can, try not to make any dumb mistakes out there -- repeating pitches to the same guy multiple times, or whatever the case may be. You can't get to that point without being comfortable on the mound first."

Samardzija, meanwhile, has been mostly lights out since arriving in Oakland, posting a 3.19 ERA in five starts with the Athletics. After holding the Astros to a run over eight innings on July 24, Samardzija allowed four runs in 6 2/3 innings in Houston in his last outing. It wasn't his best effort, but the right-hander kept his team in the game.

"I'm not happy how I pitched," said Samardzija, who failed to go seven innings for the first time with the A's. "It was 1-1. I had a chance to keep it there, and I didn't. "Every pitch and every run is important. But I did keep our offense to where they were in striking distance."

A's: Crisp nearing return

More than a week has passed since outfielder Coco Crisp has appeared in a game, but there are signs he may finally be close to a return.

Melvin said Sunday morning that Crisp was going to hit in the batting cage.

"Usually when he gets on the field or in the cage and starts doing some baseball activity, he tends to respond pretty quickly, so fingers crossed that's the case," said Melvin.

Because of Crisp's progress, the A's have refrained from putting him on the disabled list. But Crisp has missed seven consecutive games because of ongoing neck issues, a detriment to the bench as much as it is to the lineup.

His absence, coupled with Craig Gentry's unavailability, is a big reason why the A's reeled back in Sam Fuld via trade on Thursday. Fuld entered play Sunday 2-for-11 in the leadoff spot since his return.

Rays: K kings

The Rays' pitching staff only needs 18 more strikeouts to reach 1,000 for the season. If it manages to do so by the end of Tuesday night's game in Oakland, it will become the quickest in Major League history to reach 1,000. The 2013 Tigers reached 1,000 strikeouts in their 114th game.

Rays pitchers are on pace for 1,439 strikeouts, which would break the Major League record held by the '13 Tigers (1,428). The Rays club record of 1,383 was set in 2012, which ranks fifth in Major League history.

Worth noting

- According to Mark Simon of ESPN.com, since yielding an infield single to Oakland's Nick Punto on May 20, Brad Boxberger has owned lefties -- who are 0-for-40 with 22 strikeouts and five walks.
- A's right fielder Josh Reddick broke up a James Shields' no-hit bid with a solo home run in the sixth inning on Sunday. The A's haven't been no-hit since July 13, 1991.

Tampa Bay Rays at Oakland Athletics game review

By Fox Sports Florida via the AP

While the Tampa Bay Rays recently moved their ace, Alex Cobb has been pitching like one of late.

Big-name acquisition Jeff Samardzija has mostly performed well since joining the Oakland Athletics.

Looking to win a sixth consecutive decision, Cobb takes the mound opposite Samardzija as the Rays open a three-game set in Oakland on Monday night.

Cobb (7-6, 3.54 ERA) hasn't lost since June 23, going 5-0 with a 2.65 ERA over his last six starts. The right-hander has struck out 39 and walked eight over that stretch spanning 37 1-3 innings.

After striking out 10 over seven innings in a 3-0 win at St. Louis on July 23, Cobb fanned a season-high 12 in Tuesday's 5-1 victory over Milwaukee. He yielded one run and three hits over eight innings in his longest outing of the year.

"The last couple of games, Cobb's been about as good as he can be," manager Joe Maddon told MLB's official website. "That change-up, right now, is pretty spectacular."

With David Price now in Detroit, Cobb suddenly becomes Tampa Bay's No. 1 option.

"The feel in the clubhouse has been passed down to us," he said. "It's been established many years ago. It's just our job to continue that."

Cobb is 3-1 with a 1.42 ERA against the A's since 2012. He held them to three hits over 6 2-3 scoreless innings in a 5-2, 11-inning home win May 22. Josh Reddick is 0 for 12 in their matchups while Josh Donaldson and John Jaso are both 2 for 10.

"Obviously, when you're going up against a really good hitting team like Oakland, you have to make sure that you're extra sharp," Cobb said.

Samardzija (2-1, 3.19) has posted a 0.82 WHIP and .203 opponents' batting average in five starts since coming over from the Chicago Cubs on July 4. The right-hander yielded four runs over 6 2-3 innings and came away with a no-decision after Oakland scored six in the ninth to win 7-4 at Houston on Tuesday.

"I'm not happy with how I pitched, but to keep it close and give these guys a chance, sometimes that's all I need," he said.

Samardzija will get his first look at the Rays (54-57), who have followed an 11-1 surge by dropping three of four. Tampa Bay left 12 on base in Sunday's 7-5 defeat to the Los Angeles Angels.

The Rays play their next 10 on the road, where they've won a franchise record-tying eight straight and 13 of their last 14.

Oakland (67-43) has also lost three of four after falling 4-2 to Kansas City on Sunday. Reddick provided all the offense with a pair of homers as the club's Nos. 1-6 hitters went a combined 0 for 21.

"We just haven't been our best offensively here," said manager Bob Melvin, whose club is batting .176 in its last four games.

Reddick is hitting .410 with four homers and 10 runs over his last 11 games, but he's 4 for his last 47 with 17 strikeouts against Tampa Bay.

Oakland has won five of six in the series, including two of three on the road in May.

Rays fall behind early, drop series to Angels

By Fox Sports Florida via the Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) -- Jake Odorizzi had a rugged start and the **Tampa Bay Rays** never recovered.

Mike Trout hit RBI double to key a five-run first inning off Odorizzi and the **Los Angeles Angels** beat the Rays 7-5 Sunday in a game delayed by a power outage at Tropicana Field.

"Today was a tough day overall for me," Odorizzi said. "It started bad and didn't get any better in the first inning. You start a game like that, I didn't give our team any help at the start."

There was a 19-minute wait during the third inning after lightning struck a nearby power substation, causing some of the stadium lights to go out.

Trout had three hits, walked and stole a base. The Angels took two of three and handed the Rays their first series loss since early July.

It took 20 minutes for Odorizzi to get the first out of the game. That came after two walks, Trout's double and consecutive singles by **Josh Hamilton**, **Erick Aybar** and **Howie Kendrick**.

"He just didn't have it," Tampa Bay manager Joe Maddon said. "He was not in attack mode early."

David Freese had a sacrifice fly and a double by Efen Navarro drove in the final two runs of the 46-pitch first.

"We had good counts that whole first inning and took advantage of it," Los Angeles manager Mike Scioscia said.

Odorizzi had his stretch of nine starts in a row of allowing no more than three runs end.

Trout's second hit and Freese's second sacrifice fly drove in runs for the Angels later in the game.

Angels starter **Jered Weaver** (12-6) gave up six hits and four walks, but only two runs in six innings. He is 4-0 lifetime at Tropicana Field.

Huston Street pitched the ninth for his sixth save with the Angels.

James Loney, who has reached base in 22 straight games, had three hits and drove in two runs for the Rays.

Tampa Bay went 3 for 13 with runners in scoring position and left 12 on base. Kevin Kiermaier twice failed to get two-out hits with the base loaded.

"We had opportunities to win this game and we frustratingly did not," Maddon said.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Angels: Outfielder Collin Cowgill (broken nose) could be activated from the disabled list in the next couple days.

Rays: Right fielder Wil Myers, out since May 31 with a broken right wrist, is set for on-field batting practice Monday and could start a rehab assignment Saturday. ... Catcher **Ryan Hanigan** (strained left oblique) felt soreness after his first rehab game Saturday for Single-A Charlotte and has been shut down for a week.

ON DECK

Los Angeles: The Angels start a four-game stretch against the Los Angeles Dodgers with a two-game road series Monday night. The Angels have won 15 of the last 22 games between the teams.

Tampa Bay: The Rays open a 10-game road trip Monday night at Oakland. Maddon and the Rays often set a theme for the team's road swings, and this one is James Bond formal wear.

LONGO'S BUNT

Rays slugger **Evan Longoria** got his first big league sacrifice bunt with two on and no outs in the fifth, with Weaver making a nice play to prevent a hit.

Maddon was surprised by the bunt, saying that Longoria probably had a hard time picking up Weaver's pitches.