



Clips

(August 24, 2014)

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FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

Game sails away from Angels

By KEVIN BAXTER

KEY MOMENT: Angels reliever Joe Smith sailed a two-out pitch to the backstop, allowing Coco Crisp to score the winning run from third in the eighth inning. Crisp had greeted Smith with a single to center and worked his way to third on a pair of groundouts.

AT THE PLATE: Erick Aybar extended his hitting streak to eight games with a seventh-inning single — the second of his two hits — to score Howie Kendrick, who also had two hits. The Angels' Mike Trout, who had homered in his last five games in Oakland, struck out in his first three at-bats against Oakland starter Jon Lester and is seven for 36 (.194) on the road trip. David Freese's seventh-inning single gave him hits in 17 of his last 19 games.

ON THE MOUND: The A's Jon Lester recovered from a slow start to retire 10 batters in a row at one point, a streak the Angels ended with three consecutive hits and a run in the seventh. The Angels' C.J. Wilson also got off to a rocky start, giving up four hits and a run to the first eight batters. But he allowed just one more hit before leaving in the seventh. Oakland closer Sean Doolittle, who was shaky in Friday's series opener, got the final three outs for his 20th save.

EXTRA BASES: Gordon Beckham, acquired in a trade with the Chicago White Sox, joined the Angels on Saturday and was immediately inserted into the lineup at third base. To create a roster spot for him, the team optioned right-hander Cam Bedrosian to the minors.... LHP Hector Santiago, who left Friday's game two batters after taking a liner off his hand, said he was fine Saturday.... Infielder Grant Green, out a month with a lumbar strain, began a rehab assignment Saturday with triple-A Salt Lake.

UP NEXT: Former Angel Scott Kazmir (14-5, 2.73 ERA) has already set a career high for victories, and Sunday he can become the American League's first 15-game winner. The left-hander has been especially tough at home, where he's won eight of 10 decisions with a 2.28 ERA. But he's struggled in August, losing two of four starts and allowing 13 runs in 25 2/3 innings. Angels starter Jered Weaver (13-7, 3.70) has won five of his last six decisions, but he hasn't looked like the ace the Angels now need, getting an out beyond the seventh inning just once during that span. And he's been even worse against the A's, going 0-2 with a 7.15 ERA. Oakland is hitting .354 against him. On the air: TV: ESPN. Radio: 830.

Angels allow A's to pull even

By KEVIN BAXTER

It took the Angels more than three years to climb alone to the top of the American League West, a summit they had last reached in May 2011. But they needed only six days to lose their footing and slip back into a first-place tie with the Oakland Athletics.

Reliever Joe Smith's wild pitch with two out in the eighth inning allowed Coco Crisp to score from third base with the winning run, giving the A's a 2-1 victory over the Angels on Saturday and forcing the teams to again share the lead in the majors' tightest division race.

"It's going to be that way the rest of the year," Angels Manager Mike Scioscia said. "You're facing a tough ballclub every night. And we have to play well and play to a certain level if we're going to get through it. We just didn't get a couple of things done."

Which is the way the Angels' season has gone in Oakland, where they have yet to win in five tries.

"It's two really good teams," Angels starter C.J. Wilson said of the Angels and A's, who meet eight more times over the next five weeks. "When you have that many games against a competitive team, it obviously goes right down to the end. They're not going to roll over."

In addition to the pennant-race implications, Saturday's game was also important because of the pitching matchup between Wilson and Jon Lester. Each will have a lot to say about where their teams finish the season.

Lester was acquired from Boston at the trade deadline to give Oakland the kind of top-of-the-rotation arm the A's lacked. And he pitched like an ace for six innings Saturday, striking out seven, including Mike Trout three times, dropping Trout's average to .194 (seven for 36) on the trip.

Wilson, a two-time All-Star, is being counted on to take some of the sting out of the loss of 13-game winner Garrett Richards, who is out for the season after knee surgery Friday.

Wilson, too, gave his team a lift, pitching into the seventh inning and giving up only one run for the first time since mid-June.

"We need what we saw tonight," Scioscia said. "That's a terrific start for C.J. Hopefully, he's going to continue do to that, giving us well-pitched starts and opportunities to win games."

The Angels didn't get the ball out of the infield against Lester until the fourth inning, when he was working on a streak in which he retired 10 Angels in order.

David Freese ended that streak when he led off the seventh with a line drive off the left-field wall. But he was retired, too, when he was thrown out at second base.

Howie Kendrick followed with a liner over right fielder Sam Fuld's head and he did make it safely to second, though he didn't stay there long, scoring on an Erick Aybar single.

Wilson, on the other hand, got stronger as the game wore on. He gave up one run, four hits and hit a batter his first time through the batting order, with three of the hits coming in the second inning when the A's took a 1-0 lead on a run-scoring single by Fuld, the No. 8 hitter in the lineup.

In the sixth inning, Josh Donaldson drew a leadoff walk and Derek Norris hit a double into the left-field corner. But Donaldson missed the plate on his slide and was tagged out, a ruling confirmed by a 3-minute, 40-second umpire review.

Neither starter was around for the finish after turning things over to strong bullpens. Oakland relievers began the game ranked second in the league with a 2.81 earned-run average and Angels relievers were second in the AL in victories with 24.

But the Angels bullpen also has 18 losses and Smith was tagged with this one after giving up a leadoff single to Crisp. Two groundouts moved Crisp to third base, Smith (5-2) hit Norris with a pitch and his 1-and-1 offering to Brandon Moss miss everything but the backstop.

"Joe's been one of the mainstays down there and one of the biggest reasons why we've been able to pick up ground and get to the top of our standings," Scioscia said.

Bud Selig's time is running out to solve stadium issues in Anaheim, Oakland

By BILL SHAIKIN

The Bud Selig farewell tour is about to hit Southern California, with stops in San Diego and Anaheim this week and Dodger Stadium next week. In the five months before he officially hands the commissioner's gavel to Rob Manfred, there will be no shortage of debate about what Selig did that worked well, and what he did that did not work out so well.

Selig likes to cite the 22 ballparks that opened during his tenure. As he visits California, however, he can see that the ballpark situations in Oakland and Anaheim might well go unresolved before he leaves office.

Oakland first, for that is the drama into which Selig inserted himself, front and center. In 2009, when the Athletics lobbied for a new ballpark in San Jose, Selig told the A's to stand down and let him handle it.

With the San Francisco Giants refusing to surrender their territorial rights to San Jose, Selig appointed a committee to "thoroughly analyze all of the ballpark proposals."

Said Selig at the time: "The A's cannot and will not continue indefinitely in their current situation."

The A's have continued in their current situation for the last five years, and last month signed a lease extension that could keep them in their current situation, in decrepit O.co Coliseum, for up to 10 more years.

The committee essentially has disbanded, without any public report of its findings. The committee has not done any significant work in the 14 months since San Jose filed suit against Major League Baseball, and Manfred has emerged as baseball's point man in the A's stadium saga, according to three people familiar with the matter but not authorized to discuss it.

Lew Wolff, the A's co-owner and managing partner, has agreed to consider building a ballpark in Oakland, a concept he dismissed years ago as not feasible.

"If you landed in the Bay Area today and you did not want to disturb the Giants, and I really appreciate what they have accomplished, would it be Oakland, would it be San Jose?" Wolff said. "We want to give that another look."

He has no choice for now, since MLB would not consider San Jose so long as the city continues to challenge the league in court. But one person familiar with the work done by Selig's committee said the San Jose ballpark proposal is not nearly the slam dunk the city considers it to be.

"I got more straightforward answers out of Oakland than I did out of San Jose," the person said.

All San Jose wanted out of MLB was an answer on whether the A's could move. If MLB wants to rid itself of the suit, it might consider giving San Jose an answer.

Selig persuaded the A's not to demand a vote of the owners, but he's gone in five months. The A's could use that time to prepare shiny feasibility studies for Oakland and San Jose, then ask the owners to decide whether all 30 teams would make so much more money with the A's in San Jose that the Giants' territorial rights should be overturned.

"If the fact of life is that we can't do something, we need to know that," Wolff said. "I'm convinced, the day after a vote, the sun will come up anyway."

Wolff has led the Athletics' quest for a new ballpark for more than a decade, even before he and his partners bought the team. Since he wrote off an Oakland site years ago, would he consider a new ballpark there a defeat?

"I wouldn't look at it that way," he said. "We're looking for a better fan experience in the Bay Area, wherever we place it."

Angels owner Arte Moreno is looking for a better fan experience too, either in a renovated stadium in Anaheim or a new ballpark elsewhere in Orange County.

We are 10 days shy of the one-year anniversary of what appeared to be the resolution, a tentative agreement in which Moreno would pay for the estimated \$150 million in Angel Stadium renovations and would get the right to try to make his money back from developing the surrounding parking lot, at no cost to the city of Anaheim.

Mayor Tom Tait objected, saying the parking lot was too valuable to lease to Moreno at \$1 per year. A subsequent appraisal commissioned by the city valued that land at \$225 million.

But the appraisal also valued the land at up to \$325 million if the stadium were demolished, and Moreno was agitated that the city would assess that option if it were intent on keeping the team.

There have been no negotiations since the appraisal was released in May, and the Angels have considered sites in Tustin and Irvine, with the Tustin site currently considered the most feasible alternative.

The Angels have feared the lease talks would get held up by the November election, in which Tait and three of the other four City Council members are running. After all, who would vote for an Angels deal now, only to have Tait and his allies accuse you of a taxpayer giveaway at election time?

"I'd be willing to put my political career on the line," City Councilwoman Kris Murray said, "to make this happen for the city. The team is more important than any one election. We can get the agreement done."

Moreno already has four of the five City Council votes, if the council cares to vote before the election. The Angels have agreed to share profits from any development. There is a deal to be made here, if the City Council cares to stand up and make it.

On his visit to Anaheim this week, perhaps Selig can stop by City Hall. On his way out as commissioner, maybe the last ballpark deal he could broker could be the one in Anaheim, not Oakland.

The Times' baseball rankings

By BILL SHAIKIN

Last week's ranking in parentheses, statistics are through Friday's games:

1. WASHINGTON: Masters of the big finish, with five walkoff wins in six games. (6)
2. BALTIMORE: On pace for its biggest AL East margin since 1971, when Orioles had four 20-game winners. (4)
3. DODGERS: Only club to sell 3 million tickets already. Number of clubs still under 2 million: 17. (1)
4. OAKLAND: Closer Sean Doolittle: 203 batters faced, 79 K, 5 BB. (3)
5. ANGELS: Showdown? Tickets as low as \$8 available to three of four games vs. A's next weekend. (2)
6. KANSAS CITY: Setup men Davis (0.80) and Herrera (1.51): combined 440 batters faced, 0 HR. (7)
7. SEATTLE: If Kershaw is an MVP candidate, how about Felix Hernandez (13-4, 2.07)? (8)
8. MILWAUKEE: 2009 draft would be disaster without Khris Davis (7th round), Scooter Gennett (16th). (5)
9. ATLANTA: Jordan Walden, traded by Angels for Tommy Hanson: 2.85 ERA in 97 G for Braves ('13-'14). (12)
10. DETROIT: Ex-Angels SS Andrew Romine (2 HR in 195 AB) pitches, gives up 2 HR in first 3 AB. (9)
11. ST. LOUIS: All-Star middle reliever Pat Neshek's WHIP: 0.581. This is not a misprint. (10)

12. MIAMI: Reliever Bryan Morris, ex-Dodgers prospect traded in Manny Ramirez deal: 0.50 ERA. (18)
13. PITTSBURGH: Edinson Volquez (\$5 million), Brewers' Matt Garza (\$52 million) each at 146 IP, 3.58 ERA. (11)
14. SAN FRANCISCO: Pregame wine tasting on Friday. "If anyone orders Merlot, I am leaving!" (16)
15. N.Y. YANKEES: David Robertson: fastest to 500 K in club history (377 IP). Next fastest: David Cone (486 IP). (15)
16. CLEVELAND: City revives League Park, Indians' home from 1901-46, as youth baseball facility. (14)
17. TAMPA BAY: Alex Cobb, who beat former Ray David Price on Thursday: 7-0, 1.99 in last 10 starts. (17)
18. TORONTO: Blue Jays complain Creighton University Bluejays logo looks like, well, a blue jay. (13)
19. SAN DIEGO: Padres batting .226, lowest in NL. Opponents batting .234, lowest in NL. (20)
20. HOUSTON: Outscored Red Sox, 24-23, in four at Fenway; outscored Yankees, 12-9, in three in Yankee Stadium. (25)
21. N.Y. METS: 2B Daniel Murphy: 187 career doubles, tied with Strawberry for 8th on all-time Mets list. (21)
22. CINCINNATI: Closer Aroldis Chapman, last Sunday: walk, walk, walk, walk: 0 IP, 0 H, 4 R. (19)
23. CHICAGO CUBS: Attendance down 20%, payroll down 45% since last playoff team in 2008. (26)
24. CHICAGO WHITE SOX: Abreu: .305/.362/.600/33 HR/93 RBI. Trout: .289/.375/.559/28 HR/90 RBI. (22)
26. PHILADELPHIA: Team president: GM Ruben Amaro "is not on the hot seat." Fans: Why not? (28)
25. MINNESOTA: 2B Brian Dozier is first Twins player with 20-20 season since Torii Hunter (2004). (24)
27. BOSTON: OF soon could be two-thirds Cuban with Yoenis Cespedes and newly signed Rusney Castillo. (23).
28. TEXAS: Shin-Soo Choo turned career-high .423 OBP into \$130-million deal. This year: .342 OBP. (29)
29. COLORADO: In first year after Todd Helton retires, number of players with at least one game at 1B: 10. (30)
30. ARIZONA: Dodgers make last visit to Arizona this week, too soon to clinch. Jump in pool anyway. (27)

FROM THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Beckham welcomes 'clean slate' with Angels

By JEFF FLETCHER / STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND – Gordon Beckham hopes that he closed a somewhat disappointing chapter of his career simply by pulling on a new uniform.

Beckham, who joined the Angels on Saturday, said he enjoyed his time with the Chicago White Sox, but toward the end the pressure became more difficult.

“I feel like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders,” Beckham said. “For better or worse, there was a lot of scrutiny on me in Chicago. I’m excited to have a clean slate.”

Beckham may have been a victim of his own success. As a rookie in 2009, Beckham hit .270 with 14 homers and an .808 OPS. He reached the majors less than a year after being the eighth player picked in the draft.

Beckham was never able to duplicate those numbers, though. He hit .240 over the next five seasons with the White Sox.

“It was tough,” Beckham said. “I came up and played well. Then it was more of a struggle. I felt like that weighed on me a lot, having that kind of baggage. This is honestly the best thing that could have happened. Get traded and thrown into a pennant race. What’s better?”

The Angels, who claimed Beckham on waivers and then acquired him for cash or a player to be named, threw Beckham into the lineup right away. He started at third base and batted ninth on Saturday.

The plan is for Beckham to start against some left-handed pitchers, perhaps giving one of the regular infielders a chance to DH. Regular third baseman David Freese started at DH on Saturday.

Beckham has played almost exclusively second base since his rookie year, when he played third. He said he’s comfortable at second, third and shortstop, though.

“I’m not too worried about it,” he said. “I’ve taken ground balls (at third and short) this season, just messing around. I’ll be fine.”

HAMILTON’S BAT

Manager Mike Scioscia revealed that Josh Hamilton switched to a lighter bat when he came back after taking last Sunday and Monday off.

Over the previous three games, prior to Saturday, Hamilton had four hits, including two doubles and a homer.

"I think he's looking more and more comfortable since he had that little break," Scioscia said. "He's locked in, so that's good."

STANTON COMING

Although this week's series at Angel Stadium against the Miami Marlins may be overshadowed by the A's series before and after, it will be the first chance for young stars Mike Trout and Giancarlo Stanton to play against each other.

"David Price said it perfectly: If you could create a player on MLB The Show, it'd be him," Trout said. "He's 6-4, huge, just drops homers."

Trout and Stanton, who don't know each other apart from playing on opposite teams at the All-Star Game, seem to share a mutual appreciation.

"He's very talented at what he does," Stanton told Florida writers. "He does things that not too many other people can do, and if they can, they can only do one aspect. He can do them all."

NOTES

Hector Santiago, who came out of Friday's game after a line drive hit him in the left hand, said it was feeling "almost back to normal" on Saturday afternoon. Santiago is expected to make his start against the Marlins on Wednesday. ...

The A's are expected to insert a sixth starter into their rotation on Wednesday to line up their best four starters to pitch against the Angels next week. If they do, the Angels will see Sonny Gray, John Lester, Scott Kazmir and Jeff Samardzija at Angel Stadium. ...

Kole Calhoun, a left-handed hitter, was not in the Angels lineup on Saturday against the left-handed Lester. Calhoun was hitting .345 over his last 13 games and leading the team in RBI since the break. Scioscia said he wanted to give Calhoun a chance "to freshen up."

Final: A's 2, Angels 1

By JEFF FLETCHER

OAKLAND – And then, they were tied.

The Angels lost, 2-1, to the Oakland Athletics on Saturday night, dropping the first two games of this showdown series to drop into a tie with their rivals atop the American League West.

Angels reliever Joe Smith, who has been so good for most of the season, gave up the go-ahead run in the eighth inning. He allowed a leadoff single to Coco Crisp, who went to third on two ground balls and scored on a wild pitch, when a Smith fastball soared away from catcher Chris Iannetta.

Smith has allowed eight earned runs in 5 2/3 innings against the A's, and just six earned runs against everyone else.

On the bright side for the Angels, C.J. Wilson now has a 1.96 ERA in his last three starts.

Wilson, who has struggled for most of the past two months, wobbled through his outing, but he got enough outs – and some defensive help – to get into the seventh inning, with only one run on the board.

Wilson gave up five hits and three walks, and he threw 64 strikes and 56 balls. Still, the Angels helped him. In the second, third baseman Gordon Beckham – in his Angels debut -- made a nice stab of a line drive that slowed a rally.

In the sixth, Josh Hamilton and Erick Aybar combined to throw out Josh Donaldson at the plate. The A's argued that Iannetta had blocked the plate early, but the call stood.

The Angels took the momentum from that play and parlayed it into their first run against Jon Lester.

The first three batters got hits in the top of the seventh, with Aybar's single knocking in Howie Kendrick to tie the game. It could have been a bigger inning if David Freese hadn't been thrown out at second trying to stretch a single to lead off the inning.

Angels' wild ways hand A's a victory

By JEFF FLETCHER / STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND – The Angels did just enough to lose to the Oakland Athletics.

Again.

After coming to town on a hot streak, the Angels have now dropped the first two games against the A's, falling 2-1 on Saturday night, and dropping into a tie with Oakland atop the American League West.

Like Friday night's two-run loss, a few key plays sunk the Angels. The decisive moment was a wild pitch by normally reliable reliever Joe Smith.

With the game tied, 1-1, in the eighth, Smith gave up a leadoff single to Coco Crisp, who then moved to third on a couple of ground balls. After a pitch got away and hit Derek Norris, Smith threw a fastball that catcher Chris Iannetta could not reach.

"Fastball up and away," Smith said. "I threw it too high and it went to the backstop."

Smith has allowed eight earned runs in 5 2/3 innings against the A's, and just six earned runs against everyone else.

On the bright side for the Angels, C.J. Wilson now has a 1.96 ERA in his last three starts.

Wilson, who has struggled for most of the past two months, wobbled through his outing, but he got enough outs – and some defensive help – to get into the seventh inning, with only one run on the board.

It was hardly a masterpiece – Wilson allowed nine baserunners, needed the defense to get him two outs on the bases and he threw just eight more strikes than balls in 110 pitches – but the Angels will take it.

“Obviously those guys had some opportunities and he pitched out of trouble, but that’s a terrific start for C.J.,” Mike Scioscia said. “Hopefully he’ll continue to do that and give us good starts and opportunities to win games, and when the offense matches it we will win games. He’s in a much better place about his delivery.”

The Angels bailed him out of one particular inning when Josh Hamilton and Erick Aybar made two good throws to nail Josh Donaldson at the plate in the sixth.

The Angels took the momentum from that play and parlayed it into their first run against Jon Lester, on an Aybar RBI single to tie the game, 1-1.

But that was it for the Angels, as they lost for the fifth time in five games in Oakland.

“Every game is huge,” Mike Trout said. “We’re trying to win as many as we can. We’ve had a good road trip so far. We can’t hang our heads. We have to come in tomorrow and try to get a W.”

Angels Afterthoughts: Mike Trout searching again

· posted by Jeff Fletcher

OAKLAND – It was a forgettable game for Mike Trout.

Trout struck out three times against Jon Lester and then hit a weak foulout in his fourth trip.

Trout, who had homered a night earlier, said this was just a hiccup: “He made some good pitches, and I chased a lot for sure.”

Trout has hit .169 over the last 16 games, with 23 strikeouts in 65 at-bats. He’s already set a career high with 143 strikeouts, and there is more than a month to go in the season.

“He had a tough night tonight,” Manager Mike Scioscia said. “Mike is still getting toward the upside and looking for a comfort zone in the box. He had a little trouble with Lester but Mike will be fine. He hasn’t quite got locked in, but he’s working toward it.”

OUT STRETCHING

The Angels had a chance at a big inning against Lester in the sixth, when the first three batters got hits.

David Freese, however, got thrown at second trying to stretch his leadoff hit into a double. Freese hit the ball into the left field corner, and Craig Gentry got to it quickly and made a perfect throw.

“You’ve got to go for second there,” Scioscia said. “I have to look and see where his turn was around first, but it’s a ball he usually gets a double on.”

The Angels also got unlucky later in the inning, when Gordon Beckham hit a line drive to center that was caught for the third out.

REVIEWED

Umpires went to replay three times, and all three came out in the Angels favor.

In the third inning, Albert Pujols was initially ruled out at first, but the Angels won the challenge and he got an infield hit. The A’s challenged a play at the plate in the sixth, when Josh Donaldson was thrown out. That call was confirmed.

In the seventh, the A’s Sam Fuld was caught stealing second. A’s manager Bob Melvin asked for a crew chief review – which is permitted after the sixth inning if a team has no challenges – and the call was upheld.

ALSO...

I don't know about you, but I'm going to have a hard time saying "Gordon Beckham" without thinking of this guy.

On deck: Angels at Athletics, Sunday, 5 p.m., ESPN

By JEFF FLETCHER / STAFF WRITER

Angels at Athletics

Where: O.co Coliseum

TV: ESPN, 5 p.m.

Did you know: Of the Angels’ 14 losses since the All-Star break, 12 were by two runs or less.

THE PITCHERS

RHP JERED WEAVER (13-7, 3.70)

The Angels could use Weaver to eat up some innings, in addition to simply pitching well. He hasn’t gotten through the seventh inning in his last five starts, and he’s only done it twice since the start of July. As good as the Angels bullpen has been, it will be taxed if the starters can’t pick up more innings, and it starts with their No. 1 pitcher.

Vs. Athletics: 11-9, 2.53

At O.co Coliseum: 5-5, 3.43

Loves to face: Josh Donaldson, 1 for 11 (.091)

Hates to face: Eric Sogard, 7 for 19 (.368)

LHP SCOTT KAZMIR (14-5, 2.73)

Kazmir's career renaissance continues. After being out of the majors for most of two seasons, he came back and had a solid year with the Cleveland Indians last year, and now he's leading the American League in victories. Opponents are hitting only .224 against Kazmir, who has walked 36 and struck out 131.

Vs. Angels: 2-3, 4.66

At O.co Coliseum: 14-7, 3.30

Miller: Oakland is a place filled with woe for Angels

By JEFF MILLER

OAKLAND – In this space Saturday, a joke appeared about how most novelists aren't inspired by things like torn body parts.

I was writing about Ernest Hemingway, who has nothing to do with the Angels or baseball. But reaching for interesting topics can happen when the alternative is to write about Josh Hamilton.

A few Register readers then reached out themselves, noting that Hemingway, for the record, frequently was inspired to write about torn, bloodied and even gory body parts, "Papa" a regular chronicler of carnage.

In that case, maybe the Hemingway reference wasn't such a reach, carnage aptly describing the aftermath of the Angels' most recent visits here.

On Saturday, they lost in the home of the A's again, this time when the oft-reliable Joe Smith, who has thrown 13 wild pitches in eight seasons, couldn't connect with catcher Chris Iannetta, allowing Oakland to score the winning run in a 2-1 victory without so much as making contact on the deciding play.

Sometimes in this sport, teams win by executing the hit-and-run. The A's won when pinch hitter Brandon Moss basically executed the duck-and-cover.

That would seem to be an odd way to lose a game, especially a game as important as these ones are right now. But this is Oakland and these are the Angels, and the two can't seem to coexist without the visitors having their hearts broken.

"I don't know," Smith said when asked about the Angels turning this city into Woe-land. "Other places I've been we've run into cities where for a couple years they have our number, and then a year or two later you have their number. I can't really explain it."

Maybe nobody can explain it, but detailing it certainly isn't difficult:

O.Co Coliseum isn't just an unfortunately named stadium; it's also a place where the Angels go to stay grounded. Or get buried. Or, on some nights, get chased down in the standings.

Entering Saturday, they were 0-4 here this season and had lost 8 of 10 going back to last summer.

Then they showed up for Game 2 of this showdown series to find Oakland starting Jon Lester, the ace the A's acquired last month from Boston exactly for moments like this one.

Three hours later, these teams were tied for first in the American League West and the A's were nine innings away from a three-game sweep.

"We have to figure out a way to win," Smith said. "We are still in good position. We have a lot of games with these guys left (eight, to be exact). We'll be all right. We just have to beat them here a couple times, starting with (today). And then take care of them at our place."

The Angels countered Saturday with C.J. Wilson, who, as a Texas Ranger three years ago, ripped the mound here and the fans. Or, to be more accurate, he ripped the fans who, as a matter of tradition, aren't here.

While praising the people who do show up at A's games for their enthusiasm, Wilson correctly noted "some games you go there and there's like 6,000 people there."

Saturday there was a sellout here, the locals finally moved to support the A's or perhaps just here for the postgame fireworks.

Either way, it was as noisy as several of the Oakland players are hairy, the game featuring many highlights and repeated video replays and one instance in which Iannetta was suspected of having moved his foot into the restricted space.

Two questions: When and why did baseball adopt basketball's blocking/charging call?

Believe it: This felt, sounded and looked like a playoff game, a day in October showing up on a night in August. There was something extra in the air that you could sense and, around this neighborhood, for once that something extra wasn't fearing for your life.

"I think it's going to be that way the rest of the year," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "You're facing a tough game every night."

Luckily for Smith, it wasn't a playoff game. Otherwise, there would be dozens of stories about his wild pitch today and countless messages posted on countless boards questioning everything from his signing to his upbringing.

The reality is these aren't the playoffs yet and this isn't even September. As bad as the results from the first two nights here have been for the Angels, a victory today would mean they'd leave having lost just one game in the standings.

"Right now it's tied, from what I see on television," Wilson cracked. "When you have that many games against a competitive team, whether you're in first or second, it obviously is going to come down to the end."

This isn't the end, but the end is approaching. So is the final game of this series, after today the Angels able to retreat to more comfortable surroundings.

So, despite losing Friday and Saturday, they should feel good about themselves and not even be thinking about a month from now, when they'll be back in Woe-land for three more.

FROM ANGELS.COM

Beckham excited for 'clean slate' with Angels

By Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Gordon Beckham was supposed to be a star by now.

He was the No. 8 overall pick in the 2008 First-Year Player Draft, skyrocketed to the Majors after 59 Minor League games and immediately succeeded with the White Sox in '09, batting .270 with 14 homers and 63 RBIs to finish fifth in American League Rookie of the Year voting.

But ever since, his bat has gone stale, and many have frequently wondered if he could ever get right again, and display the abilities he showed as a fresh-faced 22-year-old.

Beckham was asked that on Saturday, his first official day with the Angels.

"This," Beckham said, before clarifying. "What just happened, meaning the trade, has gotten me back there. I feel kind of like a weight has been lifted off my shoulders. For better or worse, there was a lot of scrutiny on me in Chicago. It's just a lot. I'm excited to kind of have a clean slate. I've got no agenda. I just want to go play, and enjoy playing, which I will."

How much Beckham plays is still in question, though.

The 27-year-old right-handed hitter was acquired on Thursday -- for a player to be named or cash considerations -- and was immediately inserted into the lineup at O.co Coliseum on Saturday, starting at third base and batting ninth against lefty Jon Lester so that David Freese can serve as the designated hitter.

For some reason -- Beckham himself can't explain it -- he has drastic splits this season, batting .309/.349/.454 against lefties and .191/.233/.297 against righties. Beckham's starts will probably come

solely against southpaws the rest of the way, platooning at DH while spelling guys at third base, second base and shortstop.

One of the best defensive second basemen in the AL, Beckham hadn't played third base since his rookie season and hasn't seen much action at shortstop since his early days in the Minors. He took ground balls on the left side of the infield during off-days, simply to "keep it fresh."

"This is about their team," Beckham said. "I'm just here to help, honestly. I don't have any expectation of where I play, when I play, how much I play. I have no expectations."

White Sox fans had plenty of expectations for Beckham, who has batted .240/.299/.359 while averaging nine homers and 43 RBIs from 2010-14, never quite living up to the hype and perpetually finding his name in the rumor mill.

Beckham had to learn to fail in the Major Leagues, while playing for a team that was counting on him to be its next franchise guy and living under the microscope of a major market.

"I feel like in Chicago they had so much pressure on him to be the guy," said Angels starter Hector Santiago, Beckham's longtime teammate, who believes joining the Angels will "clear his mind" because he "doesn't have to be that guy who carries the team."

"It was tough," Beckham said. "I came up and played well. It was more of a struggle from then on. I felt like that weighed on me a lot, having that kind of baggage, it seemed like, all the time. This is honestly, I think, the best thing that could've happened to me -- get traded and get thrown into the pennant race."

Hamilton heating up using lighter bat

OAKLAND -- Josh Hamilton switched to a slightly lighter bat after taking a couple of days off on Sunday and Monday. And though Angels manager Mike Scioscia wouldn't reveal specifics on the weight and called it "no big deal," it just so happens to coincide with the start of what could be a nice run for the veteran cleanup hitter.

Hamilton entered Saturday's matchup against Jon Lester 4-for-12 with five RBIs since being reinserted into the lineup on Tuesday. He's worked deep counts to draw two walks, has notched three of his hits to the opposite field, has lined out hard twice, hit a sacrifice fly that almost left Fenway Park on Wednesday and homered to right field on Saturday.

"It looks like he's really seeing the ball better," Scioscia said. "There's some walks that he's taking, some pitches he's laying off. And I think as a result of that, he's getting some better pitches to hit."

Angels turning to bullpen often in second half

OAKLAND -- The Angels knew they'd rely heavily on their bullpen down the stretch, but the workload is starting to get a little troublesome.

Heading into Saturday's game against the A's, Angels relievers led the Majors in innings since the All-Star break with 125. Part of the reason is that 27 of the Angels' 33 second-half games have been decided by

one or two runs; the other is that the starting rotation has compiled only 193 1/3 innings over that span, tied for 21st in the Majors.

The Angels finish the season with 43 games in 45 days, and somehow, Angels manager Mike Scioscia is going to have to find ways to keep his back-end trio of Kevin Jepsen, Joe Smith and Huston Street fresh.

"The thing that's going to keep our bullpen together is going to be the guys in the middle, who will be able to bridge some of those innings and take some pressure off the guys in the end," Scioscia said. "They're going to be a key component going down the stretch of the season."

Worth noting

- Hector Santiago's left hand was "feeling good" on Saturday, one day after taking a Josh Donaldson liner off it in the fifth. Santiago was checked on by the Angels' training staff, then faced two more batters and got out of the inning before exiting his start with 98 pitches. Santiago is expected to make his next scheduled start on Wednesday.
- Right-handed hitter Collin Cowgill started in place of the left-handed-hitting Kole Calhoun against southpaw Jon Lester on Saturday, even though Calhoun is batting .345 in his last 13 games. Scioscia wanted to "give Kole a chance to freshen up."

A's lose challenge on tag play at home plate

Out call stands on Donaldson's attempt to score; Angels win earlier review

By Aaron Leibowitz and Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Following a replay challenge by A's manager Bob Melvin on Saturday, Josh Donaldson was still out at the plate in the sixth inning against the Angels at the Coliseum.

With the A's leading, 1-0, Donaldson tried to score from first on Derek Norris' double to left field. Donaldson slid into home and reached for the plate with his left hand, while catcher Chris Iannetta received the relay throw from shortstop Erick Aybar and applied the tag.

Plate umpire Chad Fairchild called Donaldson out, and Melvin instantly ran out to challenge. Not only was it tough to tell whether Donaldson beat the tag, but it was also unclear whether Iannetta might have illegally blocked the plate with his left foot.

"We thought he got his hand in there," Melvin said after the game. "I still haven't seen the replay. I saw the one on the scoreboard, and it looked like he was safe."

The A's did not score in the inning, and the Angels tied the score in the seventh, but Oakland pulled ahead in the eighth to win, 2-1.

In the third inning, Angels manager Mike Scioscia was successful with his challenge on an out call at first base, rewarding Albert Pujols with an infield single.

Pujols was out in front on a Jon Lester breaking ball, hitting a blooper in front of second base with some backspin. Second baseman Alberto Callaspo, shifting to the left side against Pujols, ranged to his left, fielded the ball cleanly and fired to first, but Pujols hustled down the line and made it just ahead of the throw.

First-base umpire Mike Everitt called him out, but Pujols urged Scioscia to challenge the play, and umpires ultimately reversed their decision. The Angels are now 15-for-26 in challenges this season. Pujols was stranded on first after Josh Hamilton struck out to end the inning.

Angels edged late to fall into first-place tie

Wilson duels with Lester before Smith's costly wild pitch

By Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Joe Smith has made a career out of his ability to locate a fastball down in the strike zone, a pitch that comes from an exaggerated sidearm angle, has led to one of the best ground-ball rates in the Majors and has kept his ERA below 3.00 every season since 2011.

But on Saturday night -- with the game tied, a runner on third and a tight division race in the background -- that skill abandoned him.

Smith's fastball sailed high with two outs in the bottom of the eighth, ricocheting off catcher Chris Iannetta's glove and easily allowing Coco Crisp to score the go-ahead run in the Angels' 2-1 loss to the A's.

"Fastball up and away," a miffed Smith said. "I threw it too high and it went to the backstop."

Entering the much-hyped weekend series, the Angels had won eight of nine and the A's had dropped six of seven. But the Angels have lost the first two, missing a premium opportunity to take control of their division while moving to 0-5 at O.co Coliseum this season. And now the American League West is tied at the top once again.

It'll probably come down to the very end.

"They're not going to roll over," Angels starter C.J. Wilson said after giving up just one run in 6 1/3 innings, keeping his team in the game against an even more dominant Jon Lester.

"When you have a tight race, it's always going to come down to the wire, for sure," center fielder Mike Trout said after an 0-for-4 night that included three strikeouts. "But we still have a month left. There's still a lot of baseball to be played."

The Angels are now 19-15 since the All-Star break, and 28 of their 34 games have been decided by one or two runs.

In the opener against the A's, it was decided on the two runs Jason Grilli gave up in the sixth and the game-ending strikeout of Iannetta with the potential tying run in scoring position. In the second of three this weekend -- and seven over a 10-day stretch -- it was decided on one Smith fastball that got away.

Crisp hit a leadoff single up the middle, then advanced two bases on a couple of groundouts. The next pitch by Smith plunked Derek Norris, putting runners on the corners. Then, Smith's 2-1 fastball got away and accounted for only his second wild pitch and 15th earned run this season.

"That's huge for us to be able to capitalize like that late in the game, to be able to nail it down, take the second game of the series," A's closer Sean Doolittle said after recording his 20th save of the season. "It's a big win for us."

Smith's ERA at O.co Coliseum is now 21.60. Everywhere else, it's 1.63.

In many ways, his Angels have mirrored that.

"We have to figure out a way to win," Smith said. "We are still in good position; we have a lot of games with these guys left. We'll be all right. We just have to beat them here a couple times, starting with tomorrow, and then take care of them at our place."

A troublesome area continues to be the offense, which averaged just over five runs per game in the first half and has averaged only 3.5 ever since.

A recent positive, however, is Wilson.

The 33-year-old left-hander struggled mightily from June 24 to Aug. 7, posting an 11.03 ERA over a six-start stretch that included a stint on the disabled list. But he's given up just four runs in his last 18 1/3 innings, dropping his ERA from 4.82 to 4.45 in the process.

The Angels will need plenty more of that, now that Garrett Richards is lost for the season.

"We need what you saw tonight," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "Obviously those guys had some opportunities, and [Wilson] pitched out of trouble. That's a terrific start for C.J. Hopefully he'll continue to do that and give us good starts and opportunities to win games. And when the offense matches it, we will win games."

Weaver, Kazmir square off in pivotal series finale

A's eye sweep of Halos with sole possession of first place at stake

By Aaron Leibowitz / MLB.com

Angels right-hander Jered Weaver has faced the A's twice this season, and the results have not been pretty. He gave up a combined 10 runs (nine earned) in 11 1/3 innings in those two starts, both in June, taking a pair of losses in the process.

On Sunday at the Coliseum in the finale of a three-game series, the Angels will look for Weaver to get back to his Oakland-dominating ways of old. For his career, the 31-year-old boasts a 2.53 ERA against the A's in 28 starts.

With Garrett Richards done for the year due to a torn left patellar tendon, Halos veterans, like Weaver, need to carry the weight -- particularly in the team's eight remaining games against the A's, who are tied with the Angels atop the American League West.

"It's going to take everybody stepping up a little more, as far as starting pitchers," Weaver said of finishing the season without Richards. "The bullpen has been doing a tremendous job already. Offensively and defensively, it's going to take a little more to have people step up and try to get through this."

Weaver hasn't pitched past the sixth inning since July 23 and has a 5.40 ERA in five starts over that stretch. Last time out, he gave up three runs in 5 1/3 innings against the Red Sox at Fenway Park.

The A's, perhaps even more so than the Angels, are leaning on their pitching to lead them to a division title. They will go with one of their four star hurlers on Sunday, lefty Scott Kazmir, who has been one of the best pitchers in the AL and recently bounced backed from two rough starts to begin the month.

On Tuesday, Kazmir limited the Mets to one run over six frames to notch his career-high 14th win. He did not have his best stuff, but he displayed veteran poise to help Oakland snap a five-game losing streak.

"I had to change my game plan a little bit," Kazmir said. "I had to try to get them off the fastball. Threw a lot of off-speed early in the counts. ... Toward the end of the game, I started to feel more comfortable about throwing my curveball and my slider and my changeup."

It's still a regular-season matchup, but players on both sides recognize that these games carry added weight.

"What do you think?" said Angels outfielder Kole Calhoun when asked of the games' significance. "It's a big series."

Angels: Hamilton facing test vs. back-to-back lefties

Josh Hamilton has swung the bat well since re-entering the lineup following two recent days off. He switched to a slightly lighter bat on Tuesday, and he will put it to the test against his second straight left-hander on Sunday.

"I do think that sometimes, for a left-handed hitter, when you do get in a little bit of a funk, it is good to see a left-handed pitcher," said manager Mike Scioscia. "I don't think you try to do as much. I just know from personal experience, and talking to a lot of hitters, that it's something that could help you to stay on the ball a little bit longer."

Hamilton went 0-for-4 with two strikeouts Saturday against lefties Jon Lester and Sean Doolittle but entered the matchup 4-for-12 with five RBIs since Tuesday.

A's: Rotation expected to shuffle for Anaheim trip

The A's are doing all they can to ensure their best pitchers take the ball in their most important games. This weekend, that meant skipping Jason Hammel's turn. Next week, that will likely mean tweaking their rotation so that each of their top four starters can face the Angels in Anaheim.

Right-hander Sonny Gray was in line to make his next start in Houston on Wednesday, but the A's are instead anticipated to pitch him the following day in Anaheim and call on a sixth starter to face the Astros.

Though nothing is official, those duties will likely fall on lefty Drew Pomeranz, who last pitched for the A's on June 16, the same day he punched a wooden chair out of frustration and broke his right hand.

This allows Lester, Kazmir and Jeff Samardzija to follow Gray in Anaheim, marking the A's final regular-season trip to Angel Stadium this year. The Angels will visit Oakland once more, Sept. 22-24.

Worth noting

- Of the A's 34 remaining games, 27 are against AL West opponents.
- Mike Trout has hit 28 home runs this season, 20 of which have tied the game or given the Angels a lead.

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Coco Crisp scores on wild pitch in 8th to help A's tie Angels in AL West

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Oakland Athletics are hardly relishing being back in a first-place tie with the rival Los Angeles Angels.

Both clubs know this division race is far from over, with five meetings remaining before August ends and another three in late September. And with a margin of error so slim, one miscue might be the difference.

Coco Crisp scored the go-ahead run on Joe Smith's wild pitch with two outs in the eighth inning, and the A's beat the Angels 2-1 on Saturday night to move into a share of the lead atop the AL West.

Tight Race Out West

The AL West is all tied up after Saturday's game, and if the Oakland Athletics end up winning it, look no further than what they've done head-to-head against the Los Angeles Angels this season.

| Category | Angels | Athletics |
|--------------------|---------------|------------------|
| <i>Wins</i> | 3 | 8 |
| <i>Runs PG</i> | 3.5 | 5.4 |
| <i>BA RISP</i> | .208 | .263 |
| <i>*8 matchups</i> | | |

Category **Angels** **Athletics**

left

--ESPN Stats & Information

"We can't get caught up in the standings or the playoff picture," closer Sean Doolittle said.

Luke Gregerson (3-2) pitched a perfect eighth, and Doolittle finished for his 20th save. The closer felt something in his right side nearer to his back, but was able to go through some twisting exercises and other postgame tests with no problem. He doesn't consider it serious.

The division co-leaders (76-52) have the most wins in baseball. The Angels lost their fifth straight game this season at O.co Coliseum.

Smith (5-2) threw wildly to pinch hitter Brandon Moss moments after plunking Derek Norris.

On Monday in Boston, the Angels moved into sole possession of the division's top spot for the first time since May 15, 2011. Losing the first two games of this series has things all tied up again.

Jon Lester and C.J. Wilson had a nice pitchers' duel but left with no-decisions in a tie game.

Lester struck out seven in seven innings, including Mike Trout three times as the slugger's five-game home run streak at the Coliseum was snapped.

Lester bounced back from his first defeat in nearly 2½ months and first since joining the A's from Boston at the trade deadline. The lefty threw a combined 18 pitches in the fifth and sixth innings, 14 for strikes.

He then allowed three straight hits in the seventh, including a double by Howie Kendrick and Erick Aybar's RBI single that made it 1-1.

The A's have struck out Trout three or more times in one game six times for his career, most by any team.

"Maybe we were able to get him off his game a little bit, get him frustrated and to swing at bad pitches," Lester said.

Lester was helped by a nice play from left fielder Craig Gentry in the seventh. David Freese hit a leadoff single off the wall and headed toward second as Gentry quickly retrieved the ball and threw him out.

Wilson allowed one run on five hits, struck out three and walked three in 6½ innings.

"The A's do a lot of things well. They pitch well and they have a good bullpen. It was another close game and we didn't get a couple of things done," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "We have to keep moving forward."

Scioscia challenged in the third that Albert Pujols beat out an infield hit rather than recording the third out. The call was overturned in 2 minutes, 4 seconds, and ruled a single.

In the sixth, umpires went to review again on a challenge by A's manager Bob Melvin. He believed Josh Donaldson, who held up briefly at second, was safe at home on a headfirst slide in which he reached to touch the plate with his left hand as catcher Chris Iannetta tried to tag him. The ruling stood after 3:40.

The crew chief then reviewed Sam Fuld's caught stealing in the seventh, per Melvin's request. The ruling was confirmed in 1:05.

NEW FACE

Los Angeles 3B Gordon Beckham joined his new team, two days after being acquired by the Angels from the White Sox for a player to be named or cash. He earned a start and batted ninth, going 0-for-3 with a pair of called third strikes.

"Gordon will help in a lot of ways," Scioscia said. "Hopefully he'll give us depth at some key positions."

The Angels optioned RHP Cam Bedrosian to Triple-A Salt Lake.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Athletics: More should be known about Doolittle's status Sunday. ... An MRI exam revealed 1B Kyle Blanks has tendinitis in his left Achilles tendon. He had pain in both feet and his lower legs while on a rehab assignment. "He's going to be shut down for a while," Melvin said.

UP NEXT

Angels: The series has shifted game times from 7:05 p.m. to 6:05 and now 5:05 for the series finale. RHP Jered Weaver (13-7, 3.70 ERA) tries again for his first win of 2014 against the A's, going 0-2 with a 7.15 ERA in his first two outings.

Athletics: LHP Scott Kazmir (14-5, 2.73) starts the finale. The A's expect to call up Drew Pomeranz to start Wednesday at Houston and push Friday winner Sonny Gray to Thursday to keep this weekend's rotation the same for a four-game road series next week with the Angels.

Angels-Athletics Preview

By NOEY KUPCHAN (STATS Writer)AP - Sports

After defeating the Los Angeles Angels again, the Oakland Athletics are looking to reclaim sole possession of first place in the AL West.

The Athletics go for a second consecutive three-game home sweep of the Angels on Sunday night with the best record in baseball on the line.

While Oakland (76-52) lost control of the division following a 2-8 slide, it's since climbed back into a tie after taking the first two in this series. The A's, who held on for a 5-3 win Friday, pulled out a 2-1 victory the following night after Coco Crisp scored the tiebreaking run on a wild pitch with two outs in the eighth inning.

"We can't get caught up in the standings or the playoff picture," closer Sean Doolittle said.

The A's have taken eight of 11 from Los Angeles this year, including all five home meetings by a combined 33-15 score. Oakland hasn't posted six consecutive home wins against the Angels in the same season since 1991.

Los Angeles (76-52), which went a combined 2 for 9 with runners in scoring position in the two defeats, has only three extra-base hits in the series.

"The A's do a lot of things well. They pitch well and they have a good bullpen. It was another close game and we didn't get a couple of things done," manager Mike Scioscia said. "We have to keep moving forward."

Oakland now turns to Scott Kazmir (14-5, 2.73 ERA), who beat the New York Mets 6-2 on Tuesday to set a new career high for wins. The left-hander struck out six over six innings of one-run ball, improving to 7-1 with a 2.19 ERA over his last nine home starts.

"Where we are right now, that's the last thing I'm thinking about," he said. "We have to take care of business. All you can think about is tomorrow, what we have to do tomorrow."

Sunday's start could have extra meaning for Kazmir, who spent two-plus seasons with Los Angeles from 2009-11. He's only faced them once since, yielding all five runs over three-plus innings in a 5-2 defeat last Aug. 9 while with Cleveland.

The Angels counter with Jered Weaver (13-7, 3.70), who owns a 5.40 ERA over his last five starts. The right-hander yielded three runs, seven hits and a season high-tying four walks over 5 1-3 innings but didn't receive a decision in Tuesday's 4-3 win at Boston.

Weaver went 8-1 with a 0.87 ERA in 11 starts against the A's from 2011-13 before struggling in two matchups this year. After surrendering six runs and a season-worst 11 hits over six innings in a 6-3 road loss June 1, Weaver gave up four runs over 5 1-3 innings in a 7-1 home defeat 10 days later.

John Jaso and Josh Donaldson are a combined 2 for 28 versus Weaver. Coco Crisp is a career .175 hitter against him despite going 4 for his last 12 in their matchups.

Donaldson, 3 for 27 with 10 strikeouts in his last eight games, is hitless in his last 19 at-bats against Los Angeles.

Albert Pujols is 2 for 19 with just one RBI in Oakland this year.

These division co-leaders open another crucial four-game set at Angel Stadium on Thursday.

FROM SPORTS XCHANGE

Team Report - LOS ANGELES ANGELS

INSIDE PITCH

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Los Angeles Angels arrived Friday at the O.co Coliseum on the heels of a four-game sweep of the Boston Red Sox at Fenway Park.

The Angels had won eight of their past 10 games, passing the slumping Oakland A's and building a two-game lead in the American League West. But when the Angels and A's opened their three-game series, Oakland beat the Angels 5-3 and improved to 4-0 against them at the Coliseum this year.

"There were a lot of good things on the field and some things we didn't get done," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "We couldn't get the big hit at the end. We haven't gotten it done up here yet this season. That's a good club."

The A's swept a three-game series against the Angels at the Coliseum from May 30 to June 3. This time, A's right-hander Sonny Gray pitched 8 1/3 innings, giving up three runs on six hits, including solo home runs to CF Mike Trout in the first inning and LF Josh Hamilton in the fourth.

The Angels put together a furious rally after A's closer Sean Doolittle replaced Gray with one out and Hamilton on first after a walk in the ninth. Doolittle fanned second baseman Howie Kendrick, but shortstop Erick Aybar singled, and third baseman David Freese followed with an RBI single. Collin Cowgill walked, loading the bases, but Doolittle struck out Chris Iannetta to end the game.

"Both of these teams are fighting each other," Angels right fielder Kole Calhoun said. "Gray mixed pitches, threw strikes and got big outs when he needed. That's a perfect recipe for pitching into the ninth."

NOTES, QUOTES

RECORD: 76-51

STREAK: Lost one

NEXT: Angels (LHP C.J. Wilson, 10-8, 4.59 ERA) at Athletics (LHP Jon Lester, 13-8, 2.58 ERA)

PLAYER NOTES:

--LHP Hector Santiago allowed two runs, just one of them earned, over five innings and got a no-decision Friday night in a 5-3 loss to Oakland. The no-decision was Santiago's fourth straight. He struck out five, walked two and held the A's to one or no earned runs for the third straight start this season. In the bottom of the fifth, A's 3B Josh Donaldson hit a line drive up the middle that hit Santiago's pitching hand. Santiago finished that inning but didn't return for the sixth. "It's a little sore, but I'm good to go," Santiago said. "I couldn't get a good grip on my off-speed stuff, and I didn't want to become a one-pitch guy. This series is too important."

--CF Mike Trout hit his 28th home run of the season Friday night in the Angels' 5-3 loss to Oakland. With one out in the first inning, Trout golfed RHP Sonny Gray's 1-1 curve over the high wall in left-center field. Trout went 2-for-4 and drove in his 90th run.

--LF Josh Hamilton hit his ninth home run of the season Friday night, a solo shot in the fourth inning of the Angels' 5-3 loss to Oakland. Hamilton sent a curve ball from A's RHP Sonny Gray high and deep over the right-center field fence. It was his first home run since Aug. 4. All nine of his home runs this season have come on the road.

--RHP Garrett Richards (torn left patellar tendon), who went on the 60-day disabled list Thursday, underwent season-ending surgery Friday. "They said the surgery was as they expected and they're very happy with the repair and hopefully the rehab will go very well," manager Mike Scioscia said before the Angels' game against Oakland. "Same timetable they gave us before the surgery, six to nine months." Scioscia said he was relieved that surgeons didn't discover more damage to Richards' knee than his MRI indicated. "Once you get in there you never know," Scioscia said. "But evidently everything was intact and they just had to make the repair to the patellar tendon."

--INF/OF Grant Green (lower back strain) began a rehab assignment Friday night with Triple-A Salt Lake. Green was placed on the DL retroactive to July 21.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "There were a lot of good things on the field and some things we didn't get done. We couldn't get the big hit at the end. We haven't gotten it done up here yet this season." -- Angels manager Mike Scioscia after a loss in Oakland.

ROSTER REPORT

MEDICAL WATCH:

--LHP Hector Santiago (sore left hand) took a line drive off his pitching hand Aug. 22. He finished the fifth inning but didn't return for the sixth. He said he expects to be able to make his next start.

--RHP Garrett Richards (torn left patellar tendon) went on the 60-day disabled list Aug. 21. He will undergo season-ending surgery Aug. 22. He is expected to miss six to nine months.

--LHP Joe Thatcher (sprained left ankle) went on the 15-day disabled list Aug. 3. He is expected to be out until early to mid-September. He can start some light throwing off a mound in Arizona but is not close to returning, manager Mike Scioscia said Aug. 20.

--LHP Tyler Skaggs (strained flexor tendon in left forearm) went on the 15-day disabled list Aug. 1, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on Aug. 10. He underwent season-ending Tommy John surgery Aug. 13. He will miss the rest of the 2014 season and all of the 2015 season.

--INF/OF Grant Green (lower back strain) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to July 21. He began baseball activities at the Angels' Arizona complex in early August. As of Aug. 20, he was running and hitting, and he was getting close to starting a rehab assignment.

--LHP Sean Burnett (torn left ulnar collateral ligament) went on the 15-day disabled list May 29, and he was transferred to the 60-day disabled list June 3. He underwent season-ending Tommy John surgery June 5.

--RHP Ryan Brasier (right elbow strain) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to March 21, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on April 16.

--LHP Brian Moran (left elbow inflammation) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to March 21, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on April 13. He underwent season-ending Tommy John surgery in mid-April.

ROTATION:

RHP Jered Weaver
RHP Matt Shoemaker
LHP C.J. Wilson
LHP Hector Santiago
LHP Wade LeBlanc

BULLPEN:

RHP Huston Street (closer)
RHP Joe Smith
RHP Jason Grilli
RHP Kevin Jepsen
RHP Michael Morin
RHP Cory Rasmus
RHP Fernando Salas
RHP Cam Bedrosian

CATCHERS:

Chris Iannetta
Hank Conger

INFIELDERS:

1B Albert Pujols
2B Howie Kendrick
SS Erick Aybar
3B David Freese
INF John McDonald

OUTFIELDERS:

LF Josh Hamilton
CF Mike Trout
RF Kole Calhoun
OF Efran Navarro
OF Collin Cowgill

Team Report – OAKLAND ATHLETICS

INSIDE PITCH

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Oakland A's announced a change in their rotation Tuesday, then didn't start All-Stars Josh Donaldson and Derek Norris on Wednesday.

Both things were done with the upcoming three-game showdown series against the Los Angeles Angels in mind.

Is it any wonder the A's went out and laid an egg in an 8-5 home loss to the New York Mets on Wednesday?

The A's did their best to downplay the upcoming series after Wednesday's game. However, their actions spoke louder than words in one of their uglier performances of the season, especially at home, where they had won 35 of their previous 47 games.

Hired gun Jeff Samardzija struggled through his worst game in an Oakland uniform. Meanwhile, the Oakland offense failed to capitalize on six walks, three Mets errors and a rare subpar performance by New York ace Zack Wheeler.

The A's got into the Mets' depleted bullpen (two relievers were unavailable because of injuries) in the sixth inning, but managed to add only one run -- and it was unearned.

Oakland begins the weekend two games behind Los Angeles in the American League West standings.

NOTES, QUOTES

RECORD: 74-52

STREAK: Lost one

NEXT: Angels (LHP Hector Santiago, 3-7, 3.46 ERA) at A's (RHP Sonny Gray, 12-7, 2.99 ERA)

PLAYER NOTES:

--RHP Sonny Gray brings a career-worst, four-game losing streak into the opener of the Athletics' showdown series with the Los Angeles Angels on Friday night. Just about everything else about the matchup is a positive for the 12-game winner. Gray has gone 10-2 in his career against the American League West, including 1-0 against the Angels. That win came earlier this season, when he allowed three runs in 6 2/3 innings in a 6-3 A's victory. Gray has a 2.45 ERA in three career starts against the Angels.

--RHP Jeff Samardzija was the victim of two-out hits in by far his shortest outing as a member of the A's in Wednesday's 8-5 loss to the New York Mets. Samardzija couldn't get out of the fourth inning, giving up seven runs on seven hits. Six of the hits came with two outs, including a half-swing blooper that landed near third base and yet resulted in a single by RF Curtis Granderson against a shifted Oakland

defense. Three batters after what could have been the third out, Mets 1B Lucas Duda belted a three-run homer, turning what might have been a 1-0 game into a 5-0 runaway.

--3B Josh Donaldson did not start the Athletics' 8-5 loss the New York Mets on Wednesday, but he did finish it. In fact, the All-Star had what might have been the most important at-bat of the game, with two outs and the bases loaded in the bottom of the eighth inning and the A's down by three. He hit the ball hard, but right at Mets SS Wilmer Flores, who was able to knock it down and record the game-saving, inning-ending out at first base.

--C Derek Norris can expect a busy few days with the Los Angeles Angels starting left-handers in the first two games of the American League West showdown Friday and Saturday. Norris sat and watched left-handed-hitting John Jaso get the start Wednesday against the New York Mets. But instead of getting the full day off that manager Bob Melvin hoped, Norris had to be pressed into action late in a game the A's were losing. Norris went 0-for-2, once grounding into a double play.

--LHP Eric O'Flaherty is cleared to pitch in consecutive games, A's manager Bob Melvin announced before Wednesday's game against the New York Mets. O'Flaherty, who debuted for the A's on July 3 after undergoing Tommy John surgery on his left elbow, has pitched only 13 1/3 innings in his first 14 appearances, and never two days in a row. O'Flaherty pitched in Tuesday's 6-2 win over the New York Mets, striking out the only hitter he faced, and then was declared available had Melvin needed him Wednesday. As it turns out, LHP Fernando Abad and RHP Dan Otero were able to finish out the 8-5 loss.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "Usually your team gets you five runs, it ends in a victory. A big game today and I didn't do my part. It stings." -- RHP Jeff Samardzija, after the Athletics' 8-5 loss to the New York Mets on Wednesday.

ROSTER REPORT

MEDICAL WATCH:

--C Derek Norris (sore back) was in the lineup Aug. 19 but was only able to run at three-quarters speed. He appeared as a sub Aug. 20, and the A's had an off day Aug. 21. Manager Bob Melvin said he hopes Norris will be back to full speed Aug. 22.

--SS Jed Lowrie (hairline fracture of right index finger) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to Aug. 14.

--1B Kyle Blanks (torn left calf) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to June 23. An MRI revealed that Blanks' calf has a small tear and is not merely strained, the initial diagnosis. He ran full speed Aug. 2 and ran the bases Aug. 5 and Aug. 7. He began a rehab assignment with Triple-A Sacramento on Aug. 9.

--2B Nick Punto (strained right hamstring) went on the 15-day disabled list Aug. 3.

--OF Craig Gentry (broken right hand) went on the 15-day disabled list July 28. He began a rehab assignment with Triple-A Sacramento on Aug. 18. The timetable for his return was uncertain as of Aug. 19.

--RHP A.J. Griffin (right flexor tendinitis) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to March 21, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on May 4. He underwent season-ending Tommy John surgery April 30.

--RHP Jarrod Parker (torn right ulnar collateral ligament) went on the 60-day disabled list March 20. He had a second Tommy John surgery March 24, and he will miss the entire season. He resumed playing catch Aug. 4.

ROTATION:

LHP Jon Lester
RHP Sonny Gray
LHP Scott Kazmir
RHP Jeff Samardzija
RHP Jason Hammel

BULLPEN:

LHP Sean Doolittle (closer)
RHP Dan Otero
LHP Eric O'Flaherty
RHP Ryan Cook
RHP Luke Gregerson
LHP Fernando Abad
RHP Jesse Chavez

CATCHERS:

John Jaso
Derek Norris

INFIELDERS:

1B Stephen Vogt
2B Alberto Callaspo
SS Eric Sogard
3B Josh Donaldson
INF Nate Freiman
INF Andy Parrino

OUTFIELDERS:

LF Brandon Moss
CF Coco Crisp
RF Josh Reddick
OF Jonny Gomes
OF Sam Fuld

Team Report – MIAMI MARLINS

INSIDE PITCH

DENVER -- First baseman Garrett Jones, a left-handed hitter, came into the series against Colorado with a career 1.286 OPS at Coors Field -- a .431 on-base percentage and a .854 slugging percentage.

Not only that, but he had a .396 average (19-for-48) at Coors, with eight doubles, one triple, four homers and 14 RBIs in 13 games.

But he's left-handed. Manager Mike Redmond said he considered starting Jones against Rockies lefty Franklin Morales, but instead went with right-handed hitting Jeff Baker, who was batting .289 in 90 at-bats against left-handed pitchers compared to .206 for Jones in 63 at-bats.

"Bake's done a very good job against lefties," Redmond said before the Marlins beat Colorado 13-5.

"We're going to need Bake and a lot of different guys to help us, so we'll try to keep those guys going as much as we possibly can. Jonesy will play the next two days (when the Rockies start right-handers) and might end up coming off the bench tonight."

That proved to be the case in the eighth inning when Jones took over at first base for Baker, who was suffering from a sinus infection.

Jones walked in the ninth and scored when Marcell Ozuna hit a grand slam that capped a six-run inning and gave the Marlins a 13-4 lead.

Baker, who began his career with the Rockies, went 3-for-5 with two doubles and one run scored. The three hits and two doubles both tied season highs set on May 10 at San Diego. In seven career games as a visitor at Coors Field, Baker is hitting .409 (9-for-22) with four doubles, one triple and one RBI.

NOTES, QUOTES

RECORD: 64-63

STREAK: Won one

NEXT: Marlins (RHP Tom Koehler, 9-9, 3.82 ERA) at Rockies (RHP Jordan Lyles, 6-1, 4.01 ERA)

PLAYER NOTES:

--CF Marcell Ozuna hit his second grand slam of the season and of his career in the ninth inning Friday and tied his career high with five RBIs. His other grand slam was May 21 against Philadelphia, when Ozuna also drove in five runs. He has homered in three consecutive games and has driven in at least one run in four straight games.

--LF Christian Yelich went 2-for-4 with two walks and two runs scored, extending his hitting streak to a career-high-tying 10 games. He made his major league debut July 23, 2013, at Coors Field and hit safely

in 10 straight games last year from July 31-Aug. 10. During his current streak, which includes seven multi-hit games, Yelich is 21-for-41 (.512) with four doubles, two RBIs and eight runs scored. Since July 1, Yelich is hitting .333 (61-for-183) with nine doubles, three homers, 20 RBIs and 30 runs scored in 45 games.

--LHP Dan Jennings (concussion) has begun a rehab assignment at high Class-A Jupiter with two scoreless innings through Friday. He has allowed two hits with no walks and three strikeouts in that span. He was hit in the side of the head with a line drive off the bat of Pittsburgh's Jordy Mercer on Aug. 7. Jennings is 0-1 with a 1.38 ERA in 38 games for the Marlins this season and has allowed just two homers in 35 innings. The Marlins expect him back when the rosters expand next month.

--2B Derek Dietrich (right wrist strain) has begun a rehab assignment at high Class-A Jupiter. In 49 games with Miami, Dietrich is hitting .228 with five homers and 17 RBIs. He is expected to return to the Marlins when the rosters expand in September. Dietrich was placed on the 15-day disabled list July 4 retroactive to July 2.

--RHP Carter Capps (right elbow sprain) will start a rehab assignment Monday with the rookie-level Gulf Coast League Marlins. He has made nine relief appearances for the Marlins this season and has a 3.00 ERA in 12 innings with three walks and 15 strikeouts. Capps went on the 15-day disabled list May 27 retroactive to May 26 and is currently on the 60-day disabled list.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "We put a lot of pressure on our bullpen, our seventh-, eighth- and ninth-inning guys. They've picked us up all year; it's the reason we are where we are. It's always big to put your foot on the gas a little bit, get some runs and back guys off their roles." -- Marlins 1B Jeff Baker, after a 13-5 win at Colorado on Friday.

ROSTER REPORT

MEDICAL WATCH:

--2B Derek Dietrich (right wrist strain) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to July 2. He took 10 dry swings July 11. He began a rehab assignment with Class A Jupiter on Aug. 17.

--LHP Dan Jennings (concussion) went on the seven-day disabled list Aug. 8. He began a rehab assignment in the rookie-level Gulf Coast League on Aug. 19.

--RHP Kevin Gregg (right elbow inflammation) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to July 14. He underwent season-ending arthroscopic surgery Aug. 7 to remove bone chips from the elbow.

--2B Rafael Furcal (torn left hamstring) went on the 15-day disabled list June 22, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on July 19. He will have surgery Aug. 20 and is out for the season.

--RHP Carter Capps (right elbow strain) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to May 26, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on June 4. He got a second opinion June 4 on his ailing elbow from Dr. James Andrews, who agreed with team doctors that Capps didn't need surgery but needed rest. He is expected to start a rehab assignment in the rookie-level Gulf Coast League on Aug. 25.

--RHP Jose Fernandez (right ulnar collateral ligament tear in elbow) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to May 10, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on June 1. He underwent season-ending Tommy John surgery May 16. He had the cast and stitches removed May 27. He could begin throwing in mid-September. The timetable for his recovery is 12-18 months.

ROTATION:

RHP Nathan Eovaldi
RHP Tom Koehler
LHP Brad Hand
RHP Jarred Cosart
RHP Henderson Alvarez

BULLPEN:

RHP Steve Cishek (closer)
LHP Mike Dunn
RHP Bryan Morris
RHP Chris Hatcher
RHP A.J. Ramos
RHP Sam Dyson
RHP Brad Penny

CATCHERS:

Jarrod Saltalamacchia
Jeff Mathis

INFIELDERS:

1B Garrett Jones
2B Jordany Valdespin
SS Adeiny Hechavarria
3B Casey McGehee
INF Jeff Baker
INF Donovan Solano
INF Ed Lucas

OUTFIELDERS:

LF Christian Yelich
CF Marcell Ozuna
RF Giancarlo Stanton
OF Reed Johnson