

# **ASTROS DAILY CLIPS**

## **FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2015**

### **Astros' youth baseball initiatives go beyond the field; Urban Youth Academy, RBI program offer free instruction**

By: Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

The Astros have long had a commitment to youth baseball in the Houston area, something that's even blossomed in recent years with the opening of the Houston Astros Urban Youth Academy on the city's north side.

In addition to the Urban Youth Academy, Astros RBI is a free baseball and softball program funded by the Astros Foundation. What's more, the Astros Community Leaders program has renovated 18 youth fields in seven parks around the area in the last couple of years.

"We are very proud of the Astros RBI program and the Astros Urban Youth Academy," Astros owner Jim Crane said. "The RBI program is a continuation of our efforts at the Academy, where we provide free baseball and softball instruction. Our focus of developing skills on the field helps to instill important life skills such as teamwork, discipline, dedication and respect for others."

Astros RBI is holding tryouts for its summer baseball and softball leagues in the upcoming weeks at the Urban Youth Academy. Astros RBI includes teams in three divisions: junior baseball (boys 13-15), senior baseball (boys 16-18) and senior softball (girls 13-18). Baseball tryouts are scheduled for May 2, 9 and 16, and softball tryouts are scheduled for May 9 and 16.

In 2014, nearly 300 youth baseball and softball players participated in the Astros RBI program. The senior boys' baseball and senior girls' softball teams were Southwest Regional champions, and both went on to play in the MLB RBI World Series. The 2015 Astros RBI season will begin play on June 1.

"The success of the 2014 Astros RBI season clearly demonstrates the success of our efforts at the Astros Urban Youth Academy," said Twila Carter, Astros executive director of community relations and the Astros Foundation. "The Astros Foundation is keenly focused on increasing opportunities in youth baseball and softball by continuing to offer this type of free programming at the UYA. We look forward to another successful season of Astros RBI baseball and softball."

In March, former Astros player Jose Cruz and other Astros alumni were on hand at several youth parks to kick off the 2015 Little League season. As part of the April 15 Jackie Robinson Day celebration, kids from the Urban Youth Academy took the field with the Astros.

The Urban Youth Academy has experienced instructors and hosts baseball and softball camps, clinics and other activities year-round, free of charge, to players ages 7 to 17. In addition to the new Astros RBI program, the UYA staff will also provide mentoring, leadership development and assistance with the college application process.

Additionally, the Astros Community Leaders program is providing over 2,000 uniforms and Joe Morgan Swing Trainers to all of the leagues playing on Community Leaders fields this season.

\*Video clip (link below)

<http://m.astros.mlb.com/news/article/120131676/astros-youth-baseball-initiatives-go-beyond-the-field>

### **Could the current Astros crack the top 10 in franchise home run totals?**

By: Phillippe Craig / Houston Chronicle

Entering this season, the Astros figured to produce more power at the plate after overhauling their offense during the winter. Additions such as Evan Gattis, Colby Rasmus and Luis Valbuena were supposed to compliment budding sluggers George Springer, Chris Carter and Jon Singleton, with the idea being that a stacked lineup would always keep the Astros in games.

And it wasn't just die-hard Astros fans, hungry for some signs of hope, predicting that the offense would click. Popular statistical projection systems ZiPS and Steamer had the Astros down for 189 and 187 home runs, respectively. Those totals would have left the Astros with the second most homers last season, when Baltimore paced the majors with 211 and Colorado totaled 186 while playing half its games at the hitter's haven that is Coors Field.

Well, flash forward two-plus weeks into the 2015 campaign and things aren't quite going according to plan ... or are they?

Most fans will tell you "no" while pointing to Carter, Gattis and Springer each having just one long ball. Add in Singleton's presence in Class AAA and there's plenty of reason to think the power predictions were a little premature.

Except the Astros enter Thursday tied for the fourth most home runs in the major leagues with 19 through 13 games. Granted, it's early and Valbuena is pacing the club with five homers — nearly a third of the way to last season's career high of 16 — after hitting a pair in Monday's series opener in Seattle, but there may just be hope for the Astros after all.

\*Image gallery (link below)

<http://blog.chron.com/ultimateastros/2015/04/23/could-the-current-astros-crack-the-top-10-in-franchise-home-run-totals/#30523101=0>

## Scouting report: Astros at Oakland Athletics

By: Evan Drellich / Houston Chronicle

1. Shortstop Jed Lowrie, returning to the Oakland Coliseum for the first time since he left the club for the Astros this offseason, has reached base seven straight times (five hits and two walks). Center fielder Jake Marisnick, meanwhile, has reached base in seven of 12 his last 12 plate appearances.
2. Catcher Hank Conger is set to be in the lineup Friday against a lefthanded pitcher in Scott Kazmir, even though Conger, a switch-hitter, was not in the lineup against Mariners lefty J.A. Happ on Wednesday. Manager A.J. Hinch said the reason for that is Kazmir and Happ are different style pitchers.
3. The A's stole a season-high four bases Wednesday in a 9-2 win over the Angels. It was the team's first four-steal game since April 16, 2013, against the Astros. The A's are 8-4 in night games.

Pitching matchups:

- Friday: LHP Dallas Keuchel (2-0) vs. LHP Scott Kazmir (2-0)
- Saturday: RHP Scott Feldman (1-2) vs. RHP Kendall Graveman (1-1)
- Sunday: RHP Asher Wojciechowski (0-1) vs. LHP Drew Pomeranz (1-2)

## Is Astros vs. Rangers a rivalry that's ever going to happen?

By: Ultimate Astros / Houston Chronicle

They're in their third year together in the American League West, and the jury remains out on whether the Astros and Texas Rangers are rivals. They only started playing each other in 2001 thanks to interleague play, so their history together is limited. Plus, the teams haven't both been strong at the same time during those years.

In a recent column, SB Nation's Grant Brisbee listed Astros-Rangers among four sets of teams that should hate each other. Here's some of what he said about the Lone Star Series:

This was one of the reasons the Astros moving to the American League made at least a little sense. It was one of the reasons MLB was pushing to the masses, at least. Look at this interesting, natural rivalry! Eh, eh? Same state! Eh?

You know what, though? They're right. When the both of these teams are fighting for the same division, the hate will flow so naturally. That's a huge caveat, though. Both teams have to be good first.

And then he had to take this dig at Houston and Dallas:

They play in cities that probably argue about regional crap like barbecue or music venues or the general quality of Great Clips in the area. It will happen, even if it takes 30 years to ferment.

So is Astros-Rangers a rivalry that will ever become heated or is it just wishful thinking on MLB's part?

## Astros-Athletics Preview

By: STATS LLC / ESPN.com

Once again shining in April, Scott Kazmir will try to help the Oakland Athletics regain their footing after an inconsistent road trip.

Dallas Keuchel will try to get the Houston Astros back in the win column when two of the top left-handers in the majors face off in Friday night's series opener in Oakland.

Kazmir (2-0, 1.33 ERA) is 6-0 with a 1.84 ERA in this month the last two seasons, winning his first four decisions in a season for the first time last April. A scarcity of run support and Eric O'Flaherty's blown save Sunday kept him from winning each of his first three starts this year.

He was charged with two runs in 7 1/3 innings against Kansas City but O'Flaherty gave up a pair of RBI doubles in the eighth of a 4-2 defeat.

"(Kazmir) pitched great," manager Bob Melvin told MLB's official website. "To go in the eighth like that over 100 pitches, he certainly did his job, we just couldn't finish it off."

That defeat was part of a 5-5 trip for Oakland (8-9), and the A's alternated wins and losses in the final six games. They went 0 for 8 with runners in scoring position and fell 2-0 to the Los Angeles Angels on Thursday despite giving up one hit -- Kole Calhoun's two-run homer.

"I can't remember the last time we got beat by one hit," Melvin said.

The Astros' four-game win streak was halted with a 3-2 defeat in Seattle on Wednesday.

Houston (8-7) went 1 for 8 with runners in scoring position after going 6 for 16 in the first two games of the series. The Astros totaled 13 runs in those wins.

Keuchel (2-0, 0.90) will try to build on a third impressive outing in as many starts this season, as he yielded two hits in six innings while striking out seven in a 4-0 win over the Angels on Saturday.

"It's so easy to watch Dallas Keuchel compete and put up zeros and just assume that he's functioning perfectly because you're so used to it," manager A.J. Hinch told MLB's official website. "He really goes through lineups and competes his way through."

Keuchel went 1-0 with a 1.99 ERA in his last three starts against Oakland in 2014.

Kazmir has gone 3-0 with a 1.79 ERA in his past six starts against the Astros. He yielded one run in six innings with eight strikeouts in an 8-1 win at Minute Maid Park on April 13.

Oakland took two of three in that series. The A's have won nine of the last 12 home meetings with the Astros.

Jose Altuve is batting .369 in a 26-game hit streak against Oakland, the longest active one in baseball against any opponent.

## **The Fresno Grizzlies are back home from Saturday, April 25 through Tuesday, April 28; The first-place Grizzlies begin a four-game series at Chukchansi Park against the Reno Aces**

By: Fresno Grizzlies

The first-place Fresno Grizzlies begin a four-game home series at Chukchansi Park starting Saturday, April 25th against the Reno Aces. The two Triple-A teams, both currently tied for first place in the Pacific Northern Division, feature some of the most talented prospects in all of Minor League Baseball and are ranked No. 1 and No. 2 in the league in offense. The four-game series in Downtown Fresno includes the following promotions:

Saturday, April 25 - 7:05 PM First Pitch (Gates open to the general public at 5:35 PM)

Fresno honors their heritage Saturday night with the San Francisco Giants 2014 World Championship Replica Ring giveaway (first 5,000 fans), presented by Fresno Coin Gallery. Seventeen of the 25 players on the Giants championship roster once put on a Fresno Grizzlies uniform, including notable 2014 Fresno Grizzlies players Joe Panik, Andrew Susac, Travis Ishikawa, Juan Perez, Jeremy Affeldt (rehab assignment) and Brandon Belt (rehab assignment). Fans headed to the game can pick up the giveaway ring at Gate 1 (Tulare/H), Gate 2 (H Street), and Gate 3 (Inyo/H) while supplies last. \*\*\*One ring will be given per ticket holder. There will not be multiple rings given to one person holding multiple tickets. For questions, contact the ticket office at 559.320.TIXS.

Sunday, April 26 - 2:05 PM First Pitch (Gates open to the general public at 1:05 PM)

Save Mart Sunday on April 26th features the third annual Fresno Ideaworks Day, along with a ValleyPBS character appearance by Curious George. Throughout the ballpark, the Grizzlies will be celebrating Central Valley innovation with high school robotics, Lego league robotics, a nerdy derby, a cardboard creation challenge, and additional interactive experiences for fans of all ages. Purchase four field level reserve tickets for \$20 online at FresnoGrizzlies.com by putting in special offer code "ValleyPBS." Remember to stick around after the game for Kids Run the Bases, presented by Sun-Maid, where kids 12 and under can race around the bases and slap high-fives with Parker at home plate.

Monday, April 27 - 6:35 PM First Pitch (Gates open to the general public at 5:35 PM)

Every Monday home game features the Must Catch Monday deal, presented by The Fresno Bee. For only \$20 (yep, twenty bucks), fans receive two field level reserve game tickets, two Fresno Chaffee Zoo vouchers, two Blackbeard's Mini Golf vouchers, and two John's Incredible Pizza Company vouchers. It's a value overload as you'll be able to watch some of the most talented baseball players on the planet and then leave the stadium with three other entertainment options to use at your leisure.

Tuesday, April 28 - 11:05 AM First Pitch (Gates open to the general public at 10:05 AM)

Go ahead and take the day off. Just do it. Fresno plays morning baseball to wrap up the four-game set with Reno and they're offering insane deals to make sure you start the day at Chukchansi Park. Fans can purchase \$2 Power Alley tickets, eat \$2 Hot Dogs, slurp \$2 sodas, and even down \$2 Dos Equis drafts if you're 21 and over (Hey, it's 5 o'clock somewhere). There's also a business special available, offering fans lunch and a ticket to the Phoenix Club for \$20. The business special is available at the box office or by calling 559.320.TIXS.

Special Offer for Monday and Tuesday home games

The Fresno Grizzlies are offering half-off field level reserve tickets to their Monday (April 27) and Tuesday (April 28) home games for anyone showing their 2015 Clovis Rodeo ticket at the Chukchansi Park Box Office. The discount applies to one field level reserve ticket per one rodeo ticket. For more information on tickets for the April 25-28 home games, contact the Chukchansi Park Box Office at 559.320.TIXS or visit in person Monday through Friday between the hours of 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. The box office will open at 10:00 a.m. Saturday, April 25th and Sunday, April 26th.

## **Fresno handed their third straight one-run loss in Salt Lake; Fresno starter Alex White is the hard luck loser after allowing an unearned run in the fifth inning**

By: Fresno Grizzlies

There's something about the state of Utah that the Fresno Grizzlies (8-7) are getting sick of. For the third straight night, they dropped a one-run game on a fielding error. The Salt Lake Bees (5-10) put across the lone run of the game when Roger Kieschnick singled to lead off the bottom of the fifth inning, advanced to second on a throwing error by Jon Singleton, took third on a wild pitch, and scored on a single to left by Alex Yarbrough. The 1-0 victory marks the sixth time in seven games this season that the Grizzlies and Bees outcome has been determined by one run.

Salt Lake starter Tyler DeLoach made his Triple-A debut and mystified the Grizzlies offense through 7.0 scoreless innings. He surrendered only one hit and three total base runners, while striking out five. A key contributor to his success was the ability to get double plays, which came in the second, fourth, and sixth. Outside of that, he worked perfect 1-2-3 innings in the first, third, fifth, and seventh.

The Grizzlies didn't truly threaten until the ninth when Nolan Fontana doubled off Jeremy McBryde to begin the inning. The ball barely skipped up chalk along the right field line and came two swings after a would-be solo homer sailed just a few feet right of the foul pole. With no outs and Fontana at second representing the tying run, the next three Fresno hitters couldn't put the ball in play as McBryde and Edgar Ibarra combined to strike out the side.

Fresno starter Alex White (L, 0-2) gets handed the loss despite turning in the best of his three outings this season. He allowed one unearned run on five hits, walked one, and struck out two over 5.2 innings. Darin Downs and Tyson Perez combined to throw 2.1 scoreless innings and keep the game within a run.

Tonight marked only the ninth ever 1-0 game in the 22-year history of Smith's Ballpark, with the last two 1-0 wins by Salt Lake being over Fresno (last, July 23, 2012 vs. Fresno on a game-ending balk). It marked the first time Fresno had been shut out in a game since August 25, 2014 at Memphis (also a 1-0 loss).

Fresno sends left-hander Luis Cruz (0-1, 9.00) to the hill to try and stave off a series sweep tomorrow night, with first pitch at 5:35 p.m. PT. He'll be met by Salt Lake righty Drew Rucinski (0-0, 9.00), who will make his second start of the season. After the conclusion of tomorrow night's game, the Fresno Grizzlies will stay overnight in Salt Lake and fly out Saturday morning to Fresno to begin a four-game home series against the Reno Aces at Chukchansi Park. For information on the upcoming homestand, visit FresnoGrizzlies.com.

## **CC Cruises in Series Opener**

By: Corpus Christi Hooks

Corpus Christi notched a season-high seven doubles Thursday night, powering its way to an 8-2 victory over the RoughRiders at Dr Pepper Ballpark.

The Hooks have now won back-to-back games and stand 6-1 on the road this season.

Mark Appel got the start for Corpus Christi (9-4) and surrendered a bunt base hit by Chris Garia to open the first. Two outs later, Nick Williams smashed an RBI double off the third-base bag to put the Riders in front 1-0.

Brandon Meredith and Tyler Heineman squared the score with back-to-back doubles against Jake Thompson (1-2) in the second.

In the home half, Drew Robinson's lead-off home run down the right-field line handed Frisco (5-8) a short-lived 2-1 edge.

A parade of two-baggers by Colin Moran, Carlos Correa and Conrad Gregor began the third and staked the Hooks to a 3-2 advantage.

Corpus Christi sent eight men to the plate and scored four times in the fourth. Moran and Heineman highlighted the barrage with their second doubles of the night.

Appel left after four innings of work. Houston's top pitching prospect permitted six hits and struck out three, stranding five on base. Appel threw 71 pitches, 51 for strikes.

Angel Baez (1-0) bridged the gap to Kyle Westwood with a perfect fifth inning.

Westwood induced three double-plays over the next four frames en route to his second save.

Chad Bell relieved Thompson and hurled four hitless innings. The Frisco lefty struck out six and walked two.

Corpus Christi got to Cody Kendall in the ninth. Singles by Gregor, Heineman and Tyler White led to a bases-loaded walk from Leo Heras, capping the scoring at 8-2.

The series continues Friday night as the Hooks send lefty Josh Hader (0-1, 3.00) to the hill. He will be opposed by Jose Leclerc (1-0, 9.00). First pitch 7:05.

## **Three home runs not enough in loss to Nuts; McDonald hits fifth home run, extends hitting streak to 12**

By: Spenser Smith / Lancaster JetHawks

One night removed from a solid pitching performance, the JetHawks failed to keep pace with opposing bats, falling to the Modesto Nuts 11-5 Thursday night at The Hangar.

In the bottom of the second inning, Jose Fernandez hit a two-out solo home run to give Lancaster (8-7) a 1-0 lead. The homer was the first by a JetHawks player at The Hangar this season.

Modesto (6-9) tied the score in the top of the third on a Michael Benjamin RBI double and then took the lead on a two-run homer by Jordan Patterson. Benjamin added an RBI single in the fourth inning to extend the Nuts' lead to 4-1 against Lancaster starter Blaine Sims (0-3).

Sims allowed four runs on six hits over five innings, walking three and striking out three.

J.D. Davis hit a two-run home run in the fifth to get the JetHawks within one run, but the Nuts responded with four runs in the top of the sixth against lefty reliever Randall Fant. Troy Stein led off with a solo home run, Raimel Tapia hit a sacrifice fly, and a two-run homer by Benjamin gave Modesto an 8-3 advantage.

Lancaster responded with a Chase McDonald home run to lead off the bottom half, but an RBI double by Davis in the seventh was the last run the JetHawks could manage.

McDonald's home run placed him in a tie for the league lead in homers with five, and extended his hitting streak to 12 games.

The Nuts rallied for three more runs in the ninth, including Benjamin's second two-run homer of the game, and Lancaster could not overcome the six-run deficit.

Harrison Musgrave (2-1) earned the win, striking out six and walking just one over five innings of work for the Nuts. Carlos Estevez tossed two shutout innings in relief, earning the save and giving Modesto the series-opening win.

The JetHawks will face the Nuts in the second game of the series at The Hangar. Adrian Houser (0-0, 10.38) will start for Lancaster, and Modesto will send Grahmann Wiest (1-0, 0.90) to the mound. First pitch is scheduled for 6:30 p.m.

## **Bandits get first sweep in Peoria since 2011; Quad Cities overcomes 3-0 deficit to achieve its best 15-game start since 2001**

By: Marco LaNave / Quad Cities River Bandits

The Peoria Chiefs took a 3-0 lead through the first four innings Thursday night, but the Quad Cities River Bandits scored once in the fifth and sixth innings, and twice in the eighth inning, and right-hander Daniel Mengden pitched four scoreless relief innings for his first professional win in a 4-3 victory and the club's first series sweep at Dozer Park since Aug. 24-26, 2011.

The three-run deficit was the largest erased by Quad Cities (12-3) this season. The club has eight comeback wins and sole possession of the Midwest League Western Division lead for a sixth straight day. The team has won 12 of its first 15 games for the first time since 2001.

Chiefs right-hander Daniel Poncedeleon, who beat Quad Cities April 11, pitched a perfect first inning. In the bottom of the first inning against Quad Cities right-hander Austin Chrismon, Chiefs shortstop Oscar Mercado chopped an infield single to third baseman Kristian Trompiz, who threw past first base to allow Mercado to reach second base. Mercado then stole third base and scored an unearned run on a groundout by third baseman Andrew Sohn for a 1-0 Peoria lead.

In the second inning, Poncedeleon began by allowing back-to-back singles by designated hitter Mott Hyde and first baseman Jacob Nottingham before retiring the next three batters. In the third inning with two outs, Poncedeleon allowed a single by catcher Alfredo Gonzalez and double by right fielder Sean McMullen but escaped the jam when Hyde flied out to left field.

The Chiefs (8-7) added to their lead in the fourth inning, when Sohn and first baseman Justin Ringo started with back-to-back singles. Chrismon got a flyout and struck out designated hitter Alex DeLeon on a wild pitch that moved Sohn and Ringo into

scoring position. With the infield shifted against catcher Steve Bean, a ground ball to the right side brought second baseman Alex Hernandez charging in from shallow right field, but he threw past first base, bringing in both Sohn and Ringo to make it 3-0. Chrismon retired the next four batters to finish five innings, allowing three unearned runs on five hits and no walks with six strikeouts.

Quad Cities' comeback began against Poncedeleon in the fifth inning, when shortstop Thomas Lindauer drew a one-out walk. With two outs, Lindauer stole his first base of the season on a 0-2 pitch to catcher Alfredo Gonzalez, who worked a 3-2 count and hit the ninth pitch of the at-bat to right field for an RBI single. In the sixth inning, Hyde hit a leadoff double and went to third base on Poncedeleon's wild pitch before scoring on Nottingham's groundout to cut the deficit to 3-2. Hernandez then singled to end Poncedeleon's start after he had allowed two earned runs on seven hits and one walk with seventh strikeouts in 5 1/3 innings. Right-hander Tyler Bray (1-1) retired the next two batters to end the inning.

With the visitors trailing, 3-2, Lindauer began the go-ahead rally in the seventh inning with a leadoff single to left field against Bray. Center fielder Bobby Boyd sacrificed Lindauer to second base, and Gonzalez drew a four-pitch walk. Bray was removed for left-hander Nick Lomascolo, whose first pitch got past Bean for a passed ball that allowed both runners to advance. McMullen popped up for the second out, but Hyde worked a walk, with the last pitch being wild through the legs of Bean to allow Lindauer to score the tying run and Gonzalez to reach third base. With Nottingham at bat, Lomascolo threw another wild pitch that scored Gonzalez for the go-ahead run. Both runs were charged to Bray, while Lomascolo had a blown save for his outing of 1 2/3 hitless innings with three walks and two wild pitches.

After losing a start April 11 at Dozer Park, Mengden (1-1) began the sixth inning with a deficit but had a lead in the seventh. In the eighth and ninth innings, Peoria put the leadoff batter on base and advanced him with a sacrifice and groundout to third base with two outs, but Mengden struck out Ringo to end the eighth inning and got pinch hitter Danny Diekroeger to ground out to Hernandez to end the game.

The River Bandits open a six-game, seven-day homestand at 7 p.m. Friday at Modern Woodmen Park. In the opener of a three-game series with Burlington, River Bandits right-hander Joshua James (0-0) is scheduled to face Bees left-hander Sean Newcomb (1-0).

UP NEXT: Smart Toyota of the Quad Cities and WLLR present the first Friday Fireworks of the season following the 7 p.m. game Friday at Modern Woodmen Park. It is also Legends of Rock Night for the opener of the six-game, seven-day homestand. Individual tickets are on sale at the River Bandits box office and online at riverbandits.com. Ticket plans of 12 to 70 games - which include free parking, reserved seats, merchandise discounts, and guaranteed giveaways - are available by calling 563-324-3000.

ABOUT THE BANDITS: The River Bandits ownership in 2014 made one of the biggest improvements to Modern Woodmen Park since the ballpark was first built back in 1931! A new Ferris wheel, standing 105 feet over the playing field, opened May 24, Space Camp opened June 20; the new Drop'N Twist debuted in July; and the newly expanded 300-foot long zip line also reopened.

## **OPPONENT vs. OAKLAND ATHLETICS 4/24/2015**

### **Chavez comes through on the spot for A's**

By: Jane Lee / MLB.com

Right-hander Jesse Chavez allowed one hit over six innings in a spot start against the Angels on Thursday. Typically, that would be worthy of a win. Except his teammates never scored.

"He was great," said manager Bob Melvin following the 2-0 loss. "We expect a lot out of him, and to give up one hit on a moment's notice to start, I don't know how you can ask for much more than that."

Though the A's outhit the Angels, 8-1, Los Angeles' lone hit resulted in two runs. Kole Calhoun hit a home run to right-center to drive in Drew Butera, who reached base on Brett Lawrie's throwing error to open the third inning.

"A sinker that came back," said Chavez. "Just tried to crisscross in and out with him, not let him get his hands extended. Ball was a little bit up. I should have went with a four-seam instead of a two."

Chavez walked two of the next three batters but settled down to retire each of his final 10, finishing at 90 pitches and striking out four in his first start of the season -- following four relief appearances -- in place of Jesse Hahn, who is dealing with a blister on his pitching hand.

"We were looking at maybe 80 to 85 [pitches] and he gives us 90 and gives up one hit," said Melvin. "Certainly did his job."

"I feel a little tired, but I didn't see any velocity loss," said Chavez. "That's my big thing. I look back, and today it was the same from the first pitch to the last, and that was something that was really surprising and good to see."

"Very encouraging. Had three weeks off of not being extended, and then to go out and throw 90 pitches and have the same stuff, same from the first hitter to the last one, that's all I wanted to do."

\*Video clip (link below)

<http://m.athletics.mlb.com/news/article/120177114/jesse-chavez-comes-through-on-the-spot-for-as>

## **A's miss too many chances, waste Chavez's solid effort**

By: Alden Gonzalez and Jane Lee / MLB.com

Kole Calhoun blasted a two-run homer off Jesse Chavez and Nick Tropeano pitched six scoreless innings in his season debut on Thursday afternoon, setting the tone in the Angels' 2-0 victory over the A's in Southern California.

Calhoun's homer was the only hit for the Angels' offense, which plated fewer than four runs for the 11th time in 16 games this season. It came off Chavez in the bottom of the third, two batters after Drew Butera reached first on a throwing error by A's third baseman Brett Lawrie. Calhoun got a 1-1 cutter out over the plate and lined it over the scoreboard in right-center to give him three home runs on the season and eventually help split the four-game series.

The win moved the Angels to 7-9 and was just their second victory in seven home games this season. The A's finished their 10-game road trip with a 5-5 record and are 8-9 on the season.

"That's a big win right there," Calhoun said. "For us to not really be doing what we want to do at the plate and still be able to come out with a win is huge."

### **MOMENTS THAT MATTERED**

**Tropeano deals:** Tropeano was basically only called up to start because his pitching schedule allowed him to take the ball on five days' rest. For the Angels, it was a happy coincidence. The 24-year-old right-hander, acquired from the Astros for catcher Hank Conger in November, shut out the A's for six-plus frames, scattering five hits, walking one and striking out five. It was probably only a one-start stint, since Matt Shoemaker is expected to return from the bereavement list next week, but Tropeano made a favorable impression.

**Missed opportunities:** The A's stranded 10 baserunners and went 0-for-8 with runners in scoring position, missing every chance to provide support for an impressive Chavez. Twice they left a runner at third base. Josh Reddick led off the seventh with a base hit and advanced to third on Eric Sogard's one-out single, but Marcus Semien proceeded to fly out to shallow right field, and Sam Fuld grounded into an inning-ending forceout.

**Seventh heaven:** The seventh inning was a nightmare for the Angels on Wednesday, when they turned a tie score into a five-run deficit with three relievers. But Fernando Salas preserved a two-run lead in the series finale, paving the way for Joe Smith and Huston Street to record the final six outs. Salas, who allowed 75 percent of inherited runners to score last season, came in after Tropeano allowed a leadoff single to Reddick and retired three of his next four batters.

**Tough-luck loss:** The A's couldn't have asked for much more from Chavez, who was starting in place of Jesse Hahn (blister). Making his first start of the season following four relief appearances, Chavez allowed only Calhoun's homer in six innings, walking three and striking out four. He finished at 90 pitches.

"He was great," said A's manager Bob Melvin. "We expect a lot out of him, and to give up one hit on a moment's notice to start, I don't know how you can ask for much more than that." More >

### **QUOTABLE**

"I've seen us lose on a no-hitter, so winning on a one-hitter feels a lot better." -- Angels manager Mike Scioscia, on the Angels winning despite not getting much offense

### **SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS**

Tuesday marked the third time in Angels history that they've won despite getting only one hit, with the last occurrence coming on a walk-off passed ball against the Rangers on June 16, 1986. Charlie Hough had a no-hitter through 8 1/3 innings until Wally Joyner broke it up. The last time the A's lost despite allowing one hit was April 14, 1992, in Kansas City. It was only the fourth occurrence in Oakland's franchise history since at least 1914.

Mike Trout stole his fourth base in the Angels' 16th game on Thursday, already accounting for 25 percent of his output from 2014. That year, Trout didn't pick up his fourth stolen base until the Angels' 26th game of the season.

### **GOING STREAKING**

Street's streak of consecutive batters retired to start the season ended at 14 on Thursday, when Semien reached on a slow roller to the right side with two outs in the ninth inning. The Angels' closer retired the next batter, pinch-hitter Ben Zobrist, on a flyout in foul territory to notch his fifth save.

### **WHAT'S NEXT**

**Athletics:** The A's finally return home on Friday following a 10-game road trip, and will have lefty Scott Kazmir on the mound for a 7:05 p.m. PT start against the Astros, who will counter with southpaw Dallas Keuchel. Kazmir is 2-0 with a 1.33 ERA over his first three starts this season, and 6-0 with a 1.84 ERA in nine April starts over the last two seasons.

Angels: Garrett Richards makes his second start of the season on Friday, when the Angels host the Rangers for a weekend series. Richards gave up four runs (three earned) on five hits and four walks in five innings against the Astros on Sunday, nearly eight months after rupturing his left patellar tendon. Game time is 7:05 p.m. PT.

Watch every out-of-market regular season game live on MLB.TV.

\*Video clip (link below)

<http://m.athletics.mlb.com/news/article/120117714/one-hit-enough-for-angels-in-shutout-of-as>

## **Zobrist remains a question mark for Astros series**

By: Jane Lee / MLB.com

Ben Zobrist, out since Sunday with a sore left knee, was brought into Thursday's series finale against the Angels as a pinch-hitter in the ninth inning, but he remains iffy to start Friday's series opener against the visiting Astros.

Zobrist, who flied out in left-field foul territory to end the game, a 2-0 loss, is "getting better every day," he said, but the knee "doesn't feel 100 percent" three days after he received a cortisone shot.

Even manager Bob Melvin was reluctant to use the multipurpose player.

"I didn't want to leave him in my pocket, so if we had the tying run up in the ninth, we were going to use him," said Melvin. "I was a little nervous sending him up there. I don't want him hitting the ball in the gap, now he's got to run, and it could set him back. Hopefully, he'll be that much better tomorrow."

Zobrist ran up to about 80 percent before the game, but purely straightforward, without any cuts. He did, however, do some side-to-side movement while taking ground balls, and he also participated in batting practice, encouraged by the way he felt.

Zobrist will have a better idea of his potential availability for Friday's game in the morning.

"I don't know yet what their plan is for what we need to do pregame to get that clearance, but the big thing is, how is it going to feel when I get up?" Zobrist said. "If I get up and it feels about the same it's felt the last couple days, then there's a good chance, maybe. If it feels sore, we may need to evaluate as the day goes on."

\*Video clip (link below)

<http://m.athletics.mlb.com/news/article/120177008/ben-zobrist-remains-a-question-mark-for-astros-series>

## **Bassitt arrives, will provide long relief from bullpen**

By: Jane Lee / MLB.com

Right-hander Chris Bassitt joined the A's in time for Thursday's series finale in Anaheim, providing an immediate long-relief option out of the bullpen.

Bassitt entered Spring Training as a rotation candidate but struggled greatly, particularly with the inside fastball to left-handers. In his time with Triple-A Nashville, where he posted a 3.38 ERA in three games (two starts), he went back to the first-base side of the rubber after watching video from last year.

"Pretty much from there, it all came together," said Bassitt, who had an 8.78 spring ERA. "I feel a million times better than I did."

Bassitt, acquired in the Jeff Samardzija deal, held opposition to a .207 average and struck out 16, with four walks, in 16 innings for the Sounds. He said he's "very comfortable facing [lefties] again."

"He made some adjustments on the rubber as far as the issues he felt like he had coming out of spring," said A's manager Bob Melvin. "You can say all you want about going down and working on your deficiencies and the things you need to do to get better, but when you get into a game, you want to perform and you want to get to the big leagues as quickly as you can, and sometimes that's difficult to do, but he's done that."

Bassitt takes the roster spot of right-hander Arnold Leon, who made his big league debut in the ninth inning of Wednesday's victory before being optioned.

\*Video clip (link below)

<http://m.athletics.mlb.com/news/article/120125866/chris-bassitt-arrives-will-provide-long-relief-from-as-bullpen>



## **Lefties duel as Keuchel, Kazmir open Astros-A's series**

By: Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

Two of the game's top left-handers will be on the mound Friday night when the Astros and A's open a three-game series at the Coliseum in Oakland.

Dallas Keuchel will aim for his 11th consecutive quality start for the Astros, who have won three of their first five series this season. Keuchel (2-0, 0.90 ERA) is 4-1 with a 2.04 ERA in 10 starts since Aug. 15, 2014. Meanwhile, Oakland will start lefty Scott Kazmir (2-0, 1.33 ERA), the Houston native who beat the Astros by allowing a run and three hits in six innings April 13.

What to watch for:

- The series in Oakland will mark the return of Astros shortstop Jed Lowrie and pitcher Luke Gregerson, both of whom played with the A's last season. Astros reliever Pat Neshek played for the A's in 2012-13.
- The A's have seven players on the disabled list. They began the season with eight players on the DL, but Josh Reddick has since returned. That was the team's most players on the DL to start a season in more than 20 years.
- Astros manager A.J. Hinch made his Major League debut at the Coliseum in 1998 as a member of the A's. He played parts of three seasons with Oakland, hitting .225 in 202 games there.