



New York Yankees Clips
Thursday, May 28, 2015

Rodriguez, With Three Important R.B.I., Passes Two Big Names

By DAVID WALDSTEIN

If Derek Jeter had passed Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig in an important baseball category, one can only imagine the pomp and pageantry that would have accompanied the feat.

YANKEES	4	But
ROYALS	2	when the
		player is

Alex Rodriguez, a recovering pariah who had felt baseball's heavy hammer of judgment fall upon him, it is an entirely different circumstance.

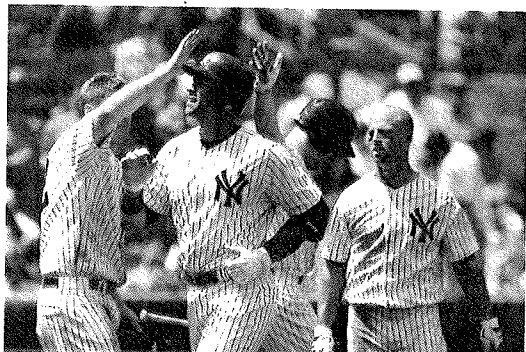
Rodriguez merely stood at his locker on Wednesday, acting as humbly as he possibly can, after his three-run homer against Chris Young helped to propel the Yankees to a 4-2 victory over the Kansas City Royals. The home run, the 665th of his career, gave him 1,995 R.B.I., moving him past Ruth (according to baseball's official statisticians) and Gehrig on the career list.

Only Hank Aaron and Barry Bonds stand ahead of him, and no one in the American League.

There was no noticeable mention of the accomplishment at Yankee Stadium, other than an announcement in the press box. After the game, about a dozen reporters gathered around Rodriguez in the quiet clubhouse and listened as he spoke about the honor he felt to have passed such legends.

But he also made sure to extend another olive branch to the team owner Hal Steinbrenner, whose recent comments made Rodriguez more welcome than he previously had been.

"I'll take this chance to say that I'm extremely grateful for



NOAH K. MURRAY/USA TODAY SPORTS, VIA REUTERS

Alex Rodriguez after homering in the third to break a 1-1 tie. He passed Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig for career runs batted in.

the comments from Hal Steinbrenner this week about me," Rodriguez said. "They certainly made me feel a lot more welcome and I wouldn't be here breaking these records if he didn't give me a chance to play on this team."

On May 20, Steinbrenner called Rodriguez "a great asset."

Another great asset is Michael Pineda, the 26-year-old right-hander who rediscovered his lost slider to throw six and two-thirds strong innings. Pineda allowed only one run, a bases-empty home run by Mike Moustakas in the first inning, walked one and struck out eight.

"That's about as well as you can pitch," said Brian McCann, whose second-inning homer evened the score, 1-1.

Rodriguez's home run came an inning later to break the tie. It was his 11th of the season and his two hits raised his batting aver-

age to .276 after dipping to .227 on May 5. During the six-game homestand, Rodriguez went 10 for 22 (.455).

"For me, in a weird way, the time off was a blessing in disguise," Rodriguez said of his suspension. "I was able to get some rest, to change my workout regimen a little bit. I just feel like I'm in a better place and more explosive, I think."

Rodriguez's hit total is 2,981. Based on his current batting average, Rodriguez should be able to reach the 3,000 mark in two to three weeks. The last Yankee to do that was Jeter, in an event that became immortalized in Yankee lore. For Rodriguez, the milestone will be more sedate.

Rodriguez has a strained relationship with baseball, its history and its fans, in part because of his season-long suspension last year for his involvement in the Bio-

genesis scandal, the second time he has been associated with using performance-enhancing drugs.

His relationship with the Yankees was particularly affected because of the way he fought back against the accusations of drug use, threatening or actually filing lawsuits against the team, Major League Baseball and the players union.

This season has been one of redemption for Rodriguez. With his success on the field and his seeming discretion off it, he has regained some popularity. The home fans cheer him as loudly, or louder, than any other player, and he is playing the game with a smile on his face and avoiding the repeated controversies that have always seemed to surround him.

"I haven't played a lot of baseball in the last two years," he said. "But I'm in a good place. I'm happy, I'm having fun."

As for passing Ruth and Gehrig, Rodriguez seemed genuinely humbled by the feat, calling it the dream of any player.

By many accounts, Ruth had 2,214 R.B.I., which would put him second behind Aaron with 2,297. Because the R.B.I. was not considered a statistical category before 1920, the Elias Sports Bureau, baseball's official statistician, recognizes only 1,992. His home run total of 714, though, is sacrosanct. Rodriguez is only 49 away.

"My dream was to be like Keith Hernandez and I never imagined I would play in the big leagues and certainly not passing my personal hero in Babe Ruth," Rodriguez said. "I mean, all of us who love baseball. He's our superhero."

INSIDE PITCH

MASAHIRO TANAKA threw three innings in a rehabilitation start for Class AAA Scranton/Wilkes-Barre and allowed four hits and a home run. Manager JOE GIRARDI said the Yankees had not determined where his next start will be. ... CARLOS BELTRAN had two hits to extend his hitting streak to 15 games.

ALEX'S ROYAL

Homers, passes Gehrig on RBI list as Yanks go west

BY ANTHONY MCCARRON
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

WHETHER IT WAS jokes — “You need a calendar to get me around the bases” — or genuflecting to the ghosts of Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig, Alex Rodriguez was hitting all the right notes Wednesday after the Yankees completed a sweep of the Royals with a 4-2 victory at the Stadium.

Heck, Rodriguez even thanked Hal Steinbrenner for the owner's kind words last week when Boss Jr. said how happy he was with A-Rod. Not that long ago, Rodriguez and the Yanks were mortal enemies and A-Rod was serving a yearlong drug suspension. But Rodriguez's play, including another homer Wednesday, and attitude have ushered in a “Kumbaya” era. At least until it's time to deal with the home run milestone bonuses.

“I'll take this chance to say I'm extremely grateful at the comments from Hal Steinbrenner about me,” Rodriguez said. “It's certainly made me feel a lot more welcome, and I wouldn't be here breaking these records if he didn't give me a chance to play on this team.”

Rodriguez took over third place on the all-time RBI list with 1,995 and broke Gehrig's AL mark of 1,993 when he blasted a tie-breaking three-run homer off Chris Young (the pitcher) in the third inning. The

home run, Rodriguez's 11th of the season and 665th of his career, put the Yankees ahead for good and gave Michael Pineda all the support he would need in putting away the defending AL champs. It was a big series for a team that looked dreadful in getting swept by the Rangers last weekend as part of a stretch of 10 losses in 11 games.

“I think it was important that we turn it around because we did not play well against Texas,” Joe Girardi said. “We did not pitch well, and our pitchers really showed up in this series against an offense that had been swinging the bat really well.”

Pineda (6-2) allowed one run in 6.2 innings, rebounding from consecutive clunkers in which his vaunted slider morphed into a spinning meatball. Wednesday, he used the pitch for key strikeouts, including one of Lorenzo Cain that ended the fifth inning with two runners in scoring position. “The guy's got strikeout stuff, we've seen that,” Girardi said of Pineda, who fanned eight. Pineda had struck out a total of only five in his two starts since whiffing 16 Orioles back on May 10.

Rodriguez's entire season is shaping up as one long milestone hunt. He's already caught and passed Willie Mays' total of 660 on the all-time homer list and cruised by Ruth and Gehrig in RBI. Coming soon? 3,000 hits — he was 2-for-4 Wednesday, so he's at 2,981.

He says he never expected any of it. “No, no,” he said. “I'm a kid that came out of Miami. I learned how to play baseball at the Boys and Girls club when I was 9 and my dream was to be like Keith Hernandez. I never imagined that I would play in the big leagues and certainly not pass my personal hero in Babe Ruth — I mean, all of us who love baseball, he's our superhero.”

Rodriguez sits behind only Hank Aaron (2,297) and Barry Bonds (1,996) on the RBI list, according to the Elias Sports Bureau, the official statistician of Major League Baseball. While RBI as a stat seems pretty straightforward, its place in the record books can be confusing because RBI did not become an official statistic until 1920.

Ruth, for instance, started his career in 1914, but he does not get credit for RBI until 1920. His official total is different than what you see on MLB.com or baseball-reference.com. According to baseball-reference.com, Ruth has 2,214 RBIs.

Whatever the case, Rodriguez's contributions this season are inarguable.

“I think he got by all the things he had to get by,” Girardi said. “Alex has always been comfortable on the field and in the clubhouse. Alex may even take longer than Bernie (Williams) to retire, because he'll always want to play.”

Especially when he's on, like now. Rodri-

guez even deftly deflected talk about A-Rod 3K by wrenching the conversation back to the team's well-being.

“You see it and you think about it (3,000), but right now it's about wins,” Rodriguez said. “We desperately needed these three wins against a great team. That's a team over there we hopefully see in October, but we have a lot of respect for them.”

“It's important for us to play this caliber of baseball. It's what we expect, and what we did (during the Yanks' poor streak) is not tolerable. We're not going to accept it.”

Tanaka's rocky start could be minor delay

EXTRAS

STAT OF THE DAY

15 That's how long Carlos Beltran's hitting streak is after he went 2-for-3 Wednesday.

TEST YOUR YANKS I.Q.

On this date (May 28) in 1946, Yankee Stadium hosted its first night game. Whom did the Yanks play?

NEXT GAME

Thursday, 10:05 p.m., at Oakland, CC Sabathia (2-6, 5.47 ERA) vs. Kendall Graveman (2-2, 6.04). TV: YES

A: They lost, 2-1, to the Washington Senators.

The results might not have been ideal, but Masahiro Tanaka could have set himself up for a return to the Yankee rotation by throwing 62 pitches in a rehab start with Triple-A Scranton Wednesday.

Tanaka allowed three runs and four hits in three innings at Pawtucket in his second rehab outing. It might not matter that Tanaka's line didn't look good — Joe Girardi said the pitcher “could be anywhere” for his next start, including the majors.

If Tanaka does get slotted into the Yanks' rotation, his regular day would be Tuesday in Seattle.

“We've got to see what we feel is the right thing to do,” Girardi said.

Girardi, who said he watched some of the start on MiLB.TV, stressed that Tanaka had no physical problems Wednesday. He has not pitched in the majors since April 23 because of a forearm

strain.

“I know he struggled the first inning,” Girardi said. “I saw a little bit but not much. We'll sit down and talk with the people who were there watching him and Cash (GM Brian Cashman) and see what the next move is.”

Asked if Tanaka had a problem with the condition of the mound in Pawtucket, the Red Sox's Triple-A affiliate, Girardi said, “I saw him kicking out some big clumps a little bit. How much does that play into it? I don't know.”

“It's not what you want, but there are a lot of obstacles that you have to overcome as a player. That's the bottom line.”

FLIPPING OVER DIDI

Girardi was fine with Didi Gregorius' flip attempt to first base on a grounder to the right side by Kendrys Morales while the Yanks were in the shift in the eighth.

Insider

BY ANTHONY MCCARRON

Gregorius' flip went awry for his sixth error of the season, and an unearned run scored off Dellin Betances on the play. “I don't have a problem with him trying that play,” Girardi said. “I think if he flips it right, he has a shot to get him out. But that's not a throw you're going to make very often.”

“It's probably an easier throw if you're an option quarterback at one point in your career.”

Gregorius said the play was instinctive and he'd do it again if the same situation. “Why not?” he said. “I know it's a tough play, but I don't see why not. Trying to get the outs. . . . I got the next ground ball for the out. Short memory, that's the only way you can play

the game.”

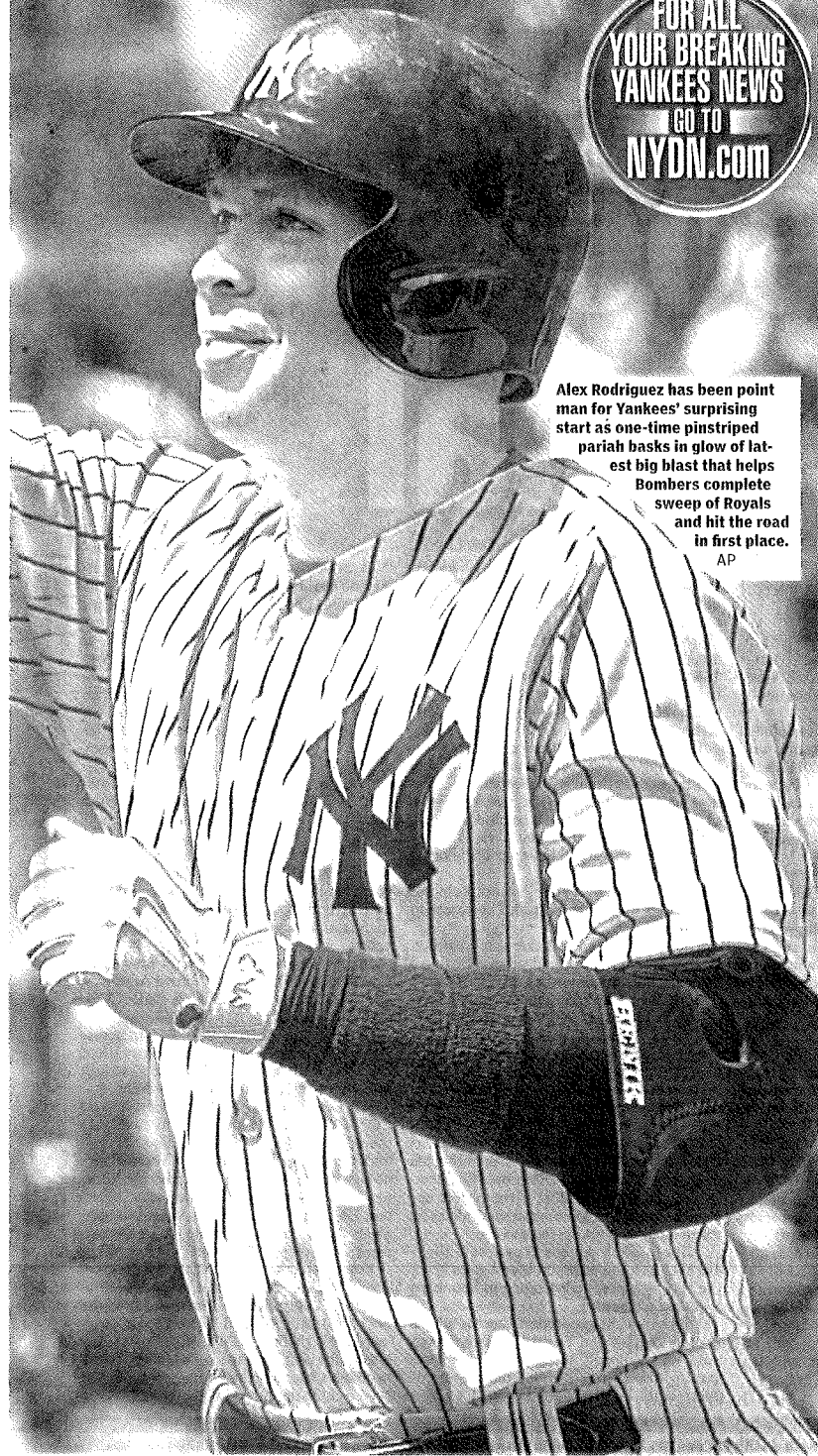
DELLIN DAYS

Betances saw a remarkable streak end when he gave up an infield single in the eighth inning — batters were 0-for-29 against him in their previous 33 plate appearances. “I forget who jinxed me (Tuesday),” Betances joked. “Before that, I didn't even know about it. I try not to pay attention to stats, but I guess it's good when you do that.”

Here are some more good Betances stats: He extended his season-opening streak of not allowing an earned run to 26 innings and a club record 23 appearances. He's only the eighth pitcher since 1912 to begin a season with that many appearances without allowing an earned run. He also has struck out 33 of the last 64 hitters he has faced.

SEND OFF

FOR ALL YOUR BREAKING YANKEES NEWS GO TO NYDN.COM



Alex Rodriguez has been point man for Yankees' surprising start as one-time pinstriped pariah basks in glow of latest big blast that helps Bombers complete sweep of Royals and hit the road in first place. AP

Bombers finally right ship, right?

This just in: The Yankees have resumed taking World Series ticket reservations.

In case you haven't noticed, caught up as you may have gotten in the Rangers' daily Stanley Cup playoff torture, up in the Bronx we are witnessing one very wacky, head-scratching baseball season. The Yankees — those same Yankees who for 11 days looked like one of the worst Yankee teams in decades in going, on merit, from 21-12 and four games up in first place to 22-22, 1½ games behind — headed for the West Coast on Wednesday once again division leaders after sweeping, of all teams, the defending AL champion Kansas City Royals.

All together now: Go figure, Suzy.

So just who are these Yankees besides being the beneficiaries of playing in the most inept division in baseball? Are they the team of spotty pitching, sloppy defense and a lineup that drops off the cliff into a dark hole after the No. 6 spot?

Or are they the team that, for three heady days in the Bronx, outscored the Royals 23-4? Judging from the large swaths of empty seats (with the exception of Bernie Williams Night) at Yankee Stadium throughout this home stand, it would appear Yankee fans feel it's the former. I asked Joe Girardi if he could provide an answer for this and after smiling and scratching his head, the Yankee manager could only offer a paraphrase of Connie Mack's credo about pitching being 75% of baseball.

"In baseball," Girardi said, "over the long run things tend to balance out. But it all starts with starting pitching for me, and when they do their job, like they did in this series, they give you a shot to win games."

Certainly Girardi had to be most gratified by the effort he got Wednesday from his pseudo ace Michael Pineda, who, coming off two straight clunker outings in which he gave up 18 hits and 12 earned runs in 11.1 innings, dominated the Royals after giving up a solo homer to Mike Moustakas, the second batter of the game. Pineda scattered just five hits after that into the seventh, striking out

eight, including Lorenzo Cain and Eric Hosmer to strand runners at second and third in the fifth, and walking just one. Nevertheless, when Pineda struck out the first two Royals in the seventh, Girardi, in what looked ominously like the constant search for the one guy who doesn't have it (especially after reliever David Carpenter gave up a single to Alcides Escobar), came to get him.

"He had thrown 106 pitches and the leadoff batter (coming up) had already gotten a couple of hits off him," Girardi explained. "Look, the most innings he's ever pitched is 170 and right now he's on pace for 225-230. That's why I made the change."

For October, one can only presume.

Meanwhile, the news out of Pawtucket, where Masahiro Tanaka was making his second rehab start following forearm tendinitis and a strained wrist, wasn't nearly as cheery as the \$180 million righty was roughed up for three runs in three innings, including a homer by the



BILL MADDEN
BASEBALL

mighty Jackie Bradley Jr., with velocity that was reported to have steadily decreased to 86 mph. It was hoped that Tanaka would be able to rejoin the Yankees in Seattle next week, but that seemed to be up in the air. When asked where Tanaka, with his delicate, frayed elbow, will be, Girardi said: "I don't know he could be anywhere."

The Yankees can only hope that doesn't include Dr. Andrews' office in Alabama.

But for now there is renewed optimism for the Yankees who, in the rear-view mirror on Wednesday, saw that their division rivals — the Rays, Blue Jays and Red Sox — had all lost. For the Rays, who, had taken most advantage of the weakened AL East by leading it most of April and again last week, it was their fifth straight loss, and it's fair to say we've seen the last of them. And with their lead back up to 1½ games and the prospect of six games on the West Coast against Oakland and Seattle, two teams playing badly, the Yankees, with or without Tanaka, can look forward to putting more distance between them and the rest of the division.

Right?

ON DECK
AT A'S

FRIDAY — 10:05
 LHP Chris Capuano (0-2, 7.36) vs. RHP Sonny Gray (5-2, 1.77)

SATURDAY — 10:05
 RHP Nathan Eovaldi (4-1, 4.27) vs. RHP Jesse Hahn (2-4, 3.69)

SUNDAY — 4:05
 RHP Adam Warren (3-3, 3.91) vs. RHP Jesse Chavez (1-5, 2.44)

All games on YES, WFAN (560 AM, 101.9 FM)

INSIDE THE MATCHUPS

YANKEES: Sabathia took his sixth loss in his shortest start of the season in the Yankees' 15-4 defeat Saturday against the Rangers, lasting just 2 1/3 innings. It marked his shortest start since June 21, 2009 at Florida and his shortest non-injury-shortened start since June 21, 2006 against the Cubs.

ATHLETICS: Graveman was on the A's Opening Day roster and went 1-2 with an 8.27 ERA in four starts before he was optioned to Triple-A Nashville on April 26. He allowed three hits over six innings while striking out six on Saturday against the Rays and earning his second win of the season.

STAT SO?

YANKEES: Sabathia is ranked 24th all-time in wins (210) by a left-handed pitcher. He needs one win to tie Billy Pierce.

ATHLETICS: The A's are 1-10 when opponents start a left-handed pitcher, the worst mark in the majors. They are batting .212 (83-for-392) against lefties.

CLEAN SWEEP

Yanks rebound from horrific skid to take three straight from Royals

By DAN MARTIN

It's hard to imagine the Yankees playing worse than they did less than a week ago, when they were in the midst of losing 10 of 11 games.

But manager Joe Girardi didn't have to look back much further than that to find a stretch that was even more putrid.

"I would question that," Girardi

YANKEES	4	Boxscore Page 48
ROYALS	2	

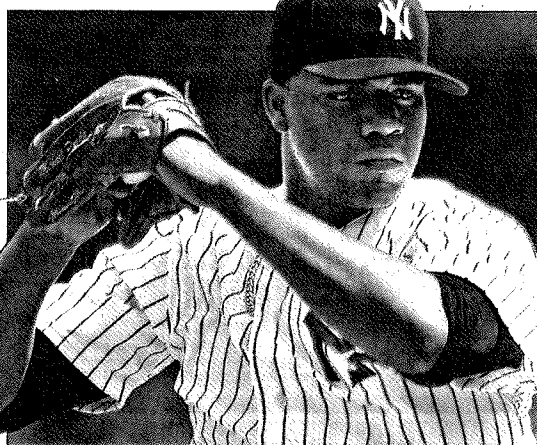
said after the Yankees completed a three-game sweep over the Royals, 4-2 on Wednesday. "I thought we looked worse the first week."

You can joke about losing streaks when they are in the rearview mirror. Now, the Yankees will try to carry their recent success with them to the West Coast, where they open a series Thursday night in Oakland.

On Wednesday, they got a bounce-back start from Michael Pineda, a three-run homer from Alex Rodriguez and more dominant work from the back end of the bullpen.

That's why, somewhat unbelievably given all their struggles, they left The Bronx with a 1 1/2-game lead over the Rays in the AL East.

Pineda, who struggled in his two outings following his 16-strikeout



performance against the Orioles, regained control of his slider and pitched well after a shaky start. He struck out eight over 6 2/3 innings to improve to 6-2.

He was hit hard in the first, as Mike Moustakas crushed a slider over the right-center field fence to give the Royals a 1-0 lead just two batters into the game.

But Pineda was aided by two nice defensive plays from Chase Headley at third and then settled down as the Yankees' offense came to life.

Pineda said he worked on his slider between starts, trying to stay

back with the pitch and keep it down. The results followed, as Brian McCann said there was "more tilt" on the pitch against the Royals after Pineda surrendered 12 runs over his previous two starts.

He struck out eight, including the last three batters he faced and didn't disagree with Girardi's decision to remove him with two outs in the seventh.

"They told me I was at 106 pitches," said Pineda, who has never pitched more than 171 innings in a season and is on pace for well over 200 innings this year.

A-Rod passes Gehrig

PLAYER	RBI's
Hank Aaron	2,297
Barry Bonds	1,996
Alex Rodriguez	1,995
Lou Gehrig	1,993
Babe Ruth	1,990

Source: MLB and Elias Sports Bureau
 Note: RBIs did not become an official stat until 1920, and MLB does not recognize pre-1920 RBIs

"And I want to pitch the whole season, not just one game."

McCann tied the game with a homer in the second before Rodriguez hit his 11th home run of the season to make it 4-1 against soft-tossing Kansas City starter Chris Young, who entered the game 4-0 with a 0.78 ERA.

"We desperately needed these three wins against a great team," Rodriguez said. "That's a team over there we'll hopefully see in October."

Rodriguez also made more history, passing Lou Gehrig on the all-time list for career RBIs with 1,995. Rodriguez now has the most in AL history and is third overall.

"It is amazing," Girardi said of the RBI feat.

But Rodriguez said he was just as pleased with the recent turnaround in the team's play.

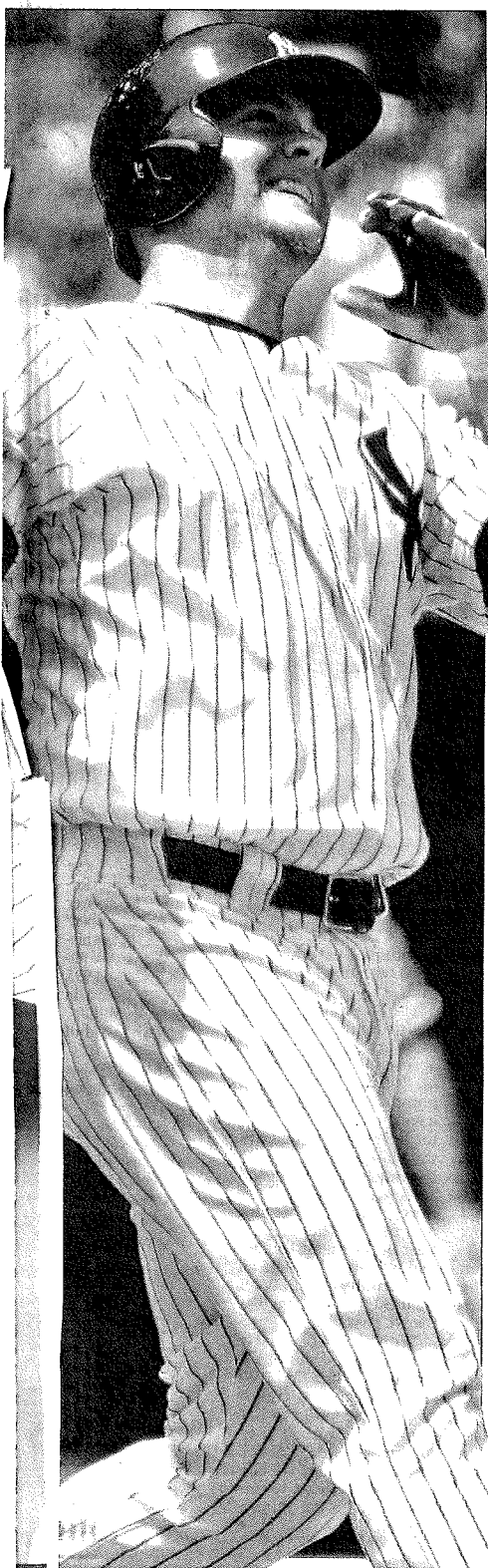
"It's important for us to play this caliber of baseball," Rodriguez said. "It's what we expect. What we did for the last 10 games is not tolerable. We're not going to accept that."

Fair enough, but at some point, they wouldn't mind some consistency.

"Over the long run, things balance out," Girardi said. "You're never as good as when you're playing great and you're never as bad as when you're playing like we've played at times. We're probably somewhere in-between there. It starts with starting pitching."

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BACK ON TRACK: Michael Pineda (above) allowed just one run on six hits before being removed during the seventh inning of the Yankees' 4-2 victory over the Royals. Brian McCann (right) hit his sixth home run during the first inning. USA TODAY Sports, Ray Stubblebine (Pineda)



JUST a big bag of A-Rod Wednesday at Yankee Stadium. Although, when isn't it?

Now that the Yankees have climbed back to DEFCON 4, with Alex Rodriguez's three-run, third-inning homer keying a three-game-sweep-securing, 4-2 victory over the dangerous Royals — after which they headed West for a seven-game trip through Oakland and Seattle — let's take stock of the most captivating, litigating, finger-wagging-moralist-baiting player on this first-place Yankees team.

1. His overall production is ridiculous. When he drilled a Chris Young slider over the left-field wall in the third, with Chase

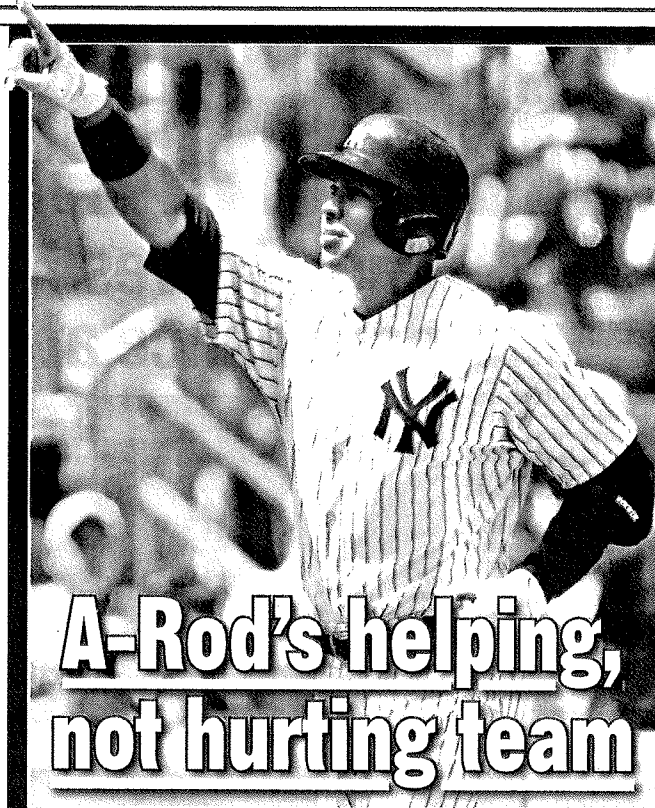
Headley on first base and Brett Gardner on second, he broke open a 1-1 with his 11th homer of the year and 665th of his career. He added a seventh-inning single, and he owns a .276/.374/.566 slash line in 179 plate appearances. Consider that in his last season, 2013, he hit seven homers with a .244/.348/.423 line in 181 plate appearances.

"I think for me, in a weird way, the time off was a blessing in disguise," A-Rod said, referring naturally to the 2014 suspension for his involvement in Biogenesis. "I was able to get some rest, change my workout regimen a little bit. A lot like Tex [Mark Teixeira]. I feel like I'm in a better place and more explosive."

"You've seen his average on a steady climb. You've seen his at-bats get better as the year went on," manager Joe Girardi said. "He's driving the baseball. We saw him catch up to a 99 mph fastball [against Kansas City reliever Kelvin Herrera on Tuesday]. Yeah, I feel good about it when we're in the middle of the order and we've got people on. That something's going to happen and we're going to score runs."

2. He made more history, albeit a tad bogus. His home run gave him 1,995 career RBIs, passing Lou Gehrig (1,993) for the all-time American League record and moving him into third place among all players behind Hank Aaron (2,297) and Barry Bonds (1,996).

Which sounds awe-



A-Rod's helping, not hurting team

HOME, SWEET HOMER: Alex Rodriguez points to the crowd while crossing home plate after his third-inning three-run home run. USA TODAY Sports

some, except that Elias Sports Bureau (Major League Baseball's official statistician) counts RBIs compiled only since 1920. According to Baseball-Reference.com, Babe Ruth — who made his big-league debut in 1914 — tallied 2,202 RBIs in the AL.

"It's definitely an honor to be mentioned in the same breath as Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth," A-Rod said. "It's any player's dream. It's ... even more special to do it here at home, at Yankee Stadium."

3. His extracurricular battle with the Yankees still hovers. Baseball never has encountered a legal conundrum quite like the one that is brewing between A-Rod and his employers. So the details to how this will play out, how Rodriguez and the Yankees will decide whether the 39-year-old gets \$6 million or doesn't by tying Willie Mays at 660 hom-

ers, remains hazy. Nevertheless, here's what we know:

A-Rod hit number 660 on May 1 in Boston, and he has 45 days to appeal, through the Players Association, the Yankees' stated intention to not activate the marketing agreement that would pay Rodriguez that \$6 million. That means that A-Rod has until June 15 to file a grievance.

Expect the union to convey something to Major League Baseball by June 15. It could be the formal appeal, or it could be a request for a "hold," or an extension of the deadline, which MLB would grant. The bottom line is that both sides appear comfortable waiting until the offseason to resolve this, especially because A-Rod is performing and behaving so well.

Speaking of which, Rodriguez made a point of thanking Yankees managing general partner Hal Steinbrenner for his words

of praise at last week's MLB owners meetings.

"It certainly made me feel a lot more welcome," A-Rod said. "I wouldn't be breaking these records if [Steinbrenner] didn't give me a chance to pass them."

The Yankees, still mindful that their actions can and will be used against them, didn't post anything on their scoreboard Wednesday about A-Rod's bogus RBI record, though they mentioned it in the press box. And now that A-Rod is up to 2,981 career hits, with the 3,000 mark attainable in June, you can expect similar restraint — maybe a quick scoreboard message.

"You see it, and you think about it," A-Rod said of his next milestone. "Right now, it's about wins."

At 25-22, a game and a half ahead of Tampa Bay (24-24) in the AL East, the Yankees are winning again. It is no coincidence that Rodriguez's benefits currently outweigh his costs, the big bag — and his epic baggage — helping more than hurting.

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Ken Davidoff

A-Rod in a league

Passes Gehrig as AL RBIs leader with 3-run HR to back sharp Pineda

BY LAURA ALBANESE
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Yankees manager Joe Girardi called it the balance of baseball.

You can find it in the ups and downs of the game, he said. It's in winning streaks and losing streaks, slumps and hot starts.

It explains how a guy like Michael Pineda, who struggled so mightily in his last two starts, can come in and pitch a 6 $\frac{1}{3}$ -inning gem, as he did in yesterday's 4-2 victory over the Kansas City Royals.

It explains how the Yankees, who have struggled just as much in the last few weeks, can come in and sweep what is arguably the best team in the American League.

It can even explain someone as inexplicable as Alex Rodriguez, who continued his ascension from baseball anathema to local folk hero: His three-run homer in the third allowed him to surpass Lou Gehrig as the American League's all-time RBI leader.

"Baseball is a strange game," Girardi said. "Over the long run, things balance out . . . A lot of things can go right, a lot of things can go wrong. You're never as good as you're playing great and you're never as bad as the way that we've played sometimes."

With the score tied at 1 in the third, Rodriguez teed off on Chris Young's 0-and-1 slider, sending it 352 feet to left and earning him his 1,995th RBI, surpassing Gehrig by two. He is one short of Barry Bonds, but far behind Hank Aaron, who holds the major-league record at 2,297. It was his 665th homer and his two hits left him 19 short of 3,000.

Though there are conflicting numbers for RBI totals (it did not become an official stat until 1920, so RBIs recorded before that time are not counted), MLB rankings are determined by the Elias Sports Bureau, and the AL crown is undoubtedly another stanza in the A-Rod redemption odyssey. His 11 homers are second to Mark Teixeira (14) on the

SCORECARD


4

2
 YANKEES ROYALS

Tonight Yankees at Oakland
 TV: YES, 10:05 p.m.
 Radio: WFAN (660, 101.9)

Yankees. He also has a second-best 26 RBIs.

"It's definitely an honor to be mentioned in the same breath as Lou Gehrig," he said. "It's been a long time and I haven't played a lot of baseball in the last two years. I feel like I'm in a good place. I'm happy, I'm having fun . . . In a weird way, the time off was a blessing in disguise. I was able to get some rest."

Meanwhile, Pineda shook off an uneven first inning (and his two previous starts). After starting the season with a 5-0 record, he had lost his last two decisions, having allowed a combined 12 runs (nine earned). It looked as if it would be more of the same in the first, which featured two hard-hit balls (both gloved on strong plays by third baseman Chase Headley) and Mike Moustakas' solo home run.

He soon settled down. Brian McCann tied the score on a home run in the second, and A-Rod provided the extra breathing room in the third. His homer came after Brett Gardner doubled and Headley walked.

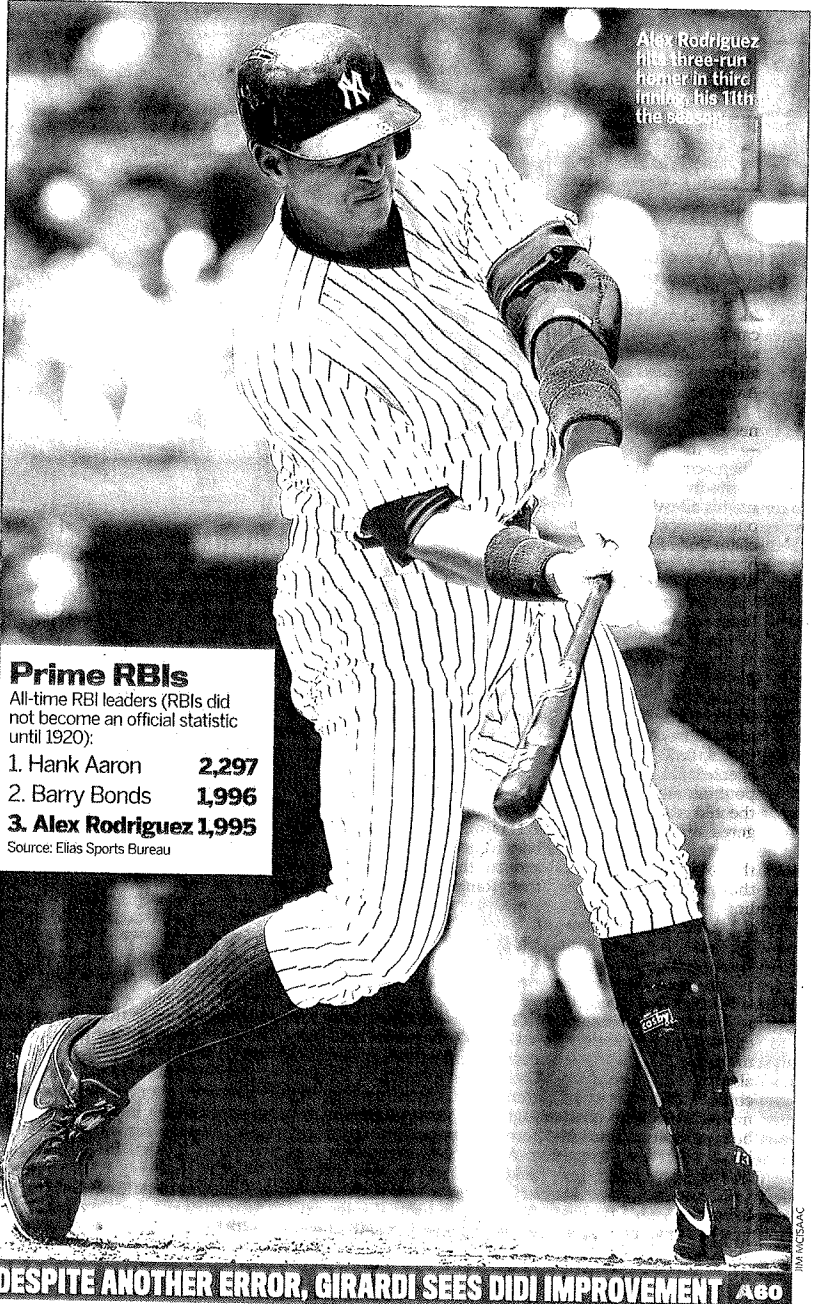
Pineda (6-2, 3.36 ERA) pitched 6 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings, allowing six hits, the one earned run, with a walk and eight strikeouts. Yankees starters allowed only one earned run apiece in each game of this sweep.

"When I have my slider, it's always tough for a hitter," Pineda said. "It's nice. I feel very happy tonight."

Girardi spoke about the importance of the turnaround.

"We did not play well against Texas," he said. "We did not pitch well, and our pitchers really showed up in this series."

In short, it all balanced out.



Alex Rodriguez hits three-run homer in third inning. His 11th the season.

Prime RBIs
 All-time RBI leaders (RBIs did not become an official statistic until 1920):

1. Hank Aaron **2,297**
2. Barry Bonds **1,996**
3. Alex Rodriguez **1,995**

Source: Elias Sports Bureau

DESPITE ANOTHER ERROR, GIRARDI SEES DIDI IMPROVEMENT A60

of his own

Bouquets instead of barbs

David
Lennon

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Alex Rodriguez knew that yesterday's three-run homer propelled him past Lou Gehrig for the American League RBI record, as well as put him in third place on the all-time list behind Hank Aaron and Barry Bonds.

A-Rod also was aware that he needs only 19 hits to reach 3,000 — a significant milestone by anyone's accounting methods.

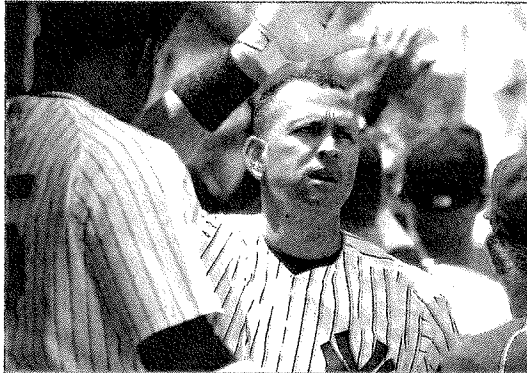
But what we didn't expect from Rodriguez during another one of his cheery postgame chats was a hat tip to Hal Steinbrenner, who last week praised A-Rod's comeback efforts.

Rodriguez brought up Steinbrenner's comments unsolicited — suggesting that he may spend as much time examining the media clips as he does poring over scouting reports. It doesn't feel all that long ago that Rodriguez was engaged in open warfare with Yankees' upper management. And there remains a potential dispute looming over the \$6-million payment triggered by homer No. 660.

If Rodriguez has learned anything, however, it's not to sweat the small stuff. And yes, \$6 million is relatively small for a guy that's already banked close to \$390 million. The crucial thing for Rodriguez is to stay on the field, with a clear head and smooth swing.

"I'll take this chance to say I'm extremely grateful for the comments from Hal Steinbrenner about me," Rodriguez said. "It certainly made me feel a lot more welcome, and I wouldn't be here breaking these records if he didn't give me a chance to play on his team."

When A-Rod was on the brink of returning from his yearlong suspension, he had a sit-down with Steinbrenner,



Alex Rodriguez is at home in the dugout after homering in third.

who said the two came to an understanding on calling a truce from this season forward. So far, there hasn't been much of a ripple, even after Brian Cashman, standing on the Fenway Park turf, said the team was not obligated to pay Rodriguez a dime for tying Willie Mays. A-Rod has refused to fight that battle in public; he has until the end of the month to file an appeal.

But maybe by keeping his focus on the field rather than a courtroom, it has enabled Rodriguez to defy the skeptics. That peace of mind has allowed Rodriguez to turn back the clock to better days, when no one had heard of Biogenesis.

"It's been a long time," Rodriguez said. "I haven't played a lot of baseball in the last two years, but I feel like I'm in a good place. I'm happy. I'm having fun."

Compared to living in exile in Miami, hitting third for the Yankees is heaven for A-Rod, and the reconciliation has been mutually beneficial. With two hits, his batting average is up to .276, to go along with a team-high .374 on base percentage, 11 home runs and 26 RBIs. The games seem easier for Rodriguez now, and it's not just about having the year off to recuperate physically.

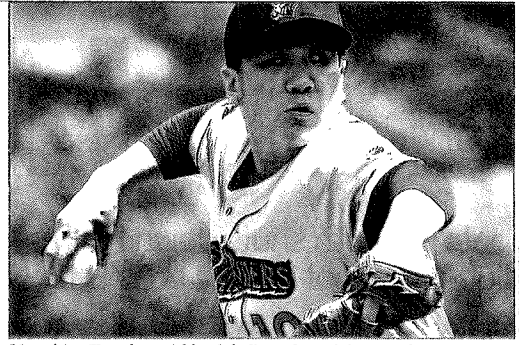
"I think he got by all the things he had to get by," Joe Girardi said. "But the one place Alex has always been comfortable is on the field and in the clubhouse. Alex might even take longer than Bernie [Williams] to retire because he's probably always going to want to play. He loves it."

You still won't hear the word "milestones" come out of the Yankees' mouths, but these next rungs on baseball's historical ladder don't have the additional stress of dollar figures attached to them. That doesn't mean the Yankees will be throwing parties for A-Rod — passing Gehrig wasn't acknowledged on the scoreboard. But the two seem content to peacefully coexist.

Rodriguez smiled at the notion of being third in the recent All-Star balloting for DH, an indication of how far he's come.

"I'm so grateful for the way the fans have treated me everywhere, especially in New York, walking around the city," Rodriguez said. "But Nelson Cruz is a great hitter. That's a very smart choice by the fans."

What's more impressive? Toppling Gehrig or winning the hearts and minds of a judgmental baseball public? One down, and a few million more to go.



Masahiro Tanaka said he felt fine after giving up three runs.

MOUND, PAWSOX GIVE TANAKA A TOUGH TIME

BY ANTHONY RIEBER
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PAWTUCKET, R.I. — In his second rehab start yesterday, Masahiro Tanaka had a mound of trouble with his footing on a minor-league hill.

Instead of focusing on the crispness of his pitches over his first few batters, Tanaka was trying not to get hurt on the mound at McCoy Stadium, the Triple-A home of the Pawtucket Red Sox.

Finally, the Yankees' \$175-million righthander called out the umpires and his translator. A grounds crew worker appeared with a wheelbarrow and then another one with a rake and a bag of dirt. After a 10-minute delay, Tanaka went back to work.

The good news for Tanaka is that he said his arm felt "absolutely fine" after this three-inning stint. The bad news is he was hit hard and didn't speak confidently about being ready to make his next start for the Yankees instead of Scranton / Wilkes-Barre.

"Obviously, I would have to see how I feel the next day," Tanaka said through his translator. "It's something that I'll talk with the manager, the trainer, coaches and make that decision."

In his first rehab start, Tanaka threw three scoreless innings against Durham. Yesterday, he allowed three runs and four hits, with two walks and four strikeouts. All four of the hits were smoked.

"Obviously, I wasn't at my best," Tanaka said. "I was missing some spots and giving up some hits."

It started on the first pitch when Red Sox prospect Jackie Bradley Jr. lined a double off the rightfield wall. After a single to left and a walk loaded the bases, Tanaka struck out Bryce Brentz on a splitter.

Tanaka was uncomfortable with the mound during the first four hitters and kept pawing at the dirt. Finally, he asked for a little help so he wouldn't lose his footing and possibly pull a leg muscle.

"A chunk of clay just came off from the mound," Tanaka said. "That's what happened."

After the delay, Tanaka gave up a sacrifice fly and recorded a strikeout on a slider to end the inning.

The PawSox scored a second run in the second inning on a leadoff walk, a long single that one-hopped the rightfield wall and an RBI groundout.

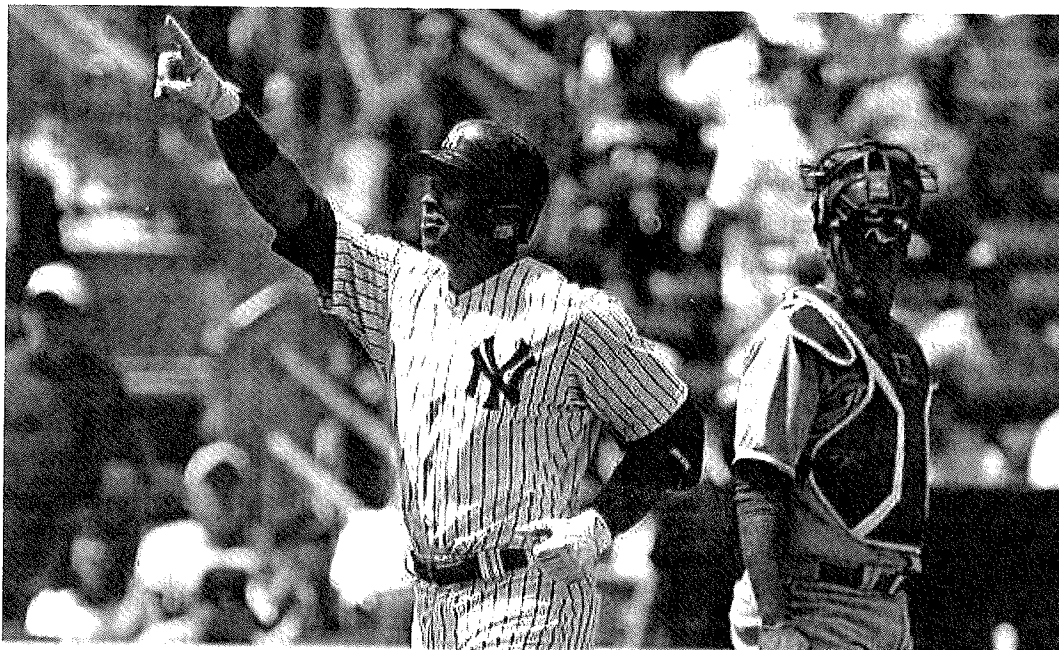
With two outs, Bradley — who is back in the minors because he hasn't hit enough to stay in the majors — hammered a 91-mph fastball over the right-centerfield wall.

Tanaka, who threw 62 pitches, retired his last four batters, two by strikeout. His velocity peaked at 92.

"The positive is that I was able to go [62] pitches strongly," Tanaka said. "Compared to my last outing, I think my slider was better."

Tanaka has been on the disabled list since April 27, four days after his last big-league outing. He said he feels no ill effects from the wrist and forearm issues that sent him to the DL, nor is his troublesome elbow acting up.

"Right now," he said, "I'm absolutely fine."



Kansas City Royals catcher Salvador Perez watches Yankees designated hitter Alex Rodriguez celebrate after Rodriguez hit a three-run homer in the third inning Wednesday at Yankee Stadium.

NOAH K. MURRAY/USA TODAY SPORTS

Pineda back to form as Yankees sweep

MIKE ZACCHIO
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NEW YORK — The only thing Yankees manager Joe Girardi focused on in regards to Michael Pineda being successful before Wednesday's game against Kansas City was that the right-hander's slider had to be on.

In the top of the first inning, Royals first baseman Mike Moustakas crushed a poorly-thrown slider into the second deck of right field that tailed foul. The next pitch, Moustakas sent another weak slider into the bleachers for a solo home run.

That was the end of Pineda's struggles for the day — with his slider, or any other pitch.

The right-hander fanned eight batters, including Moustakas twice, and walked one across 6½ innings in a 4-2 win at Yankee Stadium to complete a three-game sweep of the reigning American League champions.

"When I have my slider (working), it's tough for the hitter," Pineda said. "My last two starts were not great, (Wednes-

On the Web

Chad Jennings follows the Yankees during the season at yankees.lhblogs.com

day) I threw the ball good and I competed on the mound and won the game to help my team. That's what I'm looking for."

Chase Headley showed off his gold-glove caliber defense with two spectacular plays at third base to get Pineda out of a hard-hit first inning, but Pineda cruised from there. Pineda gained confidence and a feel for his pitches — particularly his slider — as the game wore on. Pineda got his final four strikeouts with his slider.

"To do that against that against that team, you obviously have to be throwing the ball pretty well," Girardi said. "If you're Michael Pineda and you've got your stuff and you're going out there, you're going to feel pretty good."

Alex Rodriguez delivered the game-winning blow in the form of a three-run

home run to left field in the third inning. Rodriguez passed Yankee greats Babe Ruth for sole possession of fourth place on the all-time Major League RBI list and Lou Gehrig for the all-time American League RBI lead (1,995) with the homer.

Major League Baseball only credits RBI recorded since the 1920 season, when it became an official statistic. Ruth collected 224 RBI between 1914-19.

"It's definitely in an honor to be mentioned in the same breath as Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth. That's any player's dream," said Rodriguez, who noted he never thought he'd be one of the top players in the game. "I'm just a kid that came out of Miami. I learned how to play baseball in the Boys and Girls Club when I was 9, and my dream was to be like Keith Hernandez."

Rodriguez, who now sits one RBI shy of tying Barry Bonds for third place all-time, also moved to within 19 hits of 3,000 for his career.

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@LoHudYankees



Rapid Reaction: Yankees 4, Royals 2

May 27, 2015

Andrew Marchand, ESPNNewYork.com

NEW YORK -- That's why you can't predict baseball, Suzyn.

After being swept by the under .500 Texas Rangers, the Yankees completed a sweep of the defending AL champions and one of the best teams in baseball, the Kansas City Royals, by beating them 4-2.

They did it behind the historic bat of Alex Rodriguez, the pitching of Michael Pineda and the bullpen.

History: Rodriguez sneaked a three-run homer down the line in left field to make it 4-1 in the third. The three runs driven in gave Rodriguez the most RBIs in American League history. He is third all-time.

Revenge start: Pineda reverted back to being one of the best pitchers in baseball on Wednesday. Pineda went 6 2/3 innings, allowing just one run on six hits. He struck out eight and walked one.

In Pineda's previous two starts, he got hit pretty hard, including allowing a season-high five earned runs on 10 hits in a loss to the Royals a little less than two weeks ago.

Pineda was back to normal and now has 67 strikeouts and just five walks on the season. His record is 6-2 with a 3.36 ERA.

DidE: Didi Gregorius continues to struggle. In the eighth, Kendrys Morales hit a soft grounder to the left side of second base. Gregorius, who was shifted over, made the play, but then tried to make a back-handed flip to Mark Teixeira and instead bowled one past first. It was Gregorius' sixth error of the season and allowed a run to score.

Still a big zero: Dellin Betances gave up the run in the eighth, but it was unearned due to Gregorius' error. Betances' ERA is still 0.00.

Miller Time: Andrew Miller picked up his 12th save.

Trading homers: Mike Moustakas hit a solo shot in the first inning, while Brian McCann knocked his own in the second inning.

Tanaka update: In a Triple-A rehab start, Masahiro Tanaka pitched three innings, allowing three earned runs on four hits, striking out four and walking two. He threw 62 pitches. He told reporters his arm felt fine afterward. There is no decision yet on if he will make another rehab start or join the Yankees.

On deck: The Yankees are going west for a seven-game road trip in Oakland and Seattle. Here are the pitching matchups against the last place A's: Thursday, CC Sabathia (2-6, 5.47) vs. Kendall Graveman (2-2, 6.04); Friday, Chris Capuano (0-2, 7.36) vs. Sonny Gray (5-2, 1.77); Saturday, Nathan Eovaldi (4-1, 4.27) vs. Jesse Hahn (2-4, 3.69); Sunday, Adam Warren (3-3, 3.91) vs. Jesse Chavez (1-5, 2.44).



Yankees Finish Sweep, Royals Lose 4-2 for 4th Straight Defeat

By Mike Fitzpatrick

After coming up empty in the Bronx, the Kansas City Royals left town with company atop the AL Central.

Alex Rodriguez hit a three-run homer to break Lou Gehrig's American League record for RBIs, and the New York Yankees beat the Royals 4-2 Wednesday to finish a three-game sweep.

Michael Pineda (6-2) rebounded from consecutive losses and Brian McCann hit a solo shot for the Yankees, who outscored the AL champions 23-4 in their first home sweep of Kansas City since August 2007.

Mike Moustakas homered early for the Royals, but Chris Young (4-1) gave up both New York long balls.

"Unfortunately, I feel like I let the guys down," Young said. "I feel like I could have kept this game close, maybe been able to put some pressure on their pitcher and maybe we would have pulled it out, and I let it get away."

Coming into the series, New York had lost six in a row and 10 of 11.

The slumping Royals fell into a first-place tie with Minnesota. They have dropped four straight for the first time since Aug. 28-31, mustering only five runs during the slide.

"A lot of it was Pineda. Some of it was us right now. We're not swinging the bats. We've cooled off a little bit," manager Ned Yost said. "We had opportunities to get back into that game a couple of times. We just couldn't take advantage of it."

Dellin Betances allowed an unearned run in the eighth — he has not yielded an earned run all year. Andrew Miller worked a 1-2-3 ninth and is perfect in 14 save opportunities.

Kendrys Morales had an infield single off Betances. The previous 33 batters he faced were a combined 0 for 29.

"Our pitchers really showed up in this series against an offense that was swinging the bat really well," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said.

Brett Gardner doubled to start the third, Chase Headley walked and Rodriguez pulled Young's flat slider into the left-field corner, a line drive that cleared the fence near the 318-foot sign.

"It was the right pitch selection; I just didn't execute it," Young said. "It's just unfortunate. It was a big moment and it left the ballpark."

With his 665th home run, A-Rod ended his season-worst drought at eight games and increased his career total to 1,995 RBIs. The Yankees said that's two more than Gehrig gets credit for from the Elias Sports Bureau, baseball's official statistician.

Records get tricky when it comes to runs batted in, partly because RBIs did not become an official stat until 1920. So while baseball-reference.com lists Gehrig with 1,995 RBIs and Babe Ruth with 2,214, Elias puts Rodriguez ahead of both of them and behind only Barry Bonds (1,996) and Hank Aaron (2,297).

"Unbelievable," Moustakas said. "It's a phenomenal feat and it's incredible to be here to watch it."

Rodriguez's 11th homer of the season plus a single in the seventh left him 19 hits shy of 3,000.

"You see it all. You think about it. But right now, it's about wins," Rodriguez said. "We desperately needed these three wins against a great team. That's a team over there that hopefully we'll see in October."

Moustakas, the second batter of the game, completed a cycle of sorts against Pineda with a long home run into the raised concrete bleachers in right. Back on May 15, Moustakas had a single, double and triple off Pineda as Young won 12-1 in Kansas City.

Pineda struck out Moustakas in his next two at-bats, though — the second time with two runners in scoring position and one out. The right-hander then whiffed Lorenzo Cain with a nasty slider to end the threat.



Yankees complete the sweep against Royals with 4-2 win

Posted by: [Mike Zacchio](#) - Posted in [Misc](#) on May 27, 2015

The only thing Yankees manager Joe Girardi focused on in regards to Michael Pineda being successful before Wednesday's game against Kansas City was that the right-hander's slider had to be on.

"When I look at the last two starts, (Pineda) really hasn't had a very good (slider), and that's a key pitch for him," he said. "I think it's important to get that back."

In the top of the first inning, Royals first baseman Mike Moustakas crushed a poorly-thrown slider into the second deck of right field that tailed foul. The next pitch, Moustakas sent another weak slider into the bleachers for a solo home run.

That was the end of Pineda's struggles for the day — with his slider, or any other pitch.

The right-hander fanned eight batters, including Moustakas twice, and walked one across 6 2/3 innings in a 4-2 win at Yankee Stadium to complete a three-game sweep of the reigning American League champions.

Chase Headley showed off his gold-glove caliber defense with two spectacular plays at third base to get Pineda out of a hard-hit first inning, but Pineda cruised from there. Pineda gained confidence and a feel for his pitches — particularly his slider — as the game wore on. Pineda got his final four strikeouts with his slider.

Alex Rodriguez delivered the game-winning blow in the form of a three-run home run to left field in the third inning. Rodriguez passed Yankee greats Babe Ruth for sole possession of fourth place on the all-time RBI list and Lou Gehrig for the all-time American League RBI lead (1,995) with the homer.

Major League Baseball only credits RBI recorded since the 1920 season, when it became an official statistic. Ruth collected 224 RBI between 1914-19.

Rodriguez, who now sits one RBI shy of tying Barry Bonds for third place all-time, also moved to within 19 hits of 3,000 for his career.

Kansas City scored a run in the top of the eighth after shortstop Didi Gregorius' backhand throw to first went astray. Gregorius was positioned near second base for a shift.

The run, allowed by setup man Dellin Betances, was ruled unearned by the Yankees' official scorekeeper, extending Betances' streak of consecutive innings without an earned run this season to 26. Andrew Miller pitched a perfect ninth inning to earn his 14th save of the season.

Michael Pineda shines as Yankees sweep Kansas City Royals, 4-2 | Rapid reaction

Ryan Hatch | May 27, 2015 at 3:52 PM, updated May 27, 2015 at 7:53 PM

NEW YORK — The **Yankees** took their third straight game from the Kansas City Royals on Wednesday, 4-2, behind a strong pitching performance from Michael Pineda and an historic blast from Alex Rodriguez.

Three days ago the Yankees were reeling after losing 10 of 11 and falling to .500. Now, they're on a roll as they head west for a seven-game trip.

What it means: With the win, the Yankees (25-22) have a 1 1/2-game lead on the Tampa Bay Rays in the mercurial American League East. The Rays lost 3-0 to the Seattle Mariners on Wednesday.

Turning point: **Alex Rodriguez crushed a third-inning home run** down the left-field line off K.C. starter Chris Young, driving in three runs to put the Yankees up 4-1. It was all the Yankees needed.

With the blast, A-Rod moved into sole possession of third place all-time in baseball history for RBI with 1,995. The home run was Rodriguez's 11th on the season and 665th of his career.

Like Mike: Pineda (6-2) threw 6 2/3 innings, striking out eight and walking one on 106 pitches. After two shaky outings — 12 runs in 11 1/3 innings — since his **16-strikeout game May 10**, Pineda regained his command and kept the Royals from ever really threatening.

Highlights: Catcher Brian McCann tied the game at 1-1 in the bottom of the second inning with his sixth home run of the year, a blast to the second deck in right field. It was McCann's 29th RBI and second homer in as many games.

— Carlos Beltran extended his hitting streak to 15 games, collecting two hits. Beltran also allowed a ball to shoot over his head for a double. Still getting over the fl, he was pulled in the sixth in favor of Chris Young.

— Chase Headley, who committed his 10th error of the season Tuesday night, made two great plays in the first inning on ground balls, the second a diving stop toward the third base line to rob Eric Hosmer of perhaps a double.

— Closer Andrew Miller notched his 14th save of the season in the ninth inning.

Lowlights: On the sixth pitch of the game, Pineda allowed a solo home run to Royals' third baseman Mike Moustakas.

— Reliever David Carpenter, who followed Pineda, allowed a hit to the only batter he faced. On the year, Carpenter has allowed 18 hits in just 17 1/3 innings.

— In the top of the eighth, the Royals pushed across a run when shortstop Didi Gregorius, playing the shift, committed a throwing error on a slow ground ball to the right side of the infield. Gregorius tried to flip the ball back-handed to Mark Teixeira at first base and chucked it wide, allowing Lorenzo Cain to score from second.

Gregorius has a history this season of "**trying to do too much**," as Joe Girardi has said, and it appeared to be the case once again.

Masahiro Tanaka: Tanaka was rocked in his second rehab start Wednesday afternoon for the Scranton Wilkes-Barre RailRiders, not exactly impressing anyone with the outing. **He allowed three runs in three innings on 62 pitches.**

In case you missed it: Before the game **Joe Girardi compared Dellin Betances' start to his career to that of Mariano Rivera's.** In his first 25 innings this season, Betances had not allowed an earned run.

Since Tanaka should join the Yankees somewhat soon and with Adam Warren pitching well in the Yankees' rotation, **might Girardi be open to a six-man rotation?**

On deck: The Yankees play four games this weekend against the A's in Oakland. (They will head north to Seattle and visit ex-Yankee Robinson Cano and the Mariners starting next Monday.) On Thursday, the Yankees will throw CC Sabathia (2-6, 5.47) against Kendall Graveman (2-2, 6.04).



Yankees Postgame Notebook: A-Rod plus Big Mike equals a KC sweep

05/27/2015 4:27 PM ET

By Lou DiPietro

BRONX, N.Y. - Less than 72 hours ago, the Yankees entered a Memorial Day matinee as the losers of three straight, staring down the barrel of the best team in the American League.

However, thanks to a third straight dominant pitching performance and some more home run heroics on Wednesday, the Yankees head out west the owners of a three-game winning streak, the last one courtesy of a 4-2 matinee win to complete a sweep of the Royals at Yankee Stadium.

"That makes for a nice long flight," manager Joe Girardi said after the game. "And, it was important to turn it around, because we did not play well against Texas, but our pitchers and our offense showed up in this series."

"When you win, it's always better," catcher Brian McCann added. "Any time you get a sweep it's huge, so to play a tough team like Kansas City and get three wins, that's even bigger."

The fun again started on the mound, as Michael Pineda pitched 6 2/3 strong innings, allowing just one run on a Mike Moustakas solo homer in the first. It put the Yankees in an early hole, but as the day went on Pineda got stronger, his slider once again the weapon he needs it to be.

"You started seeing swing and misses on (sliders), and to do that against that team, you obviously have to be throwing the ball very well," Girardi said.

Added McCann: "He had more tilt on his slider, and today is as good as it gets; he was zooming in and out and changing speeds, and that's about as well as you can pitch."

That was a mechanical adjustment, Pineda admitted.

"I worked hard during the last week to get my slider down, and it was working good today so I'm happy," the righty said. "When I threw it (the last two starts) my mechanics were too quick, so I'm trying to stay back and get my arm up...when I have it, it's tough because I can get outs with it."

Said adjustment worked, and it helped Pineda escape trouble in the fifth, where he put two on with one out but struck out Moustakas and Lorenzo Cain in succession to get out of a jam.

"The guy has strikeout stuff and we've seen it; he did a good job of elevating on Moustakas, who took him deep earlier, and he made some good pitches to Cain," Girardi said. "But as I said earlier, if you're Michael Pineda, with that stuff, you have to feel good going out there at any time with your stuff."

Pineda then had a strong sixth and fanned the two hitters he faced in the seventh, so while some were surprised he came out of the game at that point, Girardi had two prominent reasons.

"We talked about it, but the most innings he's ever thrown is 170, and he's on pace for 225 or 230," Girardi said. "Escobar had a couple hits and put some tough at-bat on him, so that's why I made the change."

The first sits just fine with Pineda.

"I pitch every five days so when it's my day I want to pitch," the righty explained, "and I was a little surprised. But, I asked in the dugout how many pitches I had and Joe said 106, so I felt like I did a good job. I love to pitch, but we have a good bullpen and I know they'll take care of me."

The bullpen did get the final seven outs, allowing just one unearned run thanks to Didi Gregorius' eighth-inning error on a flip throw wide of first base. It's an error Girardi said may have come from trying to do too much but also came in a situation he's comfortable with.

"I don't have a problem with him trying that play; if he flips it right, he has a shot, but that's not a play you're going to make a lot," the skipper said. "It's probably an easier throw if you were an option quarterback at some point in your career, but I think he's much more relaxed now than he was earlier this year, and we'll continue to see him improve."

Didi's take on the play was simple - "It's a tough play, but we're trying to get out, so why not?" - but even though it made a 4-1 game into a 4-2 one, it didn't hurt in the end, and the game goes down as a win and a quality bounce-back start for Pineda.

"I feel very happy to get a win and have a pretty good start," the righty said. "My last two starts weren't great, but today I threw the ball well and competed, and got a win to help my team."

On the other side, the Yankees' offensive load was carried by Alex Rodriguez, whose three-run homer in the third put the Yankees up 4-1 and moved him into third place all-time - and first overall in AL history - with 1,995 career RBI.

"That's amazing; I've talked about longevity, but it's also being productive for an extremely long time," Girardi said. "You see the guys he's passing, and it's pretty amazing."

Added Rodriguez of the moment: "It was an 0-1 slider that got a lot of the plate, and I put a pretty good swing on the ball. It's definitely an honor to be mentioned in the same breath as Ruth and Gehrig; that's every player's dream, but it's doubly special to do it here at home and contribute to a win."

Just another notch in A-Rod's ever-improving belt.

"You've seen his average on a steady climb and his at-bats get better - we saw him catch up to a 99 MPH fastball," Girardi said. "I feel good that when we have people on and the middle of the lineup up, something is going to happen and we're going to score some runs."

"It's been a long time (since I've felt this confident); I haven't played a lot of baseball in the last two years, but I feel like I'm in a good place, and I'm glad to be hitting three-four with Tex," Rodriguez added.

Put it together, and Brian McCann summed up the Yankees status as they head west pretty well.

"When you look at our season, overall we've played pretty good baseball. Over 162 games, you'll have your ups and downs, but in this series we did everything well. We have a good lineup top to bottom, and we expect to score runs."

A few more notes and quotes from the homestand finale:

-Masahiro Tanaka threw three innings in a rehab start at Triple-A this afternoon, and while Girardi said he saw a little of the first inning before the Yankees' game started, he didn't have much info to report: "All I got was three innings and 61 pitches. I know he struggled the first inning, but we'll talk with the people who were there watching him and with (Brian Cashman) and figure out what's next."

-Tanaka may have had an issue with the mound at McCoy Stadium in Pawtucket, but as Girardi noted, there's not much you can do about that: "I saw him kicking out some big clumps on the mound. How much does that play in? I don't know. It's not what you want, but there are a lot of obstacles you have to overcome as a player."

-Rodriguez on being third in DH voting in the latest All-Star Game balloting update: "I'm so grateful for the way the fans have treated me, especially here in New York, but (DH leader) Nelson Cruz is a great hitter, and that's a very smart choice by the fans."

-Chris Young missed a grand slam in the seventh inning by just a few feet, and this was his jocular reaction after the game: "I guess I need to hit the weight room or something!"

-Last word goes back to Girardi, on what one reporter called his "Jekyll & Hyde" Yankees: "Baseball is a strange game, because over the long run things balance out; on any short window, things don't necessarily balance out, because a lot can go right or wrong. I've heard people say you're never as good as when you're playing great or as bad as we've looked at times; we're probably somewhere in between, but it all starts with starting pitching. When they show up and pitch like they did in this series, they give us a chance to win every game."

Yanks sweep Royals behind power, Pineda

By Jeffrey Flanagan and Danny Knobler / MLB.com | May 27th, 2015

NEW YORK -- Alex Rodriguez belted a go-ahead three-run homer and right-hander Michael Pineda delivered 6 2/3 superb innings as the Yankees completed a three-game sweep of the Royals with a 4-2 victory on Wednesday at Yankee Stadium.

The Royals lost their fourth straight, their longest losing streak since late August, and dropped into a tie for first place in the American League Central with surging Minnesota.

"We're a great team," Royals starter Chris Young said. "We'll bounce back. I'm not too worried about it."

Added Royals manager Ned Yost, "It's baseball. You can't stay red hot for 162 games. You cool down. You just wait to get hot again."

Brian McCann homered for the Yankees in the second inning before Rodriguez lined a laser just over the wall in left field in the third.

Pineda gave up six hits and one run while walking one and striking out eight.

"To do that against that team, you have to throw the ball well," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said.

Young took the loss for the Royals, going six innings and giving up four runs. He walked two and struck out seven. Young had given up just one earned run total in his previous four starts.

Dellin Betances allowed an unearned run in the eighth, his third of the season. Betances still hasn't allowed an earned run in 26 innings. Kendrys Morales' infield hit broke a string of 30 consecutive at-bats against Betances without a hit.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

A-Rod passes Gehrig: Rodriguez's three-run home run gave him 1,995 career RBIs, passing Lou Gehrig and moving him to within one of Barry Bonds, according to the Elias Sports Bureau, the official statistician of Major League Baseball. [More >](#)

"After sitting out a year he's come back and been very productive," Yost said.

Pineda slides back to success: In two starts since his 16-strikeout game on May 10 against the Orioles, Pineda had allowed 12 runs (nine earned) in 11 1/3 innings, with Girardi blaming a slider that wasn't as sharp as it had been earlier. On Wednesday, Mike Moustakas hit Pineda's second slider of the afternoon for a first-inning home run, but Pineda righted himself and didn't allow another run. He finished the final three of his eight strikeouts with sliders. [More >](#)

"You could see the difference from the last two," McCann said. "Today was as good as it gets."

Second time is the charm: In his first at-bat, Moustakas clobbered a fastball inside into the second deck but foul. Later in the at-bat, Moustakas drilled a slider from Pineda deep into the right-field seats. It was Moustakas' fifth homer of the season and it gave the Royals a 1-0 lead, their first lead since Saturday.

On the Royals' recent slide, Moustakas said, "We got an off-day tomorrow to collect our thoughts and then we go try to win the next series. We'll be fine."

Missed chance: The Royals had a chance to creep back in it in the fifth. With one out, Paulo Orlando slashed a double to right. Alcides Escobar lined a single to right and moved to second on a wild pitch. But with the infield back, Moustakas struck out on a pitch out of the zone. Lorenzo Cain then also struck out on a slider out of the zone.

"A lot of it was Pineda, but some of it was us," Yost said. "We're not swinging the bats, and we're cooling off a bit. We had opportunities to get back in the game and couldn't take advantage of it. ... We were on a really long hot streak and we just cooled down. Offenses fluctuate like that. Get hot and cool down."

QUOTABLE

"I feel like I'm in a good place. I'm happy, having fun." -- *Rodriguez*

WHAT'S NEXT

Royals: After an off-day Thursday, right-hander Edinson Volquez (4-3, 2.77 ERA) will take the hill as the Royals open a three-game series on Friday at Wrigley Field against the Cubs at 3:05 p.m. CT. Volquez has owned the Cubs in the past, going 7-0 with a 2.90 ERA.

Yankees: The Yanks head to the West Coast for the first time this season, opening a seven-game trip with the series opener against the A's on Thursday at 10:05 p.m. ET. Northern California native CC Sabathia (2-6, 5.47 ERA) gets the start for the Yanks.

Pineda finds form on strength of slider

Yankees righty bounces back vs. Royals following two tough starts

By Danny Knobler / Special to MLB.com | May 27th, 2015

NEW YORK -- Michael Pineda knew he could do better.

It's been just over two weeks since the right-hander struck out 16 Orioles in one of the most dominating performances in franchise history, barely two weeks since Pineda was being called the ace that the Yankees needed.

There was no doubt Pineda could do better -- a lot better -- than he had in back-to-back losses to the Royals and Rangers. He just needed to get his slider back. It came back Wednesday, and Pineda came back, too. He wasn't 16-strikeout dominant, but he was plenty good in a 4-2 win over the Royals that completed a three-game sweep.

"I feel happy today," said Pineda, who gave up a Mike Moustakas home run in the first but no other runs in 6 2/3 innings. "My last two starts were not great. Today, I threw the ball good."

He had worked between starts on keeping his slider down and on slowing himself down.

"When my mechanics get too quick, my slider's no good," he said.

The Moustakas home run came on a slider that wasn't good enough. The sliders he used for the last three of his eight strikeouts were outstanding.

According to brooksbaseball.net, Pineda threw 34 sliders Wednesday, and the Royals swung through seven of them. Last Friday against the Rangers, Pineda also threw 34 sliders, but he got only three swings and misses.

"You could see the difference," catcher Brian McCann said. "There was more tilt. Today was as good as it gets. That's about as well as you can pitch."

"When I have my slider, it's tough for the hitters," Pineda said.

The win was Pineda's sixth in eight decisions, already more wins than he had in his injury-shortened 2014 season.

Pineda's 64 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings are somewhat of a concern to the Yankees, because he only threw 76 $\frac{1}{3}$ big league innings last season and has missed so much time in his career with injuries. Yankees manager Joe Girardi cited the rising innings total in explaining why he chose to pull Pineda after the righty struck out Paulo Orlando for the second out in the seventh.

Pineda had thrown 106 pitches at that point, more than he had thrown in any 2015 start other than the 16-strikeout game, when he threw 111. Pineda accepted Girardi's decision, although he said he always wants to pitch more.

After all the time he's missed, he's happy to be pitching at all, happy to be pitching well. And after two starts in which he wasn't at his best, he was happy to prove again that he can do better.

Yankees' Michael Pineda gets his nasty slider back and dominates Kansas City Royals

Maria Guardado | May 27, 2015 at 6:28 PM, updated May 28, 2015 at 7:35 AM

NEW YORK — Michael Pineda struggled in his two previous starts for the **Yankees**, but he reverted back to his dominant form by delivering a stellar performance against the Kansas City Royals on Wednesday afternoon.

Pineda yielded just one run on six hits while walking one and striking out eight over 6 2/3 innings to help the **Yankees sweep the Royals with a 4-2 win** at Yankee Stadium.

With the win, Pineda (6-2) collected his team-best sixth win and lowered his ERA to 3.36 after 10 starts this season.

"It's nice, I feel very happy today," Pineda said. "Get a win in the game and threw a pretty good start, so it's good for me. My last two starts [weren't] great, but today I threw the ball good and I competed in the mound and got a win in the game. I continue to help my team. That's what I'm looking for."

One of the biggest differences for Pineda on Wednesday was that he had his slider working and was able to induce swings-and-misses from batters with that key pitch. In his previous two outings — when he allowed 12 runs in 11 1/3 innings — Pineda's slider wasn't as effective, which played a role in his struggles.

"You could see the difference from his last two starts," catcher Brian McCann said of Pineda's slider. "He had more tilt on it. Today is as good as it gets. He was moving it in and out, changing speeds and that was about as well as you can pitch."

Pineda said he worked on improving his slider in between starts and made some adjustments to keep the pitch low to hitters.

"I'm working to throw my slider a little down and today that's what we [did]," Pineda said. "When they have my slider, it's tough for the hitter because I'm throwing it, and my slider is really good. That's what I'm looking for. So I threw my slider and get it out."

Pineda's lone mistake occurred in the first inning, when he surrendered a solo home run to the left-handed hitting Mike Moustakas. On a 1-2 count, Moustakas crushed an 88-mph slider from Pineda to right field to give the Royals a 1-0 lead.

Nevertheless, it was all the damage Kansas City managed to inflict against Pineda.

The only other real bit of adversity Pineda encountered came in the fifth, when the Royals put runners on the corners with one out. The situation grew a little more treacherous after Alcides Escobar advanced to second on a wild pitch, but Pineda shut down the threat by striking out Moustakas and Lorenzo Cain to escape the jam.

"The guy's got strikeout stuff, we've seen that," manager Joe Girardi said. "He did a good job of elevating on Moustakas, who took him deep earlier in the game. I believe it was on a changeup. And then he made some good pitches to Cain. But as I said, if you're Michael Pineda and you got your stuff, and you're going out there, you're going to feel pretty good."



Postgame notes: “In a weird way, the time off was a blessing in disguise”

Posted by: [Mike Zacchio](#) - Posted in [Misc](#) on May 27, 2015

Wednesday’s win over Kansas City did a lot of things.

It gave starter Michael Pineda a confidence boost after back-to-back poor starts. It gave the Yankees a sweep of the reigning American League champions, a roll of momentum that should bode well for them entering a West Coast road trip. It fans a reason to cheer and actually stay for all nine innings.

And it started the latest chapter of the ongoing “All Eyes On Alex” saga.

The Yankees’ polarizing designated hitter passed Babe Ruth for sole possession of fourth place on the all-time RBI list and Lou Gehrig for the American League all-time RBI lead at 1,995.

His RBI totals, which pass Ruth and Gehrig in their respective categories because Major League Baseball only counts RBI recorded since 1920, place him one behind Barry Bonds for third place on the all-time list, and his two hits in the game move him to within 19 of 3,000 for his career.

“It’s amazing,” Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. “I’ve talked about (how) it’s longevity, but it’s also being productive for an extremely long time.

“You see the guys that he’s passing and it’s really pretty amazing.”

With help from Seattle, the Yankees moved into first place of the AL East, which will obviously be something to keep an eye on as we move closer to the All-Star break, but the magnifying glass will no doubt be focused closer on Rodriguez in the coming weeks.

Rodriguez, who served a 211-game suspension for his role in the Biogenesis doping scandal, has been a model athlete for the Yankees on and off the field this season. With 11 home runs and near the top of most of the team’s power numbers

offensively, Rodriguez chuckled, saying there was “no chance” he thought he’d produce the way he has thus far.

“I feel pretty good. I’ve been pleasantly surprised at how my body is reacting on the everyday, daily grind and so far, so good,” he said. “In a weird way, the time off was a blessing in disguise.

“I was able to get some rest, change my workout regimen — a lot like (Mark Teixeira) — and I just feel like I’m in a better place.”

Yankees manager Joe Girardi said he’s confident having the 39-year-old in the heart of his lineup.

“You’ve seen his average on a steady climb, you’ve seen his at-bats get better as the year went on, he’s driving the baseball, we saw him catch up to a 99 mile-an-hour fastball,” he said. “I feel about when we’re in the middle of the order and we’ve got people on that something’s going to happen and we’re going to score runs.”

Rodriguez said that, coming into New York this season, “I knew I wanted to contribute.” Once an embattled grudge-holder, Rodriguez has been turned around the majority of Yankees fans’ opinion on him, receiving warm ovations during games, as well as the most all-star votes on the team.

“I’m so grateful for the way fans have treated me,” he said. “Nelson Cruz (the current leading vote-getter at DH) is a great hitter, and that’s a very smart choice by the fans.”

—

- Girardi on pulling Pineda in the seventh inning with two outs: “We’ve talked about it,” he said. “The most innings he’s ever thrown in a year is 170. He’s on pace (to throw) 225-230 innings this year. The leadoff hitter had a couple of hits off him and put some tough at-bats on him and that’s why I made the change.”

Pineda smiled, saying he wanted to stay in had Girardi not pulled him, but added that he was fine coming out with over 100 pitches thrown. “I don’t have control for the situation,” he said. “I feel OK because I believe in my relief pitchers.”

- Didi Gregorius made a backhanded throw to first in the top of the eighth that got by Teixeira and allowed a run to score. The shortstop, who came to New York

being praised for his defensive work, has struggled most of the season and the last week in particular.

Girardi attributed some of Gregorius' errors to "trying to do too much," in the field, but sided with the 25-year-old's decision in the field Wednesday. "I don't have problem with him trying that play," Girardi said. "If he flips it right, he has a shot to get him out, but that's not a throw you're going to make very often.

"It's probably an easier throw if you're an option quarterback in one point in your career."

- Despite Gregorius' recent struggles in the field, Girardi said he thinks the shortstop is "relaxed much more now than he was earlier in the season," adding that he thinks Gregorius has played better defense. "I think we'll continue to see it improve."

- The run that scored came while reliever Dellin Betances was on the hill. The hard-throwing 27-year-old entered the game with a 25-inning streak of not allowing an earned run. The Yankees press box ruled it an unearned run.

- Kendrys Morales ended Betances' streak of 30 consecutive hitless at-bats, a streak Betances said he was aware of last night but not during the game. "I forgot who jinxed me (Tuesday)," he joked. "I don't pay much attention (to that). I go home, watch basketball and sleep."

- Now that the Yankees are back to their winning ways, catcher Brian McCann has reason to smile. "When you win, everything's better," he said. "We've been playing really good baseball. We had a bad week, but overall, we've played some pretty good baseball."

- Final word goes to A-Rod, who seems to be putting the team before himself, even when the spotlight is on him. Here he is on the team's struggles last week: "It's important for us to play this caliber of baseball. It's what we expect. What we did the last 10 games is not tolerable and we're not going to accept it."

Alex Rodriguez Breaks RBI Record as Yankees Sweep the Royals

Rodriguez breaks Lou Gehrig's American League RBI record with three-run home run

By Daniel Barbarisi

Updated May 27, 2015 8:15 p.m. ET

Alex Rodriguez's unlikely return to baseball is recasting the game's record books, with the 39-year-old Yankee third baseman climbing up the all-time lists in his first months back after a yearlong suspension for performance enhancing drug use.

Wednesday, Rodriguez became the American League's all-time RBI leader, setting the mark in the Yankees' 4-2 win over the Kansas City Royals Wednesday afternoon.

Rodriguez broke Lou Gehrig's AL record of 1,993 RBIs with his third-inning, three-run home run, the 665th homer of his career. Earlier this month, Rodriguez passed Willie Mays to claim fourth place on the all-time home run list.

Rodriguez recently passed Babe Ruth in RBIs as well—sort of. Ruth, all told, has more RBI than Rodriguez—but because RBIs weren't an official stat until 1920, some of Ruth's early-career runs batted in don't count for historical purposes, and he is officially credited with 1992.

Barry Bonds is next up in front of Rodriguez with 1,996 RBI. Hank Aaron holds the major-league record with 2,297 RBI.

On the mound, Michael Pineda (6-2) rebounded from consecutive losses and Carlos Beltran added two hits for the Yankees, who earned their first home sweep of Kansas City since 2007. They had lost six in a row entering the series.

The Record

A-Rod passes Gehrig on RBI list in Yanks' 4-2 win over Royals

May 27, 2015, 4:04 PM Last updated: Wednesday, May 27, 2015, 11:59 PM

By PETE CALDERA

NEW YORK — As they set about completing an unlikely sweep of the defending AL champs, the Yankees still hadn't played their ace.

Michael Pineda was coming off two wobbly starts entering Wednesday's Stadium matinee. His slider recently had gone missing and the Royals came out swinging from the start.

Third baseman Chase Headley made two hit-saving plays around a first-inning Mike Moustakas solo homer off a flat change-up.

Yet, by the seventh inning, Pineda walked off to a standing ovation and the Yankees were headed toward a 4-2 win before 32,734 fans.

Following the pitching and power formula essential to their success, Alex Rodriguez's three-run homer fueled the Yanks' first three-game sweep since May 1-3 at Boston.

Since that series, the Yanks (25-22) had gone 6-13 — including a stretch of 10 losses in 11 games — until the AL Central-leading Royals arrived.

“I think it was important that we turn it around because we did not play well against Texas,” manager Joe Girardi said of the Rangers' weekend sweep. “We did not pitch well. But our pitchers really showed up in this series against an offense that had really been swinging the bat.”

With wins by Nathan Eovaldi, Adam Warren and Pineda (6-2), the Yankees outscored Kansas City, 23-4, regaining their first-place AL East standing before heading on a seven-game trip to Oakland and Seattle.

“It's important for us to play this caliber of baseball. It's what we expect. And what we did in the last 10 [losses] is not tolerable. It's not acceptable,” said A-Rod, whose 665th career homer gave the Yanks a 4-1 lead in the third off right-handed starter Chris Young (4-1).

And it also vaulted A-Rod past Lou Gehrig as the all-time RBI leader in AL history with 1,995.

Entering the game, A-Rod had 1,992 RBI, tying him with Ruth for fourth place all time, one behind Gehrig. Since the RBI became an official stat in 1920, MLB does not recognize Ruth's runs driven in from 1914-1919.

Brett Gardner had doubled to start the third inning, Headley walked and Rodriguez roped his 11th homer of the year — a liner into the lower left-field seats.

Rodriguez (2-for-4) also singled in the seventh, finishing a 10-for-22 (.455) homestand and leaving him 19 hits shy of 3,000 for his career.

“You see it, you think about it,” A-Rod said of the milestone. “But right now it's about wins. We desperately needed these three wins against a great team.

“That team over there, we could see in October.”

And the Royals eventually bowed to Pineda, who yielded just one run on six hits, with one walk and eight strikeouts.

Pineda credited the improved tilt on his slider for Wednesday's win.

With runners at second and third, Pineda struck out Moustakas and Lorenzo Cain — who chased an 0-2 slider — to end the fifth inning and preserve a 4-1 lead.

“That was about as well as you can pitch,” said catcher Brian McCann, whose second-inning solo homer tied it at 1.

Though he wanted to continue, Pineda said he was OK with being lifted in the seventh. He'd retired the first two batters in the inning, pushing his pitch count to 106. After Dellin Betances yielded an unearned run in the eighth, Andrew Miller quickly collected his 14th save in 14 chances.

And as Girardi noted, there still is some caution surrounding Pineda, who never has pitched more than 171 innings in one season (2011 with Seattle) since his recovery from right shoulder surgery.

“It all starts with starting pitching,” Girardi said of his club's turnaround.

“When they give us a shot as they did in this series, you have a chance to win three games.”



Alex Rodriguez moves into third on all-time RBI list after 3-run HR

May 27, 2015

Andrew Marchand, ESPNNewYork.com

NEW YORK -- No player in the history of the American League has been credited with more RBIs than Alex Rodriguez.

Rodriguez hit a three-run homer off Kansas City Royals right-hander Chris Young in the third inning of Wednesday's 4-2 win at Yankee Stadium, giving him 1,995 career RBIs. He passed Lou Gehrig (1,993) and moved into third on the all-time list.

A-Rod already had moved past Babe Ruth, who is credited with 1,992 career RBIs. Ruth's total is incomplete because the RBI was recognized as an official stat by Elias, the official statistician of Major League Baseball, beginning in 1920. Ruth started playing in 1914.

"It's definitely an honor to be mentioned in the same breath as Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth," Rodriguez said. "It is any player's dream; especially it is even more special to do it here at home at Yankee Stadium."

Next up on the official list for Rodriguez is Barry Bonds at 1,996. Hank Aaron has the all-time lead with 2,297.

"It is amazing," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "It is longevity, but it is also being productive for an extremely long time."

The home run was Rodriguez's 11th of the season and gave him 26 RBIs. He needs 19 more hits to reach 3,000 for his career.

Rodriguez also now has 665 career homers.

The 39-year-old slugger, who missed all of last year because of his involvement in the Biogenesis performance-enhancing drug scandal, entered this season with three years and \$61 million remaining on his contract. He is expected to have the MLB Players Association dispute a \$6 million marketing bonus agreement the Yankees declined to trigger following Rodriguez's 660th home run, which tied Willie Mays for fourth all time.

Like it or not, a rejuvenated Alex Rodriguez is the American League's RBI king | Politi

Steve Politi | May 27, 2015 at 5:45 PM, updated May 28, 2015 at 7:33 AM

NEW YORK — How is he doing this? Even Alex Rodriguez, with his two surgically repaired hips and his 40th birthday fast approaching in two months, doesn't have much of an explanation.

"It's a good question," he said on Wednesday after **his 11th home run gave the Yankees a series sweep of the Royals** — and, more significantly, gave him 1,995 career RBIs for a total that stands alone as the most in American League history.

Take a second to process that one. A-Rod is now tops in *American League history*, and while plenty of baseball historians will quibble with that declaration — we'll get to that discrepancy in a minute — it doesn't make the accomplishment any less remarkable.

Is it tainted? No argument here. Still, within the next few days, Rodriguez will crack the 2,000-RBI plateau, and while that statistic is not nearly as celebrated as 3,000 hits, it is far more rare and, PEDs or not, impressive. That 2K RBI club officially has one other member: Hank Aaron, with 2,297.

Rodriguez won't challenge Aaron any time soon. But it's not beyond the realm of possibility that he will before he hangs up his spikes, and given the questions swirling around him when this season started, that's one of the more remarkable stories in baseball this season.

So that question again: How is he doing this? Rodriguez referenced the year off, courtesy of his Biogenesis suspension and failed scorched-earth war with virtually everyone in baseball, that put him "in a better place."

"I think for me, in a weird way, the time off was a blessing in disguise," he said. "I was able to get some rest, change my workout regime a bit, and I just feel like I'm more explosive than I've been in a long time."

The cynical fans are certainly forgiven if they're not buying that explanation. Rodriguez is a proven cheater and liar. Would he turned to PEDs again, even with the threat of a lifetime ban? It's hard to fathom.

But this much is clear: The 32,734 people here on this warm spring afternoon didn't really care much. They cheered when Rodriguez gave the Yankees a 4-1 lead with that home run off Kansas City starter Chris Young, and they cheered again when the Yankees — briefly, reluctantly — acknowledged the RBI milestone on the scoreboard screen (but without an accompanying announcement).

There is no hotly contested \$6 million bonus for this one, but the Yankees can't insist that the home-run milestones are not marketable and celebrate the RBI record. The battle for that lump of cash will play out in the coming months, and Rodriguez is certainly not going fight that fight now.

He is a company man in all his dealings with the media now, including this monologue when asked if he envisioned the season unfolding this way:

"I knew that I wanted to come in and contribute, I knew I had a lot of history with (Joe) Girardi and he would trust me as a ballplayer, I just wanted to make sure I was healthy enough to help the team win," he said. "I'll take this chance to say I'm extremely grateful for the comments from Hal Steinbrenner this week. They certainly made me more welcome, and I wouldn't be here breaking these records if he didn't give me a chance to play on this team."

The owner's quotes — "All I know is he's been great," he said last week — should come as no surprise. Where would the Yankees be without his bat in the center of the lineup?

Leadoff hitter Jacoby Ellsbury **could miss another month** with a knee sprain. Masahiro Tanaka **was rocked in a rehab start**, giving up three earned runs on four hits and two walks in three shaky innings in Pawtucket, raising concerns that he might not be ready when he comes off the DL next week.

Michael Pineda looked like an ace again in shutting down the Royals, allowing one earned run in 6 2/3 innings with eight strikeouts and just one walk. But while the sweep eased the tension from a mid-spring swoon, the Yankees head west on a seven-game road trip with plenty to be concerned about.

Rodriguez, against heavy odds, is not on the list. Homer No. 665 was a laser of a line drive that barely cleared the left field wall, and the man who hit it pumped his fist three times before he reached first base. It gave the Yankees a three-run lead, and left him alone in AL history.

Of course, this being A-Rod, nothing is quite that easy. RBIs were not considered an official statistic until 1920, so there is some discrepancy as to how many Ruth had in his great career. Major League Baseball's website has him at 2,213, but Elias — MLB's statistician of record — has him at 1,992.

"I never imagined I'd play in the big leagues, and certainly not surpassing my personal hero in Babe Ruth," Rodriguez said. "For all of us who love baseball, he's our super hero."

Yeah, it sounded a bit like a second-grade homework assignment. But, with one swing on Wednesday, he climbed over Ruth and Gehrig into AL history. How is he doing this? Even he didn't have a good answer.

A-Rod passes Gehrig on all-time RBI list

MLB.com | May 27th, 2015

Alex Rodriguez's three-run home run Wednesday afternoon gave the Yankees' designated hitter 1,995 career RBIs, passing Lou Gehrig and moving him to within one of Barry Bonds, according to the Elias Sports Bureau, the official statistician of Major League Baseball. The Yankees beat the Royals, 4-2.

Baseball has a longstanding history of disputes over numbers, and the career RBI leaderboard is one of them. Due to the uncertain nature of record keeping in the early part of the 20th century, there are some discrepancies regarding Gehrig's overall numbers. According to Elias, Gehrig's career RBI total is 1,993. The various sources used to comprise MLB.com's entire database, which lists Gehrig with 1,995 career RBIs, reflects alternative and also credible points of view.

Another historical issue clouding the situation: RBIs did not become an official statistic until 1920, and Elias doesn't count the RBIs Babe Ruth collected before that season, listing his career total as 1,992. MLB.com's stats list Ruth with 2,213 career RBIs, which places him second all time behind only Hank Aaron (2,297).

So if you're keeping score at home, A-Rod is tied for fourth all-time with Gehrig, according to MLB.com's database, and is third all-time, behind only Aaron and Bonds, per Elias.



'Amazing' Alex Rodriguez is leader of the first-place Yankees

May 28, 2015

Andrew Marchand, ESPNNewYork.com

NEW YORK -- The scene fits into what is turning into an eventful, unpredictable and somewhat surreal season for the New York Yankees. A team official proudly and publicly declared Alex Rodriguez, "Amazing."

And there were no disclaimers.

There Joe Girardi was at the post-game dais, trying to put into perspective that A-Rod has picked up more RBIs than any other American League player since the stat became official in 1920.

Alex Rodriguez's three-run homer Wednesday allowed him to pass another baseball legend, this time Babe Ruth on the all-time RBI list. *Al Bello/Getty Images*

"It is amazing," Yankees manager Joe Giardi said after the Yankees finished off a sweep of the defending American League champion Kansas City Royals to put the Yanks, a little unfathomably considering their recent play, a game-and-a-half up in the AL East.

Amazingly, Rodriguez is the leader of this club, the go-to-guy for the media and one of the guys the Yankees want up in a big spot. It has been a stirring transition for a player that was nearly ostracized from the franchise because of his reckless and selfish behavior during the Biogenesis investigation that resulted in his one-season ban.

Rodriguez is in the midst of rehabbing his image to the point that a post-playing career in the game seems more and more realistic.

But at 39 and mashing, that can wait for the time being. After 152 at-bats, Rodriguez is hitting .276 with 11 homers and 26 RBIs. He says the nearly two years off have been good for him -- "a blessing in disguise," he once again termed

it Wednesday -- allowing him to be more explosive than when he last played regularly.

He has stated he is not using anything banned by baseball and has yet to fail a drug test. He is even third in the American League All-Star voting at DH, though he noted Nelson Cruz deserves to be atop of the balloting.

Rodriguez is not slowing down either. While his three-run homer off the Royals' Chris Young in the third inning snapped a season-long eight-game home run drought, he batted .455 (10-for-22) on the six-game homestand.

The Yankees have survived their six-game losing streak and their 10-out-of-11 funk, leaving Rodriguez the leader of a first-place team, which, in some respects, is because someone is required to be on top of the AL East standings. The Yankees are just 25-22, but it is not their fault no one else is better than .500.

Rodriguez has some support. Michael Pineda once again looked very good and very well could be an All-Star again. Reliever Dellin Betances, with a 0.00 ERA, and closer Andrew Miller (14 for 14 in saves) seem likely right now to make the trip to Cincinnati, as well.

But A-Rod is the main attraction of this interesting club. He is the guy that makes you put down your phone to completely pay attention to the TV when he is up. He is the guy the media will wait an eternity to hear from afterward. He is the face of this franchise, and it is for all the right reasons right now.

He is trying to keep it humble and self-deprecating and succeeding, even when he lays it on a little thick.

"I'm a kid who came out of Miami," Rodriguez said, dressed in a suit for the Yankees flight to Oakland to begin a week-long trip. "I learned to play baseball at the Boys & Girls Club when I was nine. My dream was to be like Keith Hernandez. I never imagined that I would play in the big leagues, certainly not passing my personal hero in Babe Ruth. All of us who love baseball, he is our super hero."

A-Rod's ties to Ruth are legendary, from his association with the Yankees to his near association with the Red Sox. It makes you wonder how Ruth would have held up in this era under this scrutiny.

Rodriguez has cratered in the past, but now with his next milestone approaching -- he is 19 hits from 3,000 -- he is trying to keep it humble, being more thankful than

narcissistic. He went out of his way to thank Hal Steinbrenner for calling him "an asset."

"I'll take this chance to say I'm extremely grateful about the comments from Hal Steinbrenner this week about me," Rodriguez said basically unsolicited. "They certainly made me feel a lot more welcomed. I certainly wouldn't be here breaking these records if he didn't give me a chance to play on this team."

Steinbrenner still owns the Yankees, but this 2015 edition is clearly A-Rod's team. Who knows where it will end up?

The Record

Klapisch: Yankees fans appreciate new, humble Alex Rodriguez

May 28, 2015 Last updated: Thursday, May 28, 2015, 12:27 AM

By **BOB KLAPISCH**

RECORD BASEBALL COLUMNIST |

NEW YORK — On and on, Alex Rodriguez's magical mystery tour pushes deeper into this surprising season, full of role reversals (scoundrel to fan favorite), personality changes (arrogance to humility) and the switch off from PEDs to good clean living. We think.

The one constant, though, is A-Rod's ability to hit a fastball to the planets and he did it again on Wednesday, blasting a three-run laser shot off Chris Young. Not only did the HR prove to be the difference maker in the Yankees' 4-2 win over the Royals, it turned Rodriguez into the American League's all-time leader in RBI, ahead of Lou Gehrig.

Rodriguez called it an "amazing" coup, making sure not to gloat and instead shower the Iron Horse with respect. One more time, A-Rod was contrite and self-deprecating, and when he says, "I'm having fun. ... I'm in a good place" it's hard to believe this is the same reckless, spiteful time bomb who was busy suing the planet a year ago.

Of course, it's not just A-Rod who's undergone an extreme makeover — after losing 10 of 11 and appearing ready to crater, the Bombers swept the defending American League champs this week and did so with a suffocating run of good pitching. So good luck trying to figure out who the real Yankees are at the season's quarter mark.

Are they the old, irrelevant team that was so awful in early April and was so bad recently that even Michael Pineda looked wobbly in his two previous starts? Or are the Yankees simply coded for streaks — good and bad — that are impossible to predict, let alone contain.

Joe Girardi's best guess is, "we're somewhere in between." Even the manager knows better than to bother quantifying the Bombers' ceiling. Instead, he's thankful for the small blessings, like the B-12 shot of momentum the Yankees are riding to the West Coast, and how much more tolerable the six-hour plane ride would be Wednesday night.

A-Rod, on the other hand, has larger issues in front of him. First, he's hunkered down for that long battle with his bosses — the ones upstairs — over the \$6 million performance bonus for tying Willie Mays on the all-time home run list.

Yankees officials refuse to back down; they're ready to go to arbitration to keep that money out of his bank account. They say A-Rod's achievements are unmarketable, corrupted by his PED past, even as the slugger continues to help keep the Bombers afloat in the East.

Rodriguez, who went 2-for-4 on Wednesday was 10-for-22 on the homestand, raising his average to .276. Only Mark Teixeira has more home runs among the Yankees, and A-Rod is third on the team in RBI.

It's gotten to the point where Rodriguez hears warm applause every time he steps to the plate in the Bronx. Actually, the reaction has bubbled over to full-blown love. That was to be expected — Yankees fans are willing to ride any vehicle back to the postseason, and A-Rod has made it easy to climb aboard. He's hitting and he's being civilized.

But guess what, the rest of the baseball public has stopped hating on Rodriguez, too. The early results of the All-Star balloting put him third among designated hitters with 351,567 votes. A-Rod is a million miles away from the leader, Nelson Cruz, who's already pulled in 1,225,255 votes, but even so, Rodriguez is ahead of the beloved David Ortiz. It's a stretch to say all those votes came strictly from greater New York.

There are plenty of folks who've forgiven Rodriguez and have moved on from the PED wars. Even Hal Steinbrenner is ready to ascend, having said last week, "I think [Rodriguez] realized, as well as we, that none of that [fighting] would be good for the team. What matters most to me, and to all of us, and to him, is the success of the team."

Rodriguez made sure to thank Steinbrenner when speaking to reporters on Wednesday, a peace offering if there ever was one. Can both sides find a way to compromise? There are militants in ownership's camp who desperately want to

crush A-Rod in arbitration in a few months — and think they have the legal leverage to do it.

But he could embarrass them by preemptively offering to donate the money to charity.

The proceeds could go to a Yankee-designated cause, at which point he could, without guilt or drama, proceed to his march to 3,000 hits (which he'll reach) and 700 home runs, which is within hailing distance, too.

Only 35 more blasts to go, and there's no sign of a let-up. I asked Rodriguez why he's so much more dangerous today than two years ago, and he repeated an oft-cited theory about the time off.

“It was a blessing,” Rodriguez said. “I was able to get some rest and then change my workout routine. I'm happy. I'm in a good place right now.”

The answer didn't address PEDs, which was no surprise. A-Rod can't go there. Personally, I think his 2015 home runs are authentic, although, obviously, there's room for skepticism. Still, the topic is never addressed in the clubhouse — A-Rod's teammates don't know what he is and isn't doing and probably don't care. At this point it's all about production.

When A-Rod destroyed Young over the left-field wall in the third inning, it sent a powerful message to everyone in the ballpark, including upper management.

This story, compelling as it, is only getting started. A-Rod is practically the most popular player in pinstripes today. The next stop might be the All-Star Game. Don't bet against it.

McCann powers up in Bronx

By DAN MARTIN

Brian McCann hit his sixth homer of the season on Wednesday — and all six have come at Yankee Stadium.

"I'm trying to put my finger on why that's the case," McCann said after the Yankees completed a three-game sweep over the Royals with a 4-2 win. "I'm trying to think it just means I'm due on the road."

YANKEES NOTES

McCann grinned as he said it, but it's an anomaly that isn't unique to this season. While the Yankees signed McCann in part because they felt his left-handed swing was ideally suited for the short fence in right field, he has hit 25 of his 29 home runs as a Yankee at home.

But after another slow start to the season, McCann was simply pleased to be producing anywhere.

His second-inning homer off Chris Young tied the game at 1-1 and was his second in as many days.

"I know part of the reason is that the stadium is built the way it is, but that can't be the only reason," McCann said. "And I'm not just worried about hitting home runs, but I would like to get some away from here, too."

Especially since the Yankees will play their next seven games on the road.

► **Didi Gregorius** made his sixth error of the season when he raced across the diamond to field **Kendrys Morales'** grounder in front of second baseman **Stephen Drew** and then his back-handed flip got by **Mark Teixeira**.

It allowed **Lorenzo Cain** to score and Morales to move to second.

"It was just the way the ball came out of my glove," Gregorius said. "If it was a normal flip, it would have been fine."

Even though it led to a run, Gregorius had no regrets.

"Drew was playing all the way in the outfield, so I had to go for it," Gregorius said of the shift. "Why not? It was a tough play, but I don't see why not."

► Morales' grounder was ruled an infield hit, the first off **Dellin Betances** in 33 plate appearances, but the run he surrendered was unearned. He still hasn't given up an earned run in 26 innings over 23 appearances.

"I don't pay much attention to stats," Betances said. "I actually felt better [Wednesday] even though I gave up the run."



Joe Girardi compares Dellin Betances' stellar 2015 to ex-Yankee Mariano Rivera

Ryan Hatch | May 27, 2015 at 12:13 PM, updated May 27, 2015 at 12:49 PM

NEW YORK — A once-brilliant piece of the Yankees's puzzle had started to unravel: from May 12 until last Sunday, when the **Yankees** had lost 10 of 11 games, New York's bullpen posted the worst ERA (6.23) in the major leagues. **(Two straight wins have assuaged some Bronx angst.)**

But do not put any of that stretch's blame on reliever Dellin Betances.

In 25.0 innings this season, Betances hasn't allowed an earned run and has 38 strikeouts—the best ratio in the big leagues. Betances was selected to the all-star game last season and finished third in Rookie of the Year voting. Somehow, he's been even better this season.

Betances explained it the best way he can.

"Just continue to keep working hard, try to improve whatever I need to improve, and that's about it," Betances told NJ Advance Media.

Betances said he couldn't compare much of this year to last, saying his pitches are not cutting any differently, but perhaps he is being more aggressive on hitters. That might be right. His strikeouts per nine innings are up (13.7 from 13.5) and despite 10 walks, seven of those came in his first five appearances.

Since April 21 (his last 18 innings) Betances has walked just three batters and struck out 30.

Joe Girardi had trouble remembering the last time he has seen a reliever start a career this well.

"You don't see a lot of people doing what he's doing," Girardi said.

One could argue, Girardi said, that Betances' first season was better than future Hall of Famer Mariano Rivera's first year. (Rivera's first full season, 1996, he had a 2.09 ERA in 107 1/2 innings pitched. Betances' 1.40 ERA in 90.0 innings in 2014 was, indeed, a little better.)

Girardi named Andrew Miller his closer on May 8 but said with the way Betances is throwing, he would have no problem subbing Betances into the ninth, even though Betances has only thrown in the ninth twice this season. And each time it was carried over from entering the eighth.

Said another way: Girardi won't be naming Betances the new closer any time soon, but if Betances forces his hand and Miller falters, anything could happen. (**Miller blew a game May 20 in Washington**, but otherwise has been nearly un-hittable, too.)

"Dellin's been great, Andrew's been great, the way we've done it has worked great and we'll continue to do that," Girardi said.

Betances said he and Miller don't talk about who is the closer's role at all.

"He's been tremendous, he's been fun to watch," Betances said of Miller.

Sounds like something the 24 other guys in the clubhouse would surely say about Betances.

The Record

Yanks notes: Dellin Betances still streaking

May 28, 2015 Last updated: Thursday, May 28, 2015, 1:21 AM

— Pete Caldera

Great Bet

Dellin Betances ran his club-record, season-opening streak of not allowing an earned run to 23, yielding an unearned tally while striking out the side in Wednesday's eighth inning. But an infield hit by Kendrys Morales snapped an 0-for-29 stretch over the last 33 batters he'd faced.

"Someone jinxed me," said Betances, humorously mentioning that he'd been told of the hitless streak before the game. Generally speaking, "I don't pay much attention [to such things]. I go home, watch basketball and go to sleep."

The right-hander said he felt even stronger Wednesday afternoon than Tuesday night, when he struck out all three Royals he faced. Betances has whiffed 30 of his last 59 batters. And he's just the eighth MLB pitcher since 1912 to start a season with at least 23 appearances without an earned run.

Numbers game

Manager Joe Girardi downplayed the idea of going to a six-man rotation once Masahiro Tanaka returns. "You really have to have a flexible roster," Girardi said of going with six starters and seven relievers.

Employing a 12-man bench is not an ideal scenario given the age on the Yanks' current roster. So, with Tanaka on the horizon and with Adam Warren's recent success, lefty Chris Capuano could be in jeopardy of losing his rotation spot. Ivan Nova (elbow) is also due back in the rotation in June.

Bad flick

Shortstop Didi Gregorius's sixth error of the year led to Kansas City's unearned run, crossing over to the second-base side and errantly backhanding a toss to first base on Morales's infield hit. Girardi had no fault with Gregorius, who had to rush the play.

"It's probably an easier throw if you were an option quarterback at some point in your career," Girardi said. Gregorius said he wouldn't hesitate to try it again if necessary. "Yeah, why not?"

YANKEES NOTEBOOK

Girardi still has faith in Gregorius

BY LAURA ALBANESE
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Yes, Didi Gregorius is trying too hard. Yes, that run-scoring error wasn't pretty. But believe it or not, manager Joe Girardi said, he actually is getting better.

Gregorius committed his sixth error of the season with one out in the eighth inning, when Kendrys Morales hit a grounder to the shortstop's left. With Lorenzo Cain on second, Gregorius attempted a shuffle/flip to first baseman Mark Teixeira, but instead sent the ball sailing into foul

ground, allowing Cain to score the Royals' second run. The play was scored a hit and an error.

"I think so," Girardi said when asked if Gregorius is pressing. "I don't have a problem with him trying that play. I think that if he flips it right, he has a shot to get him out. That's not a throw you're going to make very often. It's probably an easier throw if you're an option quarterback."

Gregorius' play has inspired derisive "De-rek Je-ter" chants from around Yankee Stadium. Even so, Girardi

thinks he's improving.

"It's a tough play," he said. "I think he's relaxed much more now than he was earlier in the season, I do. And I think he's played much better on defense and I think he'll continue to improve."

■ More Ks for Betances

Dellin Betances' streak of dominance continued yesterday, despite allowing an unearned run on Gregorius' error.

The reliever struck out three batters in the eighth inning and has recorded his last six outs via the strikeout.

He has not allowed an earned run this season, a total of 26 innings in 23 appearances, and the infield single he gave up to Morales snapped an 0-for-29 streak for batters facing the reliever.

"I try not to pay too much attention to stats, but I guess it's good when you do that," he said, noting he wasn't bothered by the infield single. "They're big-league hitters and you try to go out there and do your best . . .

You just have to try to better yourself each and every day." Betances has struck out 30 of his last 59 batters.

Yankees' Didi Gregorius on latest error: No regrets

Ryan Hatch | May 27, 2015 at 5:57 PM, updated May 28, 2015 at 7:34 AM

NEW YORK — Ten out of 10 times he would attempt the throw, **Yankees'** shortstop Didi Gregorius said.

Shifting behind second base in the top of the **eighth inning Wednesday afternoon against Kansas City**, Gregorius raced in and to his left on a slow hit ball by Royals' designated hitter Kendrys Morales.

Gregorius scooped it up with his glove and tried to flip the ball back-handed to Mark Teixeira at first, but the ball went wide left and trickled away from the field as K.C.'s Lorenzo Cain sprinted around from second base to score and cut the lead 4-2.

Was he trying to do too much, **as has been the case** at times this season?

"I think so," manager Joe Girardi said. "But I don't have a problem with him trying that play. If he flips it right, he has a shot to get him out...it's probably an easier throw if you're an option quarterback at some point in your career."

Gregorius had no regrets of his sixth error on the season. It was an awkward play, as he ended up nearly at first base afterward. With second baseman Stephen Drew playing shallow right field because of the shift, Gregorius was the only one who had a shot.

But with a runner on second and less than two outs and the Yankees holding a precious three-run lead, it very well could have flipped the game. Luckily for the Yankees, **Dellin Betances** struck out the next two batters.

Girardi said it is not a throw that a player is going to make very often. Gregorius chalked it up to being aggressive.

"Things happen," Gregorius said. "And you don't want to make errors when you're out there, but it's part of the game."

Girardi said he thinks Gregorius is playing much smoother in the field compared to the first few weeks of the season.

He looks more "relaxed," he said, and thinks he has "played much better defense, and I think we'll continue to see it improve."

Girardi's assessment is not wrong. Despite the rough patches, through Tuesday, Gregorius was rated by *Fangraphs* as the fourth-best shortstop in the American League.

ROCKED STAR

Tanaka shaky in second rehab start

By ZACH BRAZILLER

PAWTUCKET, R.I. — Masahiro Tanaka's right elbow felt fine. That was the good news.

His performance, however, didn't scream major league ready.

The Yankees ace, out since April 23 with right forearm soreness and wrist tendinitis, was tagged for three earned runs on four hits while walking two and striking out four in three shaky innings for Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre against Pawtucket, the Red Sox' affiliate, in his second rehab start, a 9-6 victory for the Yankees farm club.

"My arm is absolutely fine," Tanaka said through an interpreter. "It's just that I was missing some spots today. You always have the good and the bad. You have to fight through the bad times and try to go about your business."

It's uncertain where Tanaka will pitch next. Manager Joe Girardi said he will sit down with general manager Brian Cashman and other Yankees decision-makers before deciding whether he will return to the Yankees or make another rehab start. Tanaka said he is open to whatever

move the team decides is in his best interest.

"We've got to see what we feel is the right thing to do," Girardi said.

Tanaka, 2-1 with a 3.22 ERA in four starts this year for the Yankees, threw 62 pitches — 44 for strikes — and allowed three extra-base hits. He did finish strong, retiring the final four batters he faced. He used all of his pitches, getting all four of his strikeouts on off-speed pitches. His fast-ball velocity tailed off, after starting in the low 90's and topping out at 93. It sat mostly in the upper 80's over the final two innings, dropping to as low as 86 in the final frame twice.

Asked about his lack of velocity in the final inning, Tanaka said: "My fast-ball is fine."

Pawtucket center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr., who homered and doubled in two at-bats against Tanaka, said he got the sense the right-hander was trying to get his work in rather than worrying about results.

"He looked like a guy who was trying to get

strikes, he was trying to fill up the zone and get his pitch count up," said Bradley, who faced

Tanaka four times last year with the Red Sox. "I thought his fastball was right there. He was

89-92 [when I faced him], that's where his fastball usually is."

Tanaka got off to a shaky start, loading the bases with no outs in the first, before escaping with just one run al-

lowed. He gave up two more runs in the second, the big blow a Bradley homer in which he turned around an 0-2, 91 mph fastball.

Tanaka declined to give any definitive answers after the outing — about whether he feels ready to return to the Yankees or if he thinks he can get back to the dominance he displayed in a rookie year that saw him go 13-5 with a 2.77 ERA.

He is eager to return to The Bronx.

"You always want to get back there and pitch," Tanaka said. "I'm just trying to do the best I can. At the end of the day, the team is going to make the decision for me to come back to a Major League Baseball mound."

"You got to look at day-by-day.

The important thing for me is I'm [feeling] good tomorrow.

We'll see tomorrow."

— Additional reporting by Dan Martin
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GROUNDING: Masahiro Tanaka kicks a clump of dirt while trying to flatten the mound during his second rehab start with Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre on Wednesday. The Yankees ace (inset) allowed three earned runs over three innings while walking two and striking out four.

AP (2)



YANKEES NOTEBOOK

Tanaka roughed up in latest rehab start

MIKE ZACCHIO
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NEW YORK — Just as Brian McCann was tying Wednesday's ballgame up with a solo homer in the Bronx, Yankees right-hander Masahiro Tanaka was finishing his second rehab start with Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre.

The ace, who was projected to have a pitch count limited to 65, allowing three earned runs and two walks across three shaky innings in a 62-pitch outing.

Yankees manager Joe Girardi has hinted that if Tanaka, who has missed over a month with the team due to right forearm soreness and wrist tendinitis, got through the start pain-free and with sharp stuff, he could return to the pinstripes.

Tanaka got through the outing free of

pain, but with his fastball hovering in the upper-80s — below his usual low-to-mid-90s stuff — Girardi may hold off on bringing the 26-year-old back to the bigs.

"I saw a little bit of (the first inning), but not much of it, so we'll sit down and talk with people that were there watching him and with (general manager Brian Cashman) and we'll see what the move is," Girardi said. "He could be anywhere. We gotta see what we feel is the right thing to do."

Before Wednesday's game against Kansas City, Girardi addressed the possibility of moving to a six-man rotation, like the Mets have done across town. With right-hander Adam Warren filling in the starting role and doing a terrific job of late, it may be worth considering for Girardi.

"We don't have pitchers that neces-

sarily give seven, eight innings, so now you take one guy out of your bullpen or you go to 13 position players, which really limits you, and with the age on our club, that's kind of difficult," Girardi said. "You have to find a player — if you only have 12 position players — that can really play everywhere. You wouldn't be afraid to put him anywhere, except maybe behind home plate."

Girardi didn't completely rule out the idea, but it seemed clear that it may not be the best option for the current Yankees roster.

"By going to a six-man rotation, there are some pros and there are some cons," he said, "but you really have to have a flexible roster."

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Yankees undecided on Masahiro Tanaka's next start

May 27, 2015

Andrew Marchand, ESPNNewYork.com

NEW YORK -- Masahiro Tanaka didn't pitch well in his rehab start in Scranton on Wednesday, but he escaped healthy, according to New York Yankees manager Joe Girardi. Still, Girardi said he does not know if Tanaka will next pitch for the Yankees or need another rehab start.

“He could be anywhere,” Girardi said. “We have to see what we think is the right thing to do.”

Tanaka threw 62 pitches (44 strikes) and allowed three earned runs on four hits, two walks and four strikeouts in three innings against the Red Sox Triple-A affiliate, Pawtucket.

Tanaka, who has a small tear in the anterior collateral ligament of his elbow, is on the DL with a sore forearm and wrist tendinitis.

The Record

Yankees' Tanaka not too sharp in second rehab start

May 27, 2015, 2:33 PM Last updated: Thursday, May 28, 2015, 12:12 AM

By PETE CALDERA

NEW YORK – Despite a less-than-stellar outing by Masahiro Tanaka in his second minor league rehab start, the right-hander might be ready to rejoin the Yankees rotation next week.

That determination will be made soon.

“He could be anywhere [next week],” said manager Joe Girardi diplomatically. “We just have to see what we feel is the right thing to do.”

Pitching for Class AAA Scranton/Wilkes-Barre at the Red Sox’ Pawtucket affiliate Wednesday afternoon, Tanaka tossed three innings and yielded three runs on four hits – including a homer by Jackie Bradley Jr.

Of his 62 pitches, 44 were strikes.

Tanaka had two walks and four strikeouts and was seen “kicking up clumps of mound dirt” according to Girardi, who witnessed the early part of Tanaka’s noon start via Internet. Girardi wasn’t sure how much of Tanaka’s mound troubles impacted his outing.

“I really haven’t gotten a very detailed report,” Girardi said. “I know he struggled in the first inning.”

Tanaka should be built up enough to throw 80 pitches next time, which could be in another rehab start or in the majors – possibly on June 2 at Seattle on five days’ rest.

Along with general manager Brian Cashman, “We’ll sit down and talk to the people who saw him [pitch] and evaluate,” Girardi said of Tanaka, who has been on the disabled list since April 29 due to right wrist tendinitis and a mild forearm strain.

Yankees' Masahiro Tanaka rocked in second rehab start

Maria Guardado | May 27, 2015 at 1:39 PM, updated May 27, 2015 at 4:18 PM

Yankees ace Masahiro Tanaka didn't look too sharp in his second rehab start with Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre on Wednesday.

Tanaka lasted just three innings against the Pawtucket Red Sox and surrendered three earned runs on four hits with two walks and four strikeouts. The right-hander threw 62 pitches, including 44 for strikes. The Yankees were limiting Tanaka to 65 pitches in the outing.

He departed the game with the RailRiders leading, 6-3.

Tanaka's outing was rocky from the outset, as the righty relinquished a double and a single to the first two batters he faced. He then issued a five-pitch walk to Allen Craig, giving Pawtucket the bases loaded with no outs.

Tanaka struck out Bryce Brentz swinging to record the first out of the frame, but he gave up his first run of the game after Travis Shaw hit a sacrifice fly to left field to drive in Jackie Bradley Jr. from third. Still, Tanaka limited the damage by whiffing Luke Montz to end the inning.

The right-hander continued to struggle with his command in the second frame, and gave up a leadoff walk to Devin Marrero, who then advanced to third on a single by Humberto Quintero. But Tanaka and the RailRiders caught a break when Quintero tried to stretch the base hit into a double and was subsequently thrown out at second.

Pawtucket added a run on an RBI groundout from Mike Miller to score Marrero from third, and Bradley then delivered another blow by belting a solo shot to right-center to tie the game, 3-3.

Tanaka finally settled down in the third, posting a 1-2-3 inning in his final frame of the day.

In his first rehab appearance on May 21, Tanaka **tossed three scoreless innings** against Durham and yielded just two hits, no walks and two strikeouts.

Tanaka hasn't pitched for the Yankees since landing on the disabled list on April 29 with right wrist tendinitis and a right forearm strain. Though **manager Joe Girardi** didn't rule out of the possibility that Tanaka could rejoin the rotation following his second rehab start, the results from the outing could force the Yankees to rethink that course of action.

Yankees' Masahiro Tanaka says he's 'fine' after shaky rehab start

Maria Guardado | May 27, 2015 at 3:50 PM, updated May 27, 2015 at 4:46 PM

Despite **being rocked in his second rehab** start, **Yankees** ace Masahiro Tanaka insists that his recovering right arm feels healthy.

Tanaka was pulled after allowing three earned runs on four hits while walking two and striking out four over three innings in Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre's 9-6 win over Pawtucket on Wednesday. He threw 62 pitches in the outing, including 44 for strikes.

"My arm is absolutely fine," **Tanaka said via the New York Post**. "It's just that I was missing some spots [Wednesday]. You always have the good and the bad. You have to fight through the bad times and try to go about your business."

Tanaka struggled from the beginning, facing a bases loaded, no outs jam in the first inning. Tanaka gave up one run on an RBI sacrifice fly, but he limited the damage with an inning-ending strikeout.

Still, the right-hander allowed two more runs in the second, including a solo home run to Jackie Bradley Jr. According to the New York Post, Tanaka's fastball also dropped down into the upper 80's over his final two innings.

The unimpressive outing could potentially delay Tanaka's return to the majors, but that decision will ultimately rest with the Yankees.

"At the end of the day, the team is going to make the decision for me to come back to a Major League Baseball mound," Tanaka said.

Where will Yankees' Masahiro Tanaka be next week? 'Could be anywhere', Joe Girardi says

Ryan Hatch | May 27, 2015 at 10:16 PM, updated May 28, 2015 at 7:37 AM

NEW YORK — On a day when the only disappointing thing to happen for the **Yankees** occurred 180 miles north of the Bronx, manager Joe Girardi said Masahiro Tanaka — **that disappointing thing** — "could be anywhere" next week when asked on Wednesday if the 26-year-old Japanese righty would join the team in Seattle.

"I know he struggled in the first inning," Girardi said of Tanaka's second rehab start in Pawtucket Wednesday. "We'll sit down and talk with the people who were there watching him and [GM Brian Cashman] and see what the next move is."

Tanaka allowed three runs in three innings on 62 pitches for the Scranton Wilkes-Barre RailRiders (Yankees' Triple-A squad) on Wednesday, **six days after making his first rehab start** since going on the disabled list **April 28** with wrist tendinitis and a slight forearm strain.

"My arm is absolutely fine," Tanaka told the **New York Post** after the outing. "It's just that I was missing some spots [Wednesday]. You always have the good and the bad."

The Yankees have a three-game series at the Seattle Mariners next week starting Monday.

Tanaka was shut down for 10 days after complaining of a sore arm following a bullpen after a start in chilly Detroit (33 degrees) on April 23. He has since worked his way back through bullpens and now the two starts. It remains unclear if Tanaka will throw another minor league game or join the Yankees and make his next start in a big league uniform.

Yankee pitchers are often held to a strict rehab schedule but considering Tanaka's history with injury (he missed two months in 2014 because of a slight tear in his elbow), they may not want to waste any more of his pitches that don't count.

In four starts before going down this season, Tanaka is 2-1 with a 3.22 ERA.

Tanaka was said to have had some troubles with the dirt on the mound on Wednesday. Girardi said he saw Tanaka kick several clumps away.

"How much does that play into it? I don't know," Girardi said.

If Tanaka throws again in the minors, a likely date would be next Tuesday, June 2, when the RailRiders are at home against Pawtucket.



Masahiro Tanaka makes second rehab start for Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders

05/27/2015 3:16 PM ET

By Lou DiPietro

Masahiro Tanaka made his second rehab start with the Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders on Wednesday afternoon, allowing three runs over three innings against the Pawtucket Red Sox at McCoy Stadium in Pawtucket, R.I.

On a pitch count of roughly 65, Tanaka ended up throwing 62 pitches against the PawSox, with 44 of them going for strikes. All three runs were earned, and he gave up four hits and two walks while striking out four.

In the first inning, Tanaka loaded the bases with no one out, giving up a leadoff double to Jackie Bradley Jr. and a single to Quentin Berry before walking Allen Craig; however, he got out of that jam with just one run across, striking out two around Travis Shaw's one-out sacrifice fly.

After SWB scored three in the second to stake him a lead, Tanaka would surrender his other two runs in the bottom of the frame, escaping further damage thanks to his defense; Deven Marrero drew a leadoff walk to start the rally, but Tyler Austin threw out Humberto Quintero trying to stretch a single into a double for the first out.

Mike Miller's groundout would score Marrero, and Bradley Jr. would then smack an 0-2 splitter over the wall for a solo homer to tie the game at 3-3. Tanaka struck out Berry to end the inning, though, and went on to pitch a 1-2-3 third, fanning Shaw to end his day.

Tanaka was replaced by righty Kyle Davies to start the fourth and the RailRiders would go on to win 9-6, with Davies going five innings to get the duke and Branden Pinder pitching 1-2-3 ninth for his first save.

Tanaka feels fine following 2nd rehab start

Yankees right-hander allows three runs over three innings

By Mike Scandura / Special to MLB.com | May 27th, 2015

PAWTUCKET, R.I. -- Masahiro Tanaka pointed out the good and the not-so-good in his performance Wednesday after his second rehab start for the Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders against the Pawtucket Red Sox.

"Right now I'm absolutely fine," Tanaka said through an interpreter about his right arm, which landed him on the disabled list April 27 because of tendinitis in his wrist and a strained forearm. "Obviously I wasn't at my best. I was missing some spots and giving up some hits.

"You always have the good times and the bad times. You have to fight through the bad times and try to go about your business."

Tanaka was scheduled to throw 65 pitches, but he wound up throwing 62 (44 for strikes). He allowed three earned runs on four hits in three innings, with two walks and four strikeouts.

It only took Tanaka one pitch to get in trouble as Jackie Bradley Jr. lined a one-hop double off the right-field fence. Quintin Berry then singled and Allen Craig walked to load the bases. Tanaka fanned Bryce Brentz, but Travis Shaw lofted a sacrifice fly to score Bradley.

During Shaw's at-bat, Tanaka summoned the grounds crew to do extensive work on the mound.

"A chunk of clay came off from the mound," Tanaka said. "It was my planting foot [that gave Tanaka problems]."

Tanaka got out of the first inning when he fanned Luke Montz.

Deven Marrero drew a leadoff walk in the second and Humberto Quintero lined a single to right, which advanced Marrero to third. Mike Miller's groundout scored Marrero, and Bradley completed the scoring off Tanaka by pulling an 0-2 pitch into the right-field seats for a 3-0 lead.

In order for Tanaka to be effective he must have command of all four of his pitches, especially his splitter, which he showed last season can be virtually unhittable.

"I've caught him before when his split was good," catcher Austin Romine said. "It's still good. You have to remember this was his second time pitching. But it was hard and had good action."

When asked about his ability to throw all of his pitches without harboring any thoughts of incurring another injury, Tanaka was evasive.

"All I'm thinking is just trying to go out there and pitch the best way I can," he said. "There obviously are going to be ups and downs as you go through the season. But for me it's always go out there and try to do my best."

Tanaka topped out at 93 mph on McCoy Stadium's radar gun, although his fastball didn't have the same velocity his last inning, even though he retired the side in order.

"His cutter in to lefties was real good," Romine said. "The fastball command was here and there. I think that kind of got him into a little trouble."

"He was able to put the curveball in for strikes early. But fastball command [was Tanaka's major problem]."

Tanaka admitted the decision is up to the Yankees regarding if he needs another rehab start or if he'll rejoin the big league rotation.

How does Yankees' Joe Girardi feel about a 6-man rotation?

Maria Guardado | May 27, 2015 at 12:48 PM, updated May 27, 2015 at 1:16 PM

NEW YORK — The **Mets** recently announced that they would be **adopting a six-man rotation** in an attempt to better manage the workload of their young starting pitchers.

Would the **Yankees** consider taking a cue from their cross-town rivals and following suit with the unconventional alignment?

When asked about the possibility of going to a six-man rotation, manager Joe Girardi expressed some hesitation and outlined his concerns with the experiment.

"It's a couple-fold for me," Girardi said on Wednesday. "We don't have pitchers that necessarily give seven, eight innings. So now you take one guy out of your bullpen or you go to 13 position players, which really limits you, and with the age on our club, that's kind of difficult.

"You have to find a player, if you only have 12 position players, that can really play everywhere," he continued. "You wouldn't be afraid to put him anywhere except maybe behind home plate. So by going to a six-man rotation, there are some pros and some cons, but you really have to have a flexible roster."

While many Yankees starters have struggled to get deep into games, Girardi said he wasn't entirely convinced that adopting a six-man rotation would help the club get more distance from its pitchers.

"I don't necessarily think that they would," Girardi said. "Because I know the thought process on it is keeping innings down, but I think there's also a correlation to the intensity of innings — how many pitches you throw per inning. That has a lot to do with this, too."

Though Girardi has legitimate reservations about the consequences of expanding the starting rotation, it's feasible that the Yankees could at least entertain the option, especially since Masahiro Tanaka is on track to rejoin the starting rotation soon.

If the Yankees stick with the traditional five starters, it's unclear who would be bumped from the rotation. **Adam Warren** has pitched great in his last two starts, and while **Chris Capuano** hasn't looked too sharp since coming off the disabled list, the veteran left-hander is owed \$5 million this season.

Either way, it looks like tough decisions are on the horizon for the Yankees.



Despite Mets' move, six-man rotation not in the cards for Yankees

05/27/2015 2:32 PM ET

By Lou DiPietro

BRONX, N.Y. - The New York Mets are moving to a six-man rotation in the near future, planning to slot Dillon Gee in with the current starting five when he returns from the disabled list next week.

On the other side of town, the New York Yankees have used (and likely will again in the future) an occasional sixth starter during long stretches without a day off, but when asked Wednesday about the possibility of a full-time starting six in the Bronx, manager Joe Girardi didn't seem to be a fan.

"There are some pros and cons, but you really have to have a flexible roster to try it," Girardi said. "The difficult part in doing it is two-fold for me. We don't have pitchers that necessarily give you seven or eight innings, for one, and whether you take one guy out of your bullpen or go to 12 position players, it really limits you."

For the Mets, the idea of the six-man rotation came when they projected out all of the innings their staff has already pitched into a full season total - and when telling the media about how he told the group of the plan, manager Terry Collins said that he first joked with them about either pitching five innings, going on the DL, or taking all of September off to help get them on board.

It may work for the Mets, but Girardi doesn't believe it's necessarily the one number in that innings pitched column that tells the whole story.

"I know the thought process on it is keeping innings down, but there's also a correlation to the intensity of innings, and how many pitches you throw per inning," he said. "That has a lot to do with things, too."

Of course, if the Yankees were to add a starter, they can fall back on a bullpen that has been mostly lights-out this season, punctuated by the back-end of Dellin

Betances and Andrew Miller and their combined 0.40 ERA and 72 strikeouts in 45 1/3 innings entering Wednesday.

But, even if Girardi did get more length from more starters and didn't have to tax the shorter bullpen, it's the position player side of the coin that could still prove more worrisome for the Yankees.

"With the age on our club, that's kind of difficult. You'd have to find a player that can play anywhere, and someone you feel comfortable playing everywhere, except maybe behind home plate," he said.

The skipper did note that he could always revisit the theory, even temporarily, when Masahiro Tanaka comes off the disabled list in the next couple weeks and then Ivan Nova eventually returns from Tommy John surgery, but for now, it's five in the rotation and seven in the bullpen as always for the Yankees.

California native CC starts opener in Oakland

By Danny Knobler / Special to MLB.com | May 27th, 2015

CC Sabathia grew up in Northern California, so starts in Oakland have always meant just a little bit extra to him.

He didn't get a chance to pitch there last season, but he will on Thursday night, when the Yankees and A's open a four-game weekend series at the Coliseum.

Sabathia will be making his 15th career start in Oakland. A's right-hander Kendall Graveman will be making his sixth career Major League start.

Three things to know about this game

- Sabathia is coming off one of the shortest starts of his career, when he gave up six runs and didn't make it out of the third inning on Saturday against the Rangers. Before that, Sabathia had gone seven innings in back-to-back starts for his only two wins of the season.
- Alex Rodriguez has 21 career home runs at the Coliseum, and Mark Teixeira has 20. The only player on the A's active roster with more is Josh Reddick, with 26.
- Graveman pitched six shutout innings against the Rays on Saturday. He has never faced the Yankees.



5 Yankees things for Thursday: On a roll to California

Ryan Hatch | May 28, 2015 at 5:00 AM, updated May 28, 2015 at 7:37 AM

NEW YORK — After **sweeping the Kansas City Royals on Wednesday**, the **Yankees (25-22)** are 1 1/2 games up in the American League East and will spend the next week on the west coast starting with four games in against the Oakland A's. (Then three vs. the Seattle Mariners next week.)

Below are five things to know for Thursday:

1) **Broadcast information**

Television: YES

Radio: WFAN 660/101.9 FM, WADO 1280 (Sp.)

Game time: 10:05 p.m. ET game vs. the Athletics

2) **Starting pitchers**

Yankees: CC Sabathia (2-6, 5.47)

A's: Kendall Graveman (2-2, 6.04)

3) **Alex Rodriguez now has the most RBI in the history of the American League**

Who would have thought this season would unfold like it has for A-Rod?

4) **Masahiro Tanaka status?**

The righty is battling back from injury and made a **second rehab start on Wednesday**. What news will Thursday bring?

5) **Carlos Beltran hitting streak**

Beltran collected two hits on Wednesday to up his hit streak to 15 games. Will the hit parade continue on the west coast?



The Yankees don't regret these 6 offseason losses

Brendan Kutty | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com By **Brendan Kutty | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com**

Email the author | Follow on Twitter

on May 28, 2015 at 7:30 AM, updated May 28, 2015 at 7:32 AM

OAKLAND, Calif. — There are a few moves this offseason that the **Yankees**, you could argue, might soon begin to regret having made.

Signing Stephen Drew hasn't exactly worked out. That deal that saw the Yankees send Shane Greene to the Tigers so they could get Didi Gregorius from the Diamondbacks? That one's looked iffy, though Greene's come back down to earth. And while Chase Headley's essentially been himself at the plate, **his eye-popping 10 errors** have given his four-year extension an inauspicious start.

But there are more than a few ties the Yankees are glad they cut this offseason. See what they are in why in the gallery.

OF ICHIRO SUZUKI | Sure, Ichiro is doing his Ichiro thing in Miami. At 41 years old, it's impressive that he's been able to hit .291 through 110 at-bats entering Wednesday. But he's also got just two extra-base hits all season and, on the Yankees, Ichiro would have been a spare part if he hadn't left via free agency. He would have been stuck behind Chris Young in the outfield pecking order. And Ichiro's presence would have tied up the Yankees' roster so that they wouldn't have been able to add a backup first baseman in Garrett Jones, who's hit well lately, and they wouldn't have been able to promote Slade Heathcott when Ellsbury went to the disabled list.

RHP BRANDON MCCARTHY | Things seemed to be going OK for the 31-year-old righty, who took a four-year, \$48-million deal from the Dodgers when the Yankees didn't want to pay him last offseason. McCarthy was 3-0, and his strikeout-to-walk ratio was an impressive 7.25. But then came the terrible news April 29: McCarthy needed Tommy John surgery. While McCarthy hadn't had elbow trouble in the past, the Yankees did the right thing in not investing heavily in the oft-injured starter.

RHP SHAWN KELLEY | Many were caught off guard when the Yankees dealt the usually reliable Kelley to the Padres for minor-league project Johnny Barbato

in the offseason, including Kelley himself. But the 31-year-old righty hasn't quite made the Yankees sorry. While Kelley hadn't allowed a run in three outings as of late Wednesday night, he's still got an ugly 6.94 ERA in just 11 2/3 innings.

LHP DAVID HUFF | The southpaw long man who was actually pretty effective for the Yankees in 2014 (1.85 ERA, 39 innings) has made just one big-league start and five minor-league appearances for the Dodgers entering Wednesday. The Yankees chose not to non-tender Huff after the regular season.

RHP PRESON CLAIBORNE | The 27-year-old righty reliever was diagnosed with a shoulder injury at the end of spring training and hasn't pitched yet for the Marlins or their Triple-A affiliate, to which he had been optioned. Miami claimed him after the Yankees designated him for assignment in the offseason.

INF ZELOUS WHEELER | Anytime you sell a player to a Japanese team, you never really expect to regret it. And the Yankees sure haven't. Wheeler's played in just 14 games with the Rakuten Golden Eagles -- Masahiro Tanaka's old squad -- and he's hitting .156 with a homer and three RBI. (Elsa | Getty Images)

St. John's coach Mullin throws first pitch

Brooklyn native, who was an All-Star in NBA, does honors at Yankee Stadium

By Danny Knobler / Special to MLB.com | May 27th, 2015

NEW YORK -- There was a time, years ago, when Chris Mullin dreamed of stepping on a big league field.

On Wednesday, he made it.

"You know what? It was the one sport I progressively got worse at," Mullin said, before throwing out the ceremonial first pitch at Yankee Stadium. "I was really good in fourth grade, decent in sixth grade and then got progressively worse. I hated practice in baseball."

Mullin, the former St. John's and NBA star who has returned to New York to coach at his alma mater, grew up in Brooklyn as a Mets fan. He said he followed both the Mets and Yankees as a kid, and he played baseball in high school at Power Memorial.

Mullin turned to playing basketball full time, and he never looked back.

"This is my first time to the new stadium," he said. "It's kind of nostalgic. I haven't been to a baseball game in a long time, but I remember going as a kid. The grass just lit up."



Pregame notes: “I think it’s important to get that back”

Posted by: [Mike Zacchio](#) - Posted in [Misc](#) on May 27, 2015

It’s been a bumpy road lately for Michael Pineda.

Coming off a 16-game strikeout performance against Baltimore, the hard-throwing right-hander has been roughed up in his last two starts, allowed 12 runs (nine earned) across 11 1/3 innings.

Having strong success against the Royals throughout his career (2.76 ERA) should give Pineda enough confidence going into try and shake his current funk, but manager Joe Girardi said that Pineda should be confident every start.

“I would think if you’re Michael Pineda, I’d feel pretty good about every time I went out, with the stuff that I had,” Girardi said. “You’re also facing a very good lineup that’s dangerous, has a lot of left-handed power, has speed.”

Pitchers’ seasons are typically broken down into three 10-start brackets — 10 with “great” stuff, 10 with “mediocre” stuff and 10 when they “don’t have very good stuff” — according to Girardi.

“It’s what you do in those other 20 starts that really determines your year,” Girardi said, referring to the latter two categories. “When I look at the last two starts, (Pineda) really hasn’t had a very good (slider), and that’s a key pitch for him.

“I think it’s important to get that back.”

- How important would it be to sweep the Royals after such a bad string of games? “You want some momentum before you go on this long road trip,” Girardi said. “It’d be really nice.”

- Rookie Slade Heathcott is impressing everyone, including Girardi, but the outfielder is going above and beyond through his first five games with the club. “I don’t think you expect someone to hit .400,” he said, candidly. “What we saw in spring training was impressive — what he did and the way he played throughout spring training, the adjustments he made along the way.”

- Heathcott’s smooth transition to the bigs is a testament to his work ethic, according to Girardi. “It just tells you that he’s focused and he’s prepared every day,” Girardi said. “He knows what he needs to do, he knows what he’s capable of handling when it comes to pitches in the zone.

“I think that he’s done a nice job of being selective.”

- Girardi said he got a late report on Carlos Beltran and will see how Wednesday's game goes and then "go from there." Beltran is currently riding a 14-game hitting streak.

- Dellin Betances has been remarkable this season, drawing early comparisons to Yankees legend Mariano Rivera, but Girardi isn't so quick to start linking the 27-year-old to the game's all-time leading closer and Girardi's former teammate.

"You could argue that Dellin's (first) season was better than Mo's first season," Girardi said. "But Mo put some back-to-back seasons together that were just incredible."

"But what Dellin's done, you don't see a lot of people doing what he's doing."

- Although Girardi has named Andrew Miller as the team's closer (and he's done nothing to put his job in jeopardy), he said that he has no qualms about using Betances in the ninth to shut the door on a game.

"If Miller needed a day off, I'm not going to hesitate to go to Dellin or some of the other guys," he said. "Dellin's been great, Andrew's been great, the way we've done has worked great, and we'll continue to do that. But if one of them needs a day off, you might have to flip-flop something."

- The roster isn't getting any younger, so what does Girardi think of the talent coming up the pipeline? "You can just talk about the collection of outfielders that we have who are young kids that played well in spring training," he said. "You can talk about some of the catchers we've had and you can look at a guy like (Trenton's Eric) Jagielo, who's playing extremely well as an infielder down there, or Greg Bird, who's been on the DL, but is playing extremely well."

"I think the system has been deep, but it's been at the lower levels. Well these lower-level kids are now getting to the upper levels, and that's why I think you'll start to see contributions from them."

- Girardi's thoughts on Rob Refsnyder, Luis Severino and Aaron Judge: "I was impressed by all these kids," he said. "I think I was probably more impressed with the way they went about their business."

"Obviously they played well, but the way they went about their business and the way that they held each other accountable and pulled for each other and pushed each other, you don't always see that."



New York Yankees' Salary: By the Numbers

May 27, 2015

ESPN Stats & Information

The New York Yankees rank ninth of 333 international teams surveyed in an ESPN/SportingIntelligence report revealing the sports franchises that spend the most on their players. That ranks second among Major League Baseball teams.

The Yankees' average player salary is \$7.3 million. The total payroll of \$219.3 million ranks third.



Marlins should explore possibility of A-Rod being their next manager

May 27, 2015

Buster Olney, Senior Writer, ESPN The Magazine

Eventually, Miami Marlins owner Jeffrey Loria will grow tired of the Dan Jennings experiment, of having a manager who hadn't managed before last week. Maybe that'll happen after more losses -- Miami has dropped seven of nine since the managerial change, including a tough loss Tuesday -- or after more changes in the coaching staff. Maybe the Marlins will turn it around, and Loria will still switch managers. As the old saying goes, the only sure things in life are death, taxes and a new Miami manager.

The next time Loria considers a change, assuming that conversation doesn't take place until after the 2015 season, here's a name he ought to seriously think about: Alex Rodriguez.

Yes, of course there are a lot of reasons why you *wouldn't* hire Rodriguez, but before we delve into those, think about the qualifications that Rodriguez would bring to the table for the Marlins. (And let's be clear about this: Rodriguez would be a good fit for the *Marlins* and perhaps *only* the Marlins.)

1. Rodriguez knows baseball. He knows situations, he knows players, he watches other players. He is a fan of the sport. I would assume that if Rodriguez does not get a job on some team's staff after retiring, he'll probably work in television, and I suspect he would be pretty good at it because it's clear, when you hear him discuss specific parts of the game, that he has accumulated a staggering amount of knowledge about how the game is played.

2. He would have credibility among players. Look, folks in the media (such as myself) have rendered a lot of opinions about Rodriguez's lies and PED-cheating, and most of the assessments have been dead-on. But a lot of players won't look at him that way. They look at the back of the baseball card and understand the ability and the work required to achieve that level of success, and they'll tend to take his career at face value -- as they do Barry Bonds' career. A lot of players from the 1990s and 2000s whom I've talked to view Bonds as the greatest they've ever seen, and they don't attach mental asterisks to that, and I'd bet the same would be true for Rodriguez.

Dan Jennings is just 2-7 as the Marlins' manager. *J Pat Carter/AP Images*

Part of Jennings' shortcomings as a manager is that he has no track record. Players respect a track record, and while Rodriguez's contains experiences other than hits and homers, he does have one, just as Robin Ventura, Mike Matheny and Brad Ausmus had track records as players before jumping into managerial jobs without managing experience.

3. He's good with young players. A-Rod's teammates will tell you that throughout his career, he has probably been more comfortable with an up-and-coming Robinson Cano than some of the veterans he played with. I'd bet he'd be good as an instructor. It's telling that when Didi Gregorius was struggling in April, Yankees manager Joe Girardi wanted Rodriguez to spend some time with the shortstop. Rodriguez listens to teammates, and he's empathetic.

4. He and Miami are tied at the hip. Rodriguez grew up there, and he lives there now. And remember, the community of Miami seems to be more forgiving than other places; it's like a coastal version of Las Vegas. One of the most celebrated teams in the city's history is the University of Miami Hurricanes football team, and the outlaw nature of that program is an important part of its lore.

Ten days ago, most casual baseball fans probably had no idea what Jennings even looked like. Well, Miami knows Rodriguez, and the Marlins could probably sell Rodriguez to the fan base.

5. Past PED use is not a disqualifier for an MLB job. There are many, many former players either directly or indirectly tied to PED use who are in positions of authority. Mark McGwire is the hitting coach of the Dodgers -- and widely regarded as someone who is very good at his job -- and Bonds and Roger Clemens are both seen as good teachers in their respective roles with the Giants and Astros. Manny Ramirez is a valued instructor for the Cubs. MLB commissioner Rob Manfred said earlier this year that Rodriguez is a member in good standing.

6. If the Marlins wanted Rodriguez as a manager for 2016, they probably could work something out with the Yankees. Rodriguez is owed about \$41 million for the next two seasons, and even though he has been better than expected this season, Rodriguez knows his best days as a player are in the past. He might leap at the chance for a post-career lifeline and approve a deal, and if the Yankees could save \$2 million or \$3 million a year for the next two years in some sort of settlement with the Marlins, maybe they'd be open to it, in turn keeping open the DH spot for their aging roster.

Granted, Loria would have to be comfortable with the idea of hiring the most notorious PED user in the sport's history, and he'd have to explain why he would be OK with hiring someone who looked into cameras and lied repeatedly. The Marlins would have to believe that Rodriguez would tell them the truth, because you can't be the owner of a team and wonder if the guy in your dugout is being honest with you.

Rodriguez also would have to continue on the path he has seemingly been on in recent months. He has been more direct, humble, self-deprecating. He has acknowledged mistakes and has referenced them repeatedly. Only he knows for sure if he has stayed away from PEDs this year; he hasn't tested positive, as far as we know.

Loria likes splashy solutions, like hiring the loud and profane Ozzie Guillen, like hiring a former Yankee in Girardi. There could be no option that would draw more attention than the hiring of Alex Rodriguez.

I reached out to some respected folks in the game this week to ask about the concept of Rodriguez as a manager, and the responses generally ranged from "It's not completely crazy ... " to "That's really interesting ... " to "I can't say that's a bad idea ... "

Maybe Loria would explore the notion and dismiss it. Maybe he'd reject it out of hand. But as he kicks around ideas, this might be something worth thinking about, and maybe Rodriguez should think about it, too.

Meanwhile, the Yankees beat the Royals again Tuesday, with another homer from Mark Teixeira, who is on pace to hit almost 50. Teixeira and A-Rod are keeping the Yankees afloat, writes Ken Davidoff.

The Marlins demoted third-base coach Brett Butler, and promoted Lenny Harris.

Johnny Cueto says his elbow is fine after his MRI on Tuesday. Some club executives will acknowledge privately that when reporters are told that a player has inflammation, they're really not being told anything. Cueto is headed for free agency in the fall.

They called this news positive, as Hal McCoy writes.

Players and teams are not obligated to reveal medical information, and reporters (and fans) aren't obligated to take this at face value. But before any deal is made -- whether Cueto is traded or signs as a free agent -- an interested team needs full access to determine for itself the source of the inflammation.

MARLINS' LOSSES PILE UP AFTER JENNINGS MOVE

Bob Nightengale
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 USA TODAY Sports



PITTSBURGH Dan Jennings watched the reporters leave his office Wednesday afternoon after yet another Miami Marlins loss, grabbed his Bud Light, angrily slammed it on his desk and cursed in sheer frustration.

Jennings has been on the job 10 days as their manager. But with the sleepless nights, stressful decisions and grueling losses, it already has felt like 10 years.

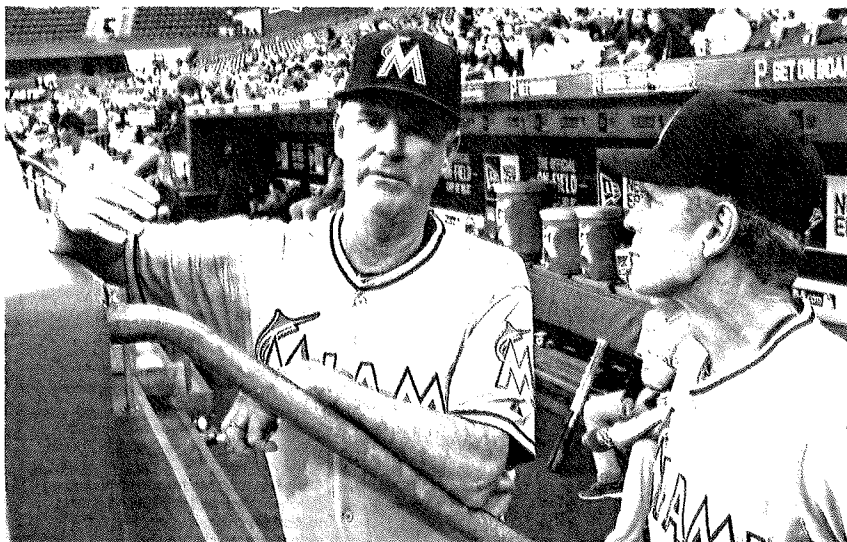
The players, who so badly wanted to believe this was their year to finally make the playoffs again, sat numb in the clubhouse. There were only muffled whispers. Guys stared blankly into their cellphones, looking up only to check what time the team bus was leaving for the airport.

It's another miserable season in South Beach, with the Marlins swept Wednesday by the Pittsburgh Pirates 5-2 and sitting in last place in the National League East with the third-worst record in baseball.

Yet this one has been like no other.

In these last 10 days, they hired a manager who used to be their general manager and whose lone coaching experience was back in high school three decades ago. They hired a bench coach, Mike Goff, who was their advance scout and childhood friend of Jennings. They moved their assistant hitting coach, Lenny Harris, to third base. They moved their third-base coach, Brett Butler, to the bench. And they've had three starters and their starting first baseman, Michael Morse, go on the disabled list.

No wonder when Marlin players walked into the clubhouse Wednesday morning and saw Jim Leyland sitting in Jennings' of-



CHARLES LECLAIRE, USA TODAY SPORTS

Marlins manager Dan Jennings, left, talking to baserunning coach Brett Butler, was the team's general manager before going into the dugout.

ice, they couldn't help but wonder if Leyland was returning to the manager's chair.

Hey, after what they've witnessed over the years, they've become immune to surprises.

It turns out that Leyland, who led the Marlins to the 1997 World Series title and retired a year ago, was offering Jennings advice on everything from pregame preparation to clubhouse leadership. It was much appreciated, Jennings said, finding a friendly face. Finally, someone who wasn't ridiculing him or the Marlins for making perhaps the oddest managerial hire since Ted Turner left the owners box for a game to manage his Atlanta Braves in 1977.

Managerial changes will always be part of baseball, but when you hire someone whose coaching experience consists of a stint at Davidson High School in Mobile, Ala., 30 years ago, it takes on a different flavor.

The last time a manager was hired with only high school experience on his résumé was Walt Weiss of the Colorado Rockies.

Yet Weiss also happened to have a 14-year playing career and competed in three World Series. Jennings was in the Yankees minor league camp in 1984 with Class A Greenville but was released at the end of spring and never played a professional game.

The Marlins, according to a high-ranking official, discussed several candidates once they decided to fire Mike Redmond. They talked about Ron Washington, who resigned from the Texas Rangers in September. They brought up Dusty Baker, who was fired by the Cincinnati Reds after the 2013 season.

They also debated the idea of bringing back Ozzie Guillen, who was fired by the Marlins after the 2012 season and is still being paid \$2.5 million by them. Yet fearing a backlash from corporate sponsors about Guillen's comments praising Fidel Castro that got him axed in the first place, that was

quashed, too.

Anointing Jennings, however, elicited attacks and ridicule the moment the news broke.

And now, after Miami lost eight of its first 10 games under Jennings, it's still open season.

"I knew this was going to be scrutinized," he told USA TODAY Sports. "I definitely expected to hear some of the cynical comments. Everybody is entitled to their opinion, and people want to focus on the negative."

Oh, and it has been ugly, even if Jennings is considered one of the greatest guys you'll want to meet in the game and well-respected as a shrewd talent evaluator.

"If people truly knew D.J. and knew what kind of guy he is, there probably wouldn't be as many shots taken as there are," Goff told USA TODAY Sports. "But right now, he's an open target."

"And everyone who gets a chance to take a shot at him is

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Marlins players 'kind of in shock'

► CONTINUED FROM 6D

going to take it. Everything that doesn't work is going to be magnified. That's just the way this business is. It's not easy for him. It's not easy for his family. It's not easy for this ballclub. But no one said this damn thing was fair."

Jennings, who twisted his left knee trying to relieve some stress jogging in the outfield last weekend, can't even walk without pain these days. But as bad as the leg hurts, the losing and criticism are a lot more excruciating.

"Hey, I don't disagree with some of the things people are saying," Jennings said. "I get it. But I'm going to tell you what, I was in that (expletive) car and driving 50,000 and 60,000 miles a year and grinding out three to four games a day as a scout. So I paid my dues as well. Really, the only opinion that counts are those guys in there."

Jennings motioned to a Marlins clubhouse where the players should be accustomed to chaos, the franchise going through seven managers in the last nine years, but there has been nothing like this one. The players who are willing to speak publicly make sure they say the right thing, but yet they are confused.

They would love to openly speak their mind, but they also want a paycheck and are fearful of the consequences.

"It does not matter," All-Star right fielder Giancarlo Stanton said when asked his opinion of the changes.

Stanton acknowledges that Jennings was one of the biggest reasons he decided to sign a \$325 million contract extension during the winter. He trusted Jennings. He believed in the organization's direction. Never in his wildest imagination did he ever think Jennings would one day be managing the team.

"I've been through managerial decisions before, so you kind of know what to expect," said veteran infielder Jeff Baker, who has played for six teams. "But a lot of guys haven't been through this before, and they're kind of in shock. There's always an adjustment period, but this situation is unique.

"One day you're seeing D.J. as your general manager. The next day he's your manager."

Ichiro Suzuki, who has played 23 seasons in Major League baseball and Japan, told USA TODAY Sports he was shocked to wake up and discover Jennings was his new manager. He never had a manager in his life who never played professional baseball.

"Usually, you think about moves and stuff that could happen," Suzuki said, "but this one, I never even imagined it. I worried about what the players might think or what the fans might think. So I tried to lighten the mood."

Suzuki showed up with a necktie, presenting it to Jennings in the dugout, letting him know that while he now might be wearing a manager's uniform, he can still be a suit at heart.

Jennings' biggest obstacle as manager simply might be gaining acceptance.

Baltimore Orioles manager Buck Showalter ridiculed him one day for his bullpen usage, while Arizona Diamondbacks rookie manager Chip Hale criticized the fact that he's even a manager and made sure to point out a game-winning pinch-hit came about because Jennings did not have a pitcher warming up.

Yet despite his affable personality and three decades of working his way up from an area scout, Jennings is Public Enemy No. 1 on the field. Managers want him to fail. They fear that if this works someone else might try to copy it.

Logic tells us this will be only a short-term experiment, lasting until the end of the season.

"I think he's being looked at as a test model," Goff said, "wondering whether it can be done. But the one thing about D.J. is that he's not afraid to take on anything. To him, this is a challenge. A huge challenge."

And yes, much to the delight of the managerial fraternity, perhaps an impossible challenge.

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FOR THE RECORD

DEALS

Baseball

► American League

Baltimore Orioles: Designated OF Alejandro De Aza for assignment. Activated IF Ryan Flaherty from the 15-day DL. Signed P Ariel Miranda to a minor league contract.

Boston Red Sox: Acquired OF Carlos Peguero from the **Texas Rangers** for cash considerations. Transferred P Anthony Varvaro from the 15-day to the 60-day DL.

Cleveland Indians: Sent C Brett Hayes outright to Columbus (AAA).

Los Angeles Angels: Acquired OF Kirk Nieuwenhuis from the **New York Mets** for cash considerations. Designated P Chad Smith for assignment.

Texas Rangers: Recalled P Jon Edwards from Round Rock (AAA). Optioned OF Jake Smolinski to Round Rock.

► National League

Los Angeles Dodgers: Traded 3B Juan Uribe and P Chris Withrow to the **Atlanta Braves** for IF Alberto Callaspo, P Eric Stults, P Ian Thomas and P Juan Jaime. Recalled OF Chris Heisey from Oklahoma City (AAA). Designated P Sergio Santos for assignment.

St. Louis Cardinals: Placed 1B Matt Adams on the 15-day DL. Recalled C Ed Easley from Memphis (AAA).