

ASTROS DAILY CLIPS

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With no room for error, McHugh stung by early walks

Right-hander allows two first-inning runs, but recovers to fan eight over six

By: Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- With the way the Astros have been struggling to score runs during their current road trip, allowing the A's to push across a pair in the first inning on Saturday afternoon certainly raised doubts about whether they could play from behind.

Astros starter Collin McHugh walked the first two batters he faced -- both of which scored -- and was otherwise terrific, but Houston went 0-for-10 with runners in scoring position and lost for the 13th time in their last 15 road games, 2-1, to the A's.

"He settled in and I thought he executed well," manager A.J. Hinch said. "We pitched him as hard as we could to get through six. I thought he responded well, I thought he made some adjustments. He did a good job of grinding through his outing, especially the way it started."

McHugh walked Billy Burns and Coco Crisp to start the first, and Danny Valencia drove them home with a one-out double -- the only offense Oakland needed. McHugh said it took him some time to get a feel for his pitches.

"I didn't really have a good curveball today," he said. "Went the whole day without having very good command or that good a stuff. We were in it the whole time. We were a swing away in a lot of situations. Give credit to their guys, threw the ball well, bullpen came in and did the job."

The Astros have been a streaky offense all year. When they're hitting homers in bunches like they're capable, they're dangerous. When they're not, they're a bone to be chewed by opposing pitchers. Oakland's Jesse Chavez, who had been struggling lately, held them to one run and six hits over seven innings.

"This stretch here, we've actually hit the ball OK and haven't got the results we want," Hinch said. "We hit the ball hard today, we hit the ball yard yesterday. We've got to do better. I think the run production can and will improve. We're very, very explosive. It's these lulls that we've got to find a way to scratch a few more runs out."

Still, McHugh said he had faith the Astros were going to pull it out.

"I'll take our chances with our guys over anybody," he said. "I don't think we're really carrying that, I don't think that's something that we're really conscious of when we run out there because we can go out there and put up a seven or eight spot just like that. "For us, we got a job to do as starting pitchers, bullpen guys have a job to do, and bullpen's done a great job over the whole season, especially lately of keeping the game where it's at, and keeping us in it after the starters leave."

Success against lefties key in adding Perez to 'pen

Houston trades Minor League pitcher for veteran hurler

By: Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Considering his success against left-handed bats this year -- they are hitting .183 against him -- veteran left-hander Oliver Perez gives Astros manager A.J. Hinch another relief option and brings an experienced arm to the bullpen, where Tony Sipp is currently the only southpaw.

The Astros landed Perez late Friday in a trade with Arizona, sending 19-year-old Minor League left-hander Junior Garcia to Arizona. Perez isn't going to join the Astros until Sunday's series finale. After Saturday's 2-1 loss to the A's, the Astros optioned right-hander Asher Wojciechowski to Triple-A Fresno to make room for Perez.

"Any time you can add experience and quality, it's being opportunistic," Hinch said. "Given the situation we're in, given the opponents we're going to have the next six weeks, another left-handed pitcher can be very advantageous for us, and when you throw on top of that he's good, he's got experience, he's pitched in a variety of roles. It will be a good addition for us."

Perez has posted a 3.10 ERA in 48 games for Arizona this year with 37 strikeouts in 29 innings. A veteran of 13 Major League seasons, Perez is 67-80 with a 4.42 ERA in 417 career appearances, including 195 starts. The Astros are his sixth team.

Hinch spoke to Perez on the phone on Friday and on Saturday talked to Arizona manager Chip Hale and bullpen coach Mel Stottlemyre to get the skinny on Perez.

"I'll be as familiar with him when he comes here," he said. "We've never crossed paths together, but he's been in the league so long it's hard not to know him or know about him. He'll blend in very well. He's pitched on so many different teams. He'll adapt quickly to this club."

With the D-backs, Perez faced right-handers and left-handers equally, but he'll be used mostly against lefties with the Astros.

"We got him specifically because of how tough he can be against left-handed hitters, and there's a lot of left-handed hitters in September and a lot of left-handed hitters in the back end of August," Hinch said. "I'll talk to him a little bit about how his arm responds, how much I can use him. But Chip and the staff over there raved about this makeup, his team-first mentality and the personality he'll bring to our club, which is already full of some pretty interesting personalities."

The Astros began the year with Sipp and Joe Thatcher as lefties in the bullpen, but Thatcher was designated for assignment on July 21 and was recently re-signed to a contract and assigned to Triple-A Fresno. Sipp is holding lefties to a .211 batting average and righties to a .194 average.

Astros' bats fall short behind McHugh

By: Brian McTaggart and Trevor Hass / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Jesse Chavez tossed seven innings of one-run ball, Danny Valencia had a two-run double in the first inning and the A's held off the Astros for a 2-1 win on Saturday at the Coliseum.

"You gotta credit everything to [Chavez] today for getting us to the eighth," A's catcher Stephen Vogt said. "There was a time when we had a guy up in fifth, and he was able to throw two more innings after that. Credit him, he came out and threw as good as he's thrown in last month or so."

A's starters have now given up three earned runs in 23 innings so far in the first three games of this series (1.17 ERA).

Collin McHugh allowed two earned runs in six innings for Houston, striking out eight and throwing 121 pitches. The Astros have lost 13 of their last 15 games on the road.

The Astros, who have lost 13 of their last 15 games on the road, were 0-for-10 with runners in scoring position.

"No frustration at all," said second baseman Jose Altuve, who went 2-for-5. "We know the things that we're able to do. We're going to come back tomorrow and try to do it. It's just two games [lost in a row]. It's not a reason to panic."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Leaving the game: Coco Crisp left Saturday's game after the second inning due to illness. A's manager Bob Melvin said Crisp felt nauseous and felt like he was going to pass out as a result of medication he's been taking. Crisp, who was reinstated from the 60-day disabled list on Tuesday, is recovering from a neck injury that kept him sidelined for more than two months. He walked and scored from first on Valencia's double in the first inning.

Bouncing back: Chavez allowed 13 earned runs over 1 1/3 innings in his previous three starts, but he responded convincingly against the Astros. The right-hander threw 106 pitches and struck out four, his lone blemish coming on a solo homer from Preston Tucker in the fourth.

"It feels real good," Chavez said. "It's a good confidence-builder after what happened last time. Something that I'll just go back to work on and build off of, find the things that put me in trouble a little bit early on that I can eliminate next time and I think that'll be helpful."

Early walks sink McHugh: McHugh was terrific after walking the first two batters he faced in the first inning. Unfortunately for him and the Astros, both Billy Burns and Crisp came around to score on Valencia's double. McHugh retired 17 of the final 22 batters he faced following those early walks.

QUOTABLE

"We didn't get into the game today. You don't think that the first inning is going to bite you when you hold them to two runs, you walk a couple of guys. But you're certainly frustrated when you feel like you could win these games, certainly on this road trip." -- Hinch, on his team's struggling offense

"Anywhere he goes, he's always gonna hit. I'm surprised we got him. He's got some pretty outrageous numbers to be [designated for assignment.]" -- Vogt, on Valencia

SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS

Astros are 8-for-45 (.178) with runners in scoring position during their current road trip (1-5).

Edward Mujica picked up his first save of the season, and the A's recorded their first save as a team since July 11.

WHAT'S NEXT

Astros: Mike Fiers (5-9, 4.17 ERA), who was originally scheduled to start Tuesday in Arlington against the Rangers before being forced into relief action on Monday, will start for the first time in a Houston uniform when the four-game series concludes at 3:05 p.m. CT on Sunday at O.co Coliseum.

Athletics: Chris Bassitt takes the mound for the A's on Sunday in pursuit of his second consecutive win in a 1:05 p.m. PT start. Bassitt hasn't allowed more than three earned runs in any of his six starts this season, and he tossed seven scoreless innings in a win over the Orioles on Tuesday.

Fiers faces A's in first start since trade to Astros

By: Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

Right-hander Mike Fiers, acquired by the Astros from the Brewers prior to the non-waiver Trade Deadline, will make his first start in a Houston uniform when he faces the A's on Sunday in the series finale at the Coliseum.

Fiers (5-9, 4.17 ERA) was originally scheduled to start on Tuesday in Arlington against the Rangers, but he was forced into action on Monday after starter Lance McCullers didn't pitch out of the first inning. Fiers last started a game on July 29 at San Francisco, allowing two runs and four hits in six innings for the Brewers.

"I'm not trying to worry about where we are, standings-wise," Fiers said. "I'm trying to keep it as simple as possible and go out there and start like I've been doing all year, being aggressive in the zone and making them swing the bats. I'll try to go as deep as possible and put up as many zeros as possible."

Right-hander Chris Bassitt (1-4, 2.64 ERA) will start for the A's. He threw seven scoreless innings in his last start to snap a four-game losing streak that spanned five starts from June 30 to July 30. His only career appearance against the Astros came in relief.

Things to know about this game

- Astros second baseman Jose Altuve extended his hitting streak at O.Co Coliseum to 19 games with a first-inning single on Saturday. He's hit safely in 35 of his last 41 games overall.
- A's center fielder Billy Burns has 23 stolen bases, the most by an A's rookie since Luis Polonia swiped 29 bases in 1987. He leads Major League rookies in steals and is tied for the lead in multi-hit games among AL rookies.
- Left-hander Oliver Perez, acquired late Friday by the Astros in a trade with the D-backs, is scheduled to be available in the Houston bullpen on Sunday for the first time. He'll join Tony Sipp as the available lefties.

Road remains unkind to Astros in latest loss to Athletics

By: Evan Drellich / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND, Calif. — The road map is getting repetitive for the Astros, who dropped their fifth of six games on this trip, 2-1 to the A's on Saturday, and it's guiding them straight to Baseball's Twilight zone.

This sport is a real pain to process when it comes to short stretches, so strap in.

What you're seeing may just be statistical noise, variation in the 162-game schedule.

The Astros are hitting .213 from Monday on, since leaving home. But, maybe the lineup, which appears to exist on a seesaw, doesn't actually fluctuate as wildly as it seems. It's a flawed lineup (whose isn't?) but that doesn't mean it's spiking with greater intensity.

Maybe being on the road isn't drastically different from being home either, despite what the outcomes say.

The out-of-town record for the Astros has been brutal of late, with 15 losses in their last 18 away from Minute Maid Park. They're also without a series win on the road since April. But their talents probably don't actually diminish when they're elsewhere.

(Homefield advantage in baseball isn't as meaningful as it is in other sports but it does exist: across the majors entering Saturday, host teams had a .545 win percentage. At the same time, it would take a gaggle of late-night partiers, light sleepers and hitters best suited for a home park to really make a team stand out.)

So is this just another bad set of games that happened to come close together for the Astros, or is there some underlying issue here?

"We've seen a little bit of streaks here and there," manager A.J. Hinch said. "This stretch here, we've actually hit the ball OK and haven't got the results we want. We hit the ball hard today, we hit the ball hard yesterday. We've got to do better. I think the run production can and will improve. We're very, very explosive. It's these lulls that we've got to find a way to scratch a few more runs out."

Whether the last week has been exceptional or not, though, might not even matter.

The greatest concern when visible trends arise, no matter their cause, is that player confidence and psyche can be affected. If hitters start to believe the lineup's output looks like a seismometer reading, or if there's a tiny drop in faith every time the team charter leaves Houston, they're gearing up for a greater chance at failure.

"I mean, it's the same routine," catcher Hank Conger said of being the visiting club. "I think the biggest thing for us is just not letting it get in our head. I mean, you know obviously we don't play well on the road and we haven't the whole year, but it could be a random thing."

On Saturday afternoon at O.co Coliseum, walks to the first two batters Astros starter Collin McHugh faced led to two runs on a Danny Valencia line drive in the first inning, and it was over almost as soon as it began. The Astros hit the ball hard, but never to the right spots or in the right sequence against righty Jesse Chavez.

Their lone run scored, for a second straight day, was a solo homer in the fourth inning, this time from Preston Tucker. He has 11.

"I would say no," Conger said when asked if the thought he and his fellow batters were more volatile than other teams. "Because we have a good group of hitters. But I guess the perception is, yes, because we're considered a high-power, high-strikeout team. But you know, we look at it and it's not, you know, not really — I really don't see us going through these really big hills and valleys (individually) and everything like that.

"I guess the general perception is everyone thinks yes, 'cause of the way we are (built). But after watching our whole team the whole year, no. You don't see too many big dips here or there. These one run losses are just killing us."

Three of the six losses on this road swing have been by one-run. On the year, the Astros are 15-18 in those games.

Jed Lowrie was supposed to lengthen the lineup. So too was Carlos Gomez. George Springer's on his way. Presumably, at some point, those improvements take a real hold.

It's a bad time for a bad week, but that might be all this is.

"No frustration at all," Altuve said. "We know the things that we're able to do. We're going to come back tomorrow and try to do it. ... It's not a reason to panic."

Four days rest not the present routine for Astros rotation

By: Evan Drellich / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND, Calif. — Mike Fiers is to pitch on five days' rest in Sunday's start, his first start for the Astros after an arms shortage led to an appearance out of the bullpen on Monday.

That outing against the Rangers wasn't pretty, and came one day ahead of his scheduled start Tuesday.

Fiers hopefully won't be needed out of the 'pen again, but a pair of off-days this upcoming week — and the desire to get regular pitchers an extra day's rest occasionally — makes aligning a typical four-days-rest schedule for the five-man rotation a difficult task.

"I would like our guys to get in a routine," manager A.J. Hinch said. "The schedule has made it impossible for that really to happen without disrupting some of the other guys. It's difficult. It's obvious to say (Dallas) Keuchel or (Scott) Kazmir being the most notable guys, (that you want) to keep 'em on regular rest. But that does impact Collin McHugh and (Scott) Feldman and three-fifths of your rotation if you focus solely on our two left handers.

"They haven't changed the schedule for us to eliminate some of these off days," Hinch continued with some sarcasm. "It's a little bit awkward to get through this part of August with any sort of regular routine based on the off-days. In a perfect world, there's a routine that these guys can face, but there's also some rest and recovery days that are beneficial — even if we don't know it right now."

For Keuchel, who lost to Sonny Gray on Friday, there will be six days in between starts. He's slated to get the ball next against the Tigers on Aug. 14 at Minute Maid Park.

"I joked with Keuchel, he's our Friday night starter," Hinch said. "He pitches this Friday, he pitches next Friday — it's back to his (University of) Arkansas days. But there's not a lot we can do about it if we want to have a full rotation getting rest.

"We'd like to get Fiers up and running. We've already messed up his first appearance having it have to be a bullpen day instead of a start. They'll be fine, and they'll get into their routine, and down the stretch, we'll lean on them pretty heavily and ride the hot hands in September."

As for Fiers, he compared the off-field transition to a new organization — he had not been traded previously — to moving to a new minor league level.

"It's pretty similar," he said. "You have your car shipped, you pack up your stuff, as much stuff as you can.

"Just going about your routine. They want you ready every fifth day. That's all I'm doing right now."

Astros' pursuit of reliever at trade deadline didn't rankle closer Luke Gregerson

By: Evan Drellich / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Astros made no secret they were looking at a hard-throwing, endgame reliever at the trade deadline. Coincidentally, Luke Gregerson had a couple rough outings around the same time.

There's no angst on his part, though. No one could rightly feel wronged that a team pursued pitchers as good as Craig Kimbrel and Aroldis Chapman, and with a 1.64 ERA from the start of July on, the necessary results are still coming.

Gregerson's ground-ball rate of 60.3 percent of balls in play was fifth best in the American League entering Saturday, and the percentage of fly balls that turns into home runs was 10th best, 17.2 percent. His rate of 1.96 batters walked per nine was 14th best.

"My confidence is very high," Gregerson said. "I feel like I've proven that year after year. Everyone has hiccups here and there. I might not be the 100-mph fastball reliever, but what I do I think is effective."

In a 12¹/₃-inning span starting June 13 running through July 24, Gregerson made 13 appearances and allowed neither an earned run nor an unearned one, with just five hits and no walks.

But in his last five appearances, Gregerson's allowed four runs, two of them earned on five hits and three walks spanning five innings.

Against the A's on Thursday in a 5-4 'Stros win in 10 innings, the righty was on the mound for a pair of unearned runs in the ninth that tied the game at 4. A leadoff walk started that ninth inning poorly, but sometimes, a walk isn't a sign a pitcher is all that off.

"Strommy (pitching coach Brent Strom) came out there and asked me, he said, 'I think I might see something, might be recoiling a little quick,'" Gregerson said. "(I said) 'Strommy, listen, man, my ball's moving really good right now. I'm just missing the edge. I'm just missing below, my pitches are working really well right now. I'm just missing.'"

He's 22-for-26 in save opportunities with a 3.05 ERA in 43 games.

Astros report: Newcomer Perez to be tossed into fray right away

By: Evan Drellich / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND, Calif. - Manager A.J. Hinch got on the phone with Oliver Perez late Friday night after the Astros acquired the veteran lefthander from the Arizona Diamondbacks in a waiver trade for minor league pitcher Junior Garcia

"Nice to connect with him and talked to Chip Hale this morning, the manager in Arizona, Mel Stottlemyre, the bullpen coach," Hinch said. "I'll be as familiar with him (as possible) when he comes here. We've never crossed paths together, but he's been in the league so long, it's hard not to know him or know about him. He'll blend in very well. He's pitched on so many different teams. He'll adapt quickly to this club."

Perez is to join the team Sunday, for the finale of a four-game series against the Athletics. Asher Wojciechowski was optioned Saturday to make room on the 25-man roster.

Perez likely will be used mostly as a situational lefthander, freeing up the only lefthander in the bullpen presently, Tony Sipp. When Joe Thatcher was designated for assignment in July, Sipp had to be deployed differently because he was the only southpaw available.

Hinch said Perez would face volatile situations immediately, "and given his experience he'll be able to handle it."

"He's really tough on lefties," Hinch said. "He's pitched about equally as much, sort of like Sipp where they pitch against righties sometimes, too. We got him specifically because of how tough he can be against lefthanded hitters.

"And there's a lot of lefthanded hitters in September and a lot of lefthanded hitters in the back end of August. I'll talk to him a little bit about how his arm responds, how much I can use him."

Prince Fielder, as strong a lefthanded bat as you'll find in the American League West, has a .118 (2-for-17) average against Perez lifetime with one home run. Robinson Cano is 5-for-14 (.357) with no homers, while David Murphy, newly acquired by the Angels, is 2-for-11 with no homers.

"I hesitate to label (relievers) too much because I'd like to get them up and running and see how he pitches. You like to ride the hot hand sometimes, too, if he's pitching well," Hinch said. "You don't always have the luxury of waiting for the perfect lefthanded matchup for some of these lefthanded pitchers.

"Their effectiveness against righties becomes important, specifically when you have a big righthanded bat in between two lefties. We'll see."

One batter Perez won't likely face: Albert Pujols, who has a .306/.405/.722 line against him lifetime in 42 plate appearances, with three homers.

Gregerson still full of confidence

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Seeking routine for rotation

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Valencia, Chavez power A's to 2-1 win over Astros

By: Associated Press / espn.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Danny Valencia could get used to being a cleanup hitter.

In his second straight game at the No. 4 spot in the order for the Oakland Athletics, Valencia delivered an early two-run double to support right-hander Jesse Chavez's strong start in a 2-1 victory over the Houston Astros on Saturday.

Valencia ripped a two-run double to the gap in right field in the bottom of the first. It came just a day after he belted a home run to back Sonny Gray's gem in a 3-1 win over the Astros. Valencia finished 2 for 4 on Saturday and is 5 for 12 with three RBI in three games since the A's acquired him off waivers from the Toronto Blue Jays on Monday.

"It feels good," Valencia said. "It feels better when you come through to help the team win, it makes all that much (more) gratifying. It was nice to be out there today, it was nice that we won this game. Jesse did a great job. A team effort today for sure."

Chavez (6-11) struggled with his pitch count early but went seven innings. He allowed an earned run, six hits and four walks while striking out four to record his first victory since July 19. Chavez completed at least seven innings for the first time since June 17, a span of nine outings. He rebounded nicely from a bad start on Monday when he gave up six earned runs in 3 2/3 innings in a 9-2 loss to the Baltimore Orioles.

"It's a good confidence-builder after what happened last time," Chavez said. "Something that I'll just go back to work on and build off of, find the things that put me in trouble a little bit early on that I can eliminate next time."

Houston right-hander Collin McHugh (13-6) fell short in his bid to become the American League's first 14-game winner. He used a career-high 121 pitches to get through six innings, allowing two earned runs and five hits with three walks and eight strikeouts. He issued consecutive walks to start the game, and both runners came around to score on Valencia's double.

"I put us behind the 8-ball from the beginning," McHugh said. "It took a little while to find a feel for my pitches. I really didn't have a very good curveball all day. I went the whole day without having very good command or very good stuff."

Outfielder Preston Tucker hit a solo shot off Chavez in the fourth inning.

Astros shortstop Jose Altuve went 2 for 4 to extend his hitting streak at O.Co Coliseum to 19 games, the longest active streak for any player.

The A's (50-62) are last in the AL West but defeated the division-leading Astros (61-51) for the second straight game.

ASTROS OPTION WOJCIECHOWSKI

Following the loss, the Astros optioned RHP Asher Wojciechowski (7.16 ERA) to Triple-A Fresno to make room for southpaw Oliver Perez, who is scheduled to join the club on Sunday in Oakland. Houston acquired Perez (3.10 ERA) via trade from the Arizona Diamondbacks on Friday night.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Athletics: OF Coco Crisp (illness) was replaced in left field by Sam Fuld in the top of the third inning. Crisp is expected to return to the lineup on Sunday. ... LHP Sean Doolittle (strained left shoulder) said he felt "rusty" during Friday's scoreless one-inning rehab stint with Class-A Stockton and that he plans to pitch again Sunday.

UP NEXT

Astros: RHP Mike Fiers (5-9, 4.17) will make his first start for Houston since being acquired via trade from Milwaukee on July 30. Fiers gave up six earned runs over five innings of relief work in his Astros debut on Monday.

Athletics: RHP Chris Bassitt (1-4, 2.64) seeks his fourth straight quality start for the A's. He is 1-2 with a 2.25 ERA since being recalled from Triple-A Nashville on July 25.

Grizzlies make it eight in a row

Fresno trounces Sacramento on Saturday night

By: Fresno Grizzlies

FRESNO, Calif. - Eleven unanswered runs by the first-place Fresno Grizzlies (67-47) over the first three innings put them on pace to secure a 12-2 victory over the Sacramento River Cats (52-63) on Saturday night in front of 8,333 fans at Chukchansi Park. The Grizzlies have won eight in a row and are tied with Oklahoma City for the most wins in the Pacific Coast League. They'll look to establish a franchise record Sunday night if they can secure a victory to complete an undefeated nine-game homestand.

Tonight's game was cracked wide open during a seven-run third inning that saw every player in the Fresno lineup reach base. Already holding a 4-0 lead, Matt Duffy led off the inning with a walk and moved to third on a single by Tyler White. Working to a full count, Robbie Grossman lined an inside pitch over the right field wall for a three-run homer (4). Max Stassi followed the bomb with a solo homer (13) of his own, while Nolan Fontana missed making it back-to-back-to-back when his triple hit the warning track in right center.

The triple by Fontana knocked Sacramento starter Tommy Hanson (L; 7 ER/2.1 IP) from the game, but it didn't stop the scoring in the inning. Jonathan Villar drove in Fontana when Everth Cabrera misplayed a routine grounder and three batters later Matt Duffy floated a soft line drive into right-center to score two to make it 11-0.

Starter Mike Hauschild tossed his sixth quality start in a Fresno uniform as he struck out eight over six innings. He held the River Cats scoreless through four, which extended his scoreless streak to 12 innings dating back to his start on August 3rd vs. Albuquerque. He'd allow a single run in the fifth and sixth inning before turning the game over to the bullpen.

Reliever Jake Buchanan, who notched a four-inning save on June 18th vs. Las Vegas, worked three scoreless innings to pick up his second save of the year.

Joe Scalfani extended his career-best hit streak to 16 games by doubling to left off Cory Gearrin in the fifth. The 16-game streak is the longest active mark in the Pacific Coast League and also is a team-high for Fresno this season.

The Grizzlies seek to complete a 9-0 homestand tomorrow night when they send right-hander Brady Rodgers to the mound to face River Cats righty Clayton Blackburn. First pitch is set for 6:05 PM, with gates opening to the park at 5:05. The Chukchansi Park Box Office opens at Noon.

Healy, Walsh, Sanchez RockHound Heroes

Series, Homestand Finale Sunday

By: Corpus Christi Hooks

CORPUS CHRISTI - Ryon Healy's two-run, two-out, eighth-inning single off Ruben Alaniz provided the go-ahead scores in Midland's 5-4 triumph over Corpus Christi Saturday at Whataburger Field before 7,686.

Midland (63-50; 28-15) advanced its lead over the Hooks to four games in the Texas League South Division second-half standings. Corpus Christi (72-41; 24-19) captured the first-half title and has already qualified for postseason play.

With the game tied at 2, Jaycob Brugman singled to begin the eighth, but was ruled out when struck by Colin Walsh's dead-ball single. Alaniz (4-3) hit Chad Pinder with a 2-0 offering and the RockHounds put runners at second and third when Matt Olson grounded out to the pitcher. Healy then laced a 1-2 fastball back up the middle.

In the home half of the eighth, Colin Moran's second home run in as many pitches pulled the Hooks to within a run.

Walsh's RBI single off Travis Ballew provided ninth-inning insurance for the visitors. That proved critical, as Teoscar Hernandez rapped an RBI double off Brandon McCurry in the ninth.

Brian Holmes yielded two runs to Midland in the first. Three straight one-out hits, including an RBI double by Pinder, preceded an inning-ending double play. Olson contributed an RBI single.

Holmes, who pitched his way out of a bases-loaded jam in the fourth, faced the minimum in the second, third, fifth, and sixth innings. Corpus Christi manager Rodney Linares pulled Holmes after he struck out Anthony Aliotti and Josh Whitaker to open the seventh.

Holmes gave up a fourth-inning single to Healy and walked two. The former Wake Forest star struck out eight and his pitch count was 106 (65).

Jake Sanchez (10-7) allowed just four Hooks baserunners through the first five frames before Moran belted a two-run homer - his sixth round-tripper of 2015 - with Hernandez aboard after a single.

The Hooks left the bases full in the seventh, as Sanchez induced a ground out from Hernandez to Healy at third. Sanchez, who leads the league in victories, permitted six hits, three walks, and struck out six.

Pinder has a 12-game hitting streak.

Midland southpaw Dillon Overton (3-2) meets Hooks right-hander Michael Feliz (5-2) Sunday in the series and homestand finale at 6:05. Mrs Baird's presents Hooks Insulated Lunch Boxes to the first 1,500 children 12-and-under. It's H-E-B Kids Day, too, so all youngsters run the bases postgame.

Davis extends homer streak in loss to Mavs

Streak reaches five games with three-run shot in seventh inning

By: Spenser Smith / Lancaster JetHawks

LANCASTER, Calif. - The JetHawks were unable to bounce back from a seven-run first inning for the High Desert Mavericks, eventually falling 11-4 on Saturday night at The Hangar.

J.D. Davis homered in his fifth straight game, and James Ramsay went 2-for-4 to extend his hitting streak to 15 games.

JetHawks (56-56) starter Bryan Radziewski (3-5) was unable to complete the first inning, allowing three runs on four hits and two walks before yielding to Troy Scribner with two out. Tripp Martin extended the Mavericks' lead to six runs with a three-run double off Scribner, and Isiah Kiner-Falefa added a RBI-single. Radziewski was charged with six of the seven runs in the inning.

Scribner, however, would not allow a run through the rest of his outing. The right-hander struck out seven over 4.2 innings of relief, the longest outing by a JetHawks reliever this season.

Lancaster loaded the bases with one out against Mavericks (59-50) starting pitcher Reed Garrett (5-3) in the second, but managed just one run on a Mott Hyde RBI-single.

A Chris Garia RBI-double in the eighth extended the Mavericks' lead to 8-1, but Davis hit a three-run homer off Anyelo Leclerc in the bottom half to cut the deficit to four runs.

In the eighth, Joe Jackson homered and Ronald Guzman hit a RBI-triple, and Kiner-Falefa recorded another RBI-single in the ninth for a seven-run High Desert lead. The JetHawks would not score again, as Jose Valdespina and Dakota Watts each pitched one scoreless inning for the Mavericks.

The series concludes on Sunday with first pitch scheduled for 5 p.m. Keegan Yuhl (2-0, 1.76) will pitch for the JetHawks as the Mavericks counter with Trey Lambert (5-2, 4.24). The JetHawks will be hosting Aerospace Appreciation Night, as the first 1,000 fans in attendance will receive a Jerry Ross bobblehead, courtesy of Lancaster Choice Energy.

Bandits achieve 2nd 12-game winning streak

Quad Cities whitewashes Dayton, 10-0, for fourth shutout in seven games, moves to baseball-best 74-36

By: Marco LaNave / Quad Cities River Bandits

Quad Cities River Bandits right-hander Joshua James matched a career high with seven strikeouts in six shutout innings, and his teammates scored nine runs in the sixth through eighth innings to seal a 10-0 victory over the Dayton Dragons, tying the River Bandits' season high of 12 straight wins in front of 5,211 at Modern Woodmen Park Saturday night.

Pitching their fourth shutout in seven games and 14th of the season - their most since 2001 - the River Bandits (29-13 second half, 74-36 overall) tied their longest winning streak of the season, set April 29-May 11, when their 12 straight wins were the most for a Quad Cities Midwest League team since a franchise-record 13-game winning streak by the Quad City Cubs to close the 1979 season. The River Bandits also won their 10th straight home game since July 19, tying a 2013 home winning streak that was the club's longest since at least 2001.

Dayton right-hander Wyatt Strahan (6-9) did not allow a hit until two outs in the fifth inning, but Quad Cities took the lead without the help of a hit in the third inning. Third baseman Luis Reynoso led off the third by reaching second base when Strahan fielded a ground ball and overthrew first base. Shortstop Kristian Trompiz sacrificed Reynoso to third base, before left fielder Jason Martin drew a walk. Center fielder Bobby Boyd then hit a sacrifice fly to left field, scoring Reynoso for a 1-0 lead.

While James (5-2) held Dayton (18-24, 57-55) to one runner in scoring position in the first six innings, the River Bandits added another run against Strahan in the bottom of the sixth inning. Leading off the inning, Boyd extended his eight-game hitting streak with an infield single to shortstop Luis Gonzalez. Strahan's wild pitch moved Boyd to second base, and second baseman Nick Tanielu chopped an infield single to second baseman Cory Thompson. With runners at first and third bases, designated hitter Bryan Muñoz grounded into a double play that scored Boyd. Strahan finished six innings, allowing two runs - one earned - on three hits and one walk with three strikeouts.

With a 2-0 lead starting the seventh inning, James allowed a leadoff double to Dragons third baseman Gavin LaValley and single by left fielder Argenis Aldazoro to put runners at first and third bases with no outs. Right-hander Eric Peterson relieved James by walking center fielder Narciso Crook to load the bases. With the tying runs in scoring position, Peterson struck out catcher Garrett Boulware looking and got Gonzalez to ground to Tanielu, who threw to Trompiz to begin an inning-ending double play that

preserved the shutout. After Peterson worked two hitless innings with one walk and two strikeouts, left-hander Steve Naemark walked one and struck out one in the ninth inning.

After escaping a bases-loaded jam defensively in the top of the seventh inning, the River Bandits capitalized offensively with loaded bases in the bottom of the inning against left-hander Jacob Moody. Catcher Garrett Stubbs drew a leadoff walk, Reynoso reached on a one-out infield single, and Moody issued three straight two-out walks to Martin, Boyd and Tanielu, forcing in two runs for a 4-0 Quad Cities lead.

Dragons right-hander Jake Ehret recorded the final out in the seventh inning but allowed the largest inning of the night in the bottom of the eighth. He began by hitting right fielder Ramon Laureano with a pitch and walking Stubbs and Bottger to load the bases, before Reynoso's RBI single to left field. Trompiz brought in another run by grounding into a fielder's choice, but Gonzalez's throwing error scored another run and put Trompiz at second base. Boyd hit a two-out RBI single to right field for his sixth straight multi-hit game, and Tanielu capped the six-run inning with his fifth home run of the year on a two-run blast to the Modern Woodmen Berm for a 10-0 River Bandits advantage.

Quad Cities seeks to tie its 56-year Midwest League franchise record with a 13th straight win in its homestand finale at 1:15 p.m. Sunday at Modern Woodmen Park. River Bandits right-hander Brock Dykxhoorn (6-3) is scheduled to face Dragons right-hander Tejay Antone (5-9).

UP NEXT: Gates open at 12:15 p.m., and the River Bandits will sign autographs on the field at 12:30 p.m. on Family Sunday presented by KWQC, B100 and ESPN 93.5. The 1:15 p.m. game is Pirates and Princesses Day, including Storybook Princess appearances. Dogs are welcome to the berm for Bark in the Park, and postgame Kids Run the Bases presented by Prairie Farms. Individual tickets are on sale at the River Bandits box office and online at riverbandits.com. Ticket plans of 12 to 70 games - which include free parking, reserved seats, merchandise discounts, and guaranteed giveaways - are available by calling 563-324-3000.

ABOUT THE BANDITS: With the installation of the Ferris Wheel, the River Bandits ownership in 2014 made one of the biggest improvements to Modern Woodmen Park since the ballpark was first built back in 1931, and this year the club is matching that effort by opening three new areas. A two-tiered special group deck immediately behind and overlooking the corn field opened in June. A new 11,000-square-foot concourse expansion down the third-base line will open late August. Finally, the club has expanded the children's play area by an additional 5,500 square feet down the right-field line, with additional bounce houses and the newest ride - Spin Zone Bumper Cars - as the latest attraction.

Tri-City ends road trip with 5-1 in Aberdeen

By: Tri-City ValleyCats

ABERDEEN, MD - Brooks Marlow went 2-for-2 with a home run and two runs batted in, while Pat Porter added a homer and two runs scored, as the Tri-City ValleyCats concluded their six-game road trip with a 5-1 victory over the Aberdeen IronBirds at Ripken Stadium in Aberdeen, Md., on Saturday night.

Two days after tossing a no-hitter against Aberdeen in a 5-0 victory, and one night after holding the IronBirds to only one run in a 1-0 defeat, the ValleyCats again had a dominant pitching performance, allowing only six hits, two walks, and one unearned run.

Trent Thornton got the start for the 'Cats striking out three batters in five frames, before Scott Weathersby came in and pitched two scoreless frames of his own.

The two right-handers got more than enough help from the Tri-City hitters, as the 'Cats got on the board in the top of the first, when Marlow drove home Johnny Sewald with a sacrifice fly to left field.

Two innings later, Anthony Hermelyn drove home Porter with a line-drive single to right field, and Kolbey Carpenter scored on an RBI by Cesar Carrasco, to put the 'Cats ahead 3-0.

The IronBirds were able to push one run across in the bottom of the fifth, but Porter homered over the right field wall in the top of the sixth for his second long ball of the season, and Marlow cleared the right field wall in the eighth for his team-leading fifth home run, to help the 'Cats take a 5-1 lead into the ninth inning.

Aberdeen put two runners aboard with only one out in the final frame, but right-handed reliever Jacob Dorris came in and induced two consecutive ground outs to close out the victory, and earn his third save in the process.

Registering the win for Tri-City was Thornton, who advanced to 4-0.

The ValleyCats now hold a two-game first-place lead in the New York Penn-League Stedler Division over the Lowell Spinners, whom they will now host in a three-game series at Joseph L. Bruno Stadium, which will begin at 5 p.m., on Sunday. On the mound for Tri-City in the series opener, will be LHP Alex Winkelman (4-0, 1.45), with RHP Austin Glorius (0-0, 0.00) getting the start for Lowell.

Astros fall to Pirates to even series

By: Nick Carey / Greeneville Astros

Greeneville, TN - The Greeneville Astros (23-20) lost 6-5 to the Bristol Pirates (20-22) despite a rallying effort of three runs in the eighth inning.

Greeneville began the game auspiciously at the plate with a leadoff triple by Myles Straw who came in to score on a Daz Cameron single. That spark of offense gave Greeneville starter Devonte German a 1-0 cushion to pitch behind. German finished the night having pitched four and two-third innings allowing seven hits, four runs and striking out one.

The Pirates evened the game 1-1 behind a one-hit inning in the top of the third. Bealyn Chourio hit a two-out double to right field, which was followed by Henry Rosario reaching on a fielding error allowing Chourio to score and tie the game.

Bristol took the lead in the top of the fourth beginning with a single by John Bormann and a succeeding double by Carols Munoz. Julio De La Cruz knocked a single to left to score Bormann and set up a RBI single for Erik Lunde. Trae Arbet lined a double to left before the inning concluded with the Pirates ahead 3-1.

The Astros answered with a lone run in the home half of the fourth to close the gap to one run. Brauly Mejia led off the frame with a single to center then moved to third on a double by Kyle Tucker. Second baseman Ford Stainback reached on a fielder's choice, which scored Mejia. Arturo Michelena followed by driving a single to right before the inning ended with the Astros down 3-2.

The Pirates managed lone runs in the fifth and sixth innings. In the fifth, Bormann laced a two-out single to left to score Edgar Figueroa who walked to lead off the inning. In the sixth, Lunde was walked in for a run after singling with one out then advancing to third on a Trae Arbet double.

Down 5-2 going into the bottom of the eighth the Astros mounted a three-run rally to tie the game. Straw led off by drawing a walk then advanced to second on a single to center by Cameron. Straw then came in to score on a pair of Pirate errors.

After a Bristol pitching change, Mejia nailed a double to center to score Cameron to bring Greeneville within a run. The tying run came after Stainback tripled down the left field line to score Mejia and deadlock the game 5-5.

Two Astros relievers anchored the mound from mid-game through the three-run rally. Righty Erasmo Pinales tossed two and one-third innings and allowed two hits and one run while striking out one batter. Lachlan Madden threw the last two frames and took the loss allowing three hits, one run and striking out two.

Bristol struck the final blow in the top of the ninth beginning with consecutive bunt singles by Figueroa and Chourio. Bormann drew a walk to load the bases before Munoz singled to right scoring Figueroa and the winning run.

Mejia led Astros batters going three-for-four at the plate with two runs scored and a RBI. Cameron finished the night two-for-five with a run and a RBI followed by Straw who was one-for-three with a triple, two runs scored and a pair of walks. Tucker, Stainback and Michelena each went one-for-four as Tucker doubled; Stainback tripled and recorded two RBI.

The Astros will hit the road to conclude the series with Bristol on Sunday and begin another split series with Elizabethton on Monday. The team will return home to face the Twins on Tuesday, July 11 with a 7 PM scheduled first pitch time.

Elias Says...

By: Elias Sports Bureau / espn.com

Welcome back Stephen Strasburg

From Elias: Stephen Strasburg did it all for the Nationals on Saturday night, going 3-for-3 at the plate and striking out a dozen on the mound. Strasburg is the third player in modern major-league history to go 3-for-3 or better as a batter and strikeout at least 12 batters as a pitcher in the same game. Camilo Pascual did it twice, once for the Senators in 1956 (4-for-4, 12 SO) and once for the Twins in 1961 (3-for-3, 13 SO). Adam Wainwright did it for the Cardinals in 2013 (3-for-3, 12 SO).

Phillies want to start the season over

From Elias: The Phillies, who were 29-62 (.319) before the All-Star break, have won 15 of 20 games since the break. Philadelphia is the 84th team to win 15 (or more) of its first 20 games after the All-Star break, but none of the previous 83 had as bad a record as the Phillies had prior to the break. Entering the 2015 season, the worst record at the break for a team that started the second half 15-5 or better was 27-40 (.403) by the 1940 Cardinals.

Price pays off for Jays

From Elias: David Price threw seven scoreless innings in the Blue Jays' win at Yankee Stadium. Price is 5-0 with a 1.85 earned-run average over his last seven starts in the Bronx. Price is the first visiting pitcher to go 5-0 or better with an ERA that low over a seven-start span in the Bronx since Jimmy Key. Key went 5-0 with a 1.70 ERA for the Blue Jays over a seven-start span at Yankee Stadium from 1985 to 1988.

Justin smokes one

From Elias: Justin Smoak's grand slam turned a scoreless game into a 4-0 lead in the Blue Jays' win over the Yankees in the Bronx. It was the first slam hit by a Toronto player in Yankee Stadium - new or old - in the history of the franchise. Blue Jays players had 179 at-bats with the bases loaded in the Bronx prior to Smoak's blast.

Bryant through 100 career games

From Elias: Kris Bryant hit a two-run homer off Matt Cain in the Cubs' win over the Giants at Wrigley Field. Bryant, who played in his 100th major-league game on Saturday, has 15 homers and 64 runs batted in this season. The only other player, since RBIs became an official statistic in 1920, to hit at least 15 homers and drive in at least 60 runs and play his first 100 major-league games for the Cubs is Vince Barton (16 HR, 65 RBI). Barton played only two more games in the majors.

Almonte shines in his first game with the Tribe

From Elias: Abraham Almonte, playing in his first game with the Indians, went 4-for-5 with a home run in a 17-4 victory over the Twins. Almonte is the first player in Indians history to record four hits and a homer in his first game with the team. Two other players had four hits in their Indians debut: Billy Hunter in 1958 and Kevin Seitzer in 1996.

Altuve extends hitting streak in Oakland

From Elias: Jose Altuve went 2-for-5 in the Astros' loss in Oakland extending his hitting streak 19 games at O.Co Coliseum. That matches the second-longest current hitting streak for any active player at any major-league venue. Brandon Phillips has a current 22-game hitting streak at Citi Field and Adrian Beltre has hits in his last 19 games at Kaufman Stadium.

Cabrera is hot

From Elias: Asdrubal Cabrera went 2-for-3 as the Rays ended the Mets' seven-game winning streak. Cabrera has 14 hits over his last six games becoming the first Rays player in eight years with that many hits over a six-game span. The last Rays player to do it was Carl Crawford, who had 18 hits over six games in August 2007.

Grandy strikes twice early

From Elias: Curtis Granderson hit a solo home run in both the first and second innings in the Mets' loss to the Rays. Granderson is the seventh player in Mets history to homer in each of the first two innings of a game, the first since David Wright did it on June 25, 2008 against the Mariners.

Bucs thrive outside division

From Elias: Andrew McCutchen went 3-for-3 in the Pirates' win over the Dodgers. Pittsburgh is 44-17 (.721) in games played against teams from outside the National League Central Division. That is, by far, the best record for any major-league team in games played outside its division. The next-best such mark is held by the Cardinals (41-23, .641).

Rangers tie American League record

From Elias: Prince Fielder's two-run homer capped an eight-run eleventh inning in the Rangers' win over the Mariners. That tied the American League record for most runs scored in an eleventh inning, previously done three times: The A's in 1951, Rangers in 1991 and Mariners in 2002. It also matched the second most runs the Rangers have ever scored in any extra inning. Texas scored 12 runs in the 15th inning at Oakland on July 3, 1983 and eight runs in the eleventh inning at Seattle on September 23, 1991.

A.J. extends hitting streak

From Elias: A.J. Pierzynski extended his hitting streak to 13 games with a 2-for-4 night in the Braves' win over the Marlins. It's the second time this season that Pierzynski has fashioned a hitting streak of at least 13 games. The only other player who has had two (or more) hitting streaks of at least 13 games this season is Jose Abreu, who had three such hitting streaks (17, 14 and 13 games). The last Braves player to have two different hitting streaks of at least 13 games in one season was Kelly Johnson in 2008 (22 and 13).

Kinsler is hot

From Elias: Ian Kinsler, who went 3-for-4 on Saturday night, has 35 hits over his last 19 games. It's the most hits Kinsler has had over any 19-game stretch since 2008 when he was with Texas and the most by a Tigers player over 19 games within one season since Placido Polanco in 2008. Kinsler has raised his batting average 30 points during this hot streak (.272 to .302).

Ubaldo throws a gem

From Elias: Ubaldo Jimenez blanked the Angels over eight innings and allowed only two hits Saturday night. Chris Tillman pitched a similar game at Detroit on July 18 (8 IP, 1 H, 0 R). The last time the Orioles had two different pitchers have a game in which they pitched at least eight innings while allowing no more than two hits and no runs in the same season was in 1993 when Mike Mussina, Fernando Valenzuela (twice) and Ben McDonald all did it.

Carpenter hits leadoff homer

From Elias: Matt Carpenter's home run leading off the first inning was the only run the Cardinals would need in their 3-0 victory over the Brewers in Milwaukee. It was the fourth leadoff home run of the season for Carpenter. Only three other Cardinals players since 1900 hit four or more leadoff homers in one season: Lou Brock hit five in 1967 and 1970, Ray Lankford hit five in 1994 and Les Mann hit four in 1921.

8.9.15 OPPONENT AT OAKLAND ATHLETICS

Chavez rewards Melvin's faith with strong finish

Right-hander allows one run over seven innings Saturday vs. Astros

By: Trevor Hass / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's manager Bob Melvin thought about pulling Jesse Chavez in the sixth, but he opted to leave him in, and Chavez finished strong with his two best innings of the game.

"It was just a testament to his fortitude," Melvin said. "He wanted to be out there, he knew he was going to have to get outs and he knew he didn't have any room for error. It was just about really going out there and believing in yourself."

Chavez, who had yielded 13 combined runs in his last three starts, surrendered one run in seven innings in the A's 2-1 win over the Astros on Saturday. He gave up six hits and struck out four, throwing 106 pitches in by far his best start since July 19.

The right-hander said he was a bit hesitant at first, which is something he knew he couldn't afford to do against the Astros' lineup. "After that, you've just got to trust your stuff," Chavez said. "It's moving the way you want it to, it's going where you want it to go. Just trust it in the zone and that's what I did in the sixth and seventh innings."

A's catcher Stephen Vogt said Chavez's cutter, curveball, breaking ball and four-seam fastball were all sharp. The four-seam fastball in particular, Vogt said, was something that got away from Chavez his last few starts, but he went back to using it effectively on Saturday.

Chavez said putting together such a strong performance -- one he knows he's fully capable of on a consistent basis -- is a confidence builder. Now his focus going forward is finding out what troubled him early in the game and working to limit those hiccups, like Preston Tucker's homer in the fourth.

He also said he made a tactical adjustment during the week, one that he believes helped him immensely on Saturday.

In his last start, in which he yielded six runs over 3 2/3 innings in a loss to the Orioles on Monday, Chavez said he would stop and try to pause before he started his momentum forward. That was causing him to lean backward, which is not something a pitcher wants to do, he said.

Pitching off his heels led to flat throws. On Saturday, he said he did a much better job of staying on top of the balls of his feet and keeping the ball down.

"You've got to credit everything to Chavy today for getting us to the eighth," Vogt said. "There was a time when we had a guy up in the fifth, and he was able to throw two more innings after that. Credit him, he came out and threw as good as he's thrown in last month or so."

Crisp leaves Saturday's game with illness

Outfielder expected to play in Sunday's series finale vs. Astros

By: Trevor Hass / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Coco Crisp left Saturday's 2-1 win over the Astros due to illness prior to the start of the third inning.

A's manager Bob Melvin said Crisp was OK after the game, but during the game he was "real nauseous" and felt like he was going to pass out as a result of medication he has been taking.

Sam Fuld replaced Crisp in left field and in the No. 2 spot in the order, and went 0-for-3.

"Prudent to get him out," Melvin said of Crisp. "And Sammy made some good plays along the way, too, in left field."

Melvin said after the game he plans on playing Crisp on Sunday in the series finale against Houston and he expects he'll be fine. Crisp walked in the first and scored on Danny Valencia's RBI double. He didn't make any fielding plays, and did not show any discomfort while running the bases.

Crisp is back with the A's after spending more than two months on the disabled list with a neck strain.

Doolittle works out kinks in first rehab outing

Left-hander recovering from strained shoulder

By: Trevor Hass / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's left-hander Sean Doolittle said he felt a little out of sync, but felt good physically during his first rehab appearance with Class A Advanced Stockton on Friday.

"I was frustrated by that part," Doolittle said. "I thought it was going to be more in rhythm, just because I've been feeling so good doing all my other throwing things."

Doolittle (strained left shoulder) needed only seven pitches to retire the side in order in the fourth inning of his rehab outing. He said he'll pitch again for Stockton on Sunday, but A's manager Bob Melvin said that hasn't been finalized quite yet.

Melvin said Doolittle hit 90 mph, which was a positive, but Doolittle said the ball wasn't coming out as cleanly as he wanted it to. It helped that the hitters swung at nearly everything.

"It was only [seven] pitches," Doolittle said, "but you've got to get your body back in the mode of throwing before the game and then sitting around and then when the phone rings being able to flip that switch."

He expects everything to be a lot cleaner next time. Doolittle said it was difficult throwing at 3:30 p.m., and then coming in for the fourth inning four-and-a-half hours later, but he expects that will be much easier in his next outing.

The left-hander plans to do a better job next time of managing his body to make sure he's ready to go at any point. That's the point of rehab assignments, he said, to work these things out before pitching at the big league level again.

"Get the first one out of the way, get a little more comfortable," Melvin said, "but he didn't give up any hits, didn't walk anybody, threw the ball over the plate, felt good, which is most important."