

## **ASTROS DAILY CLIPS**

### **Tuesday, September 8, 2015**

#### **Even in defeat, Astros show offensive resiliency**

*Correa's 434-foot blast among 3 HRs in loss to A's*

By Oliver Macklin / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- On a day where millions of Americans were given the day off from their jobs, the Astros' offense went to work on the Athletics' pitching.

Jonathan Villar and Carlos Correa homered in the seventh inning and Jake Marisnick connected for a two-run jack in the eighth as Houston tried to rally from a six-run deficit in Monday's 10-9 loss to Oakland on Labor Day.

"Anytime you [allow] a six-run inning, it's difficult to come back from," manager A.J. Hinch said. "But what do we do? We come back and get four and make it a game."

Mike Fiers labored into the sixth inning, allowing four runs, and the Astros' bullpen gave up another four in the frame, putting Houston down 8-2.

But the team with 35 come-from-behind wins in 2015 nearly added another behind the three late-inning home runs.

"It's great to see," Fiers said. "This team never thinks we're out of a game."

Following Oakland's six-run outburst, Villar unloaded on a 1-0 fastball from A's starter Felix Doubront in the seventh, sending it into the second deck down the left-field line.

Later in the inning, with runners on first and second, Correa obliterated a 3-2 fastball off Fernando Rodriguez into the bleachers in left-center to pull the Astros within two. The rookie's 17th home run was projected by Statcast™ to land 434 feet from home plate -- the second longest of his career -- and left his bat at 112 mph.

"Since day one, I really noticed we have a power lineup, from the leadoff guy until the guy hitting in the nine-hole," Correa said. "We know we've got guys that can drive the ball out of the ballpark."

When A's catcher Josh Phegley responded with a two-run bomb, the Astros' offense didn't recoil.

Villar, in the eighth, drove in a run with a grounder and Marisnick launched a two-run homer.

The Astros may not win every game down the stretch, but at least Hinch knows his club will give him all it has every time out.

"We compete until the end," Hinch said. "There's not a doubt in my mind what we're going to do. You see it in our guys. There are a lot of reasons why we're a good team and one of them is because we play until the end."

#### **Kazmir, Gray trade friendly barbs ahead of showdown**

*Left-hander to face former teammates for 1st time since trade to Houston*

By Oliver Macklin / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- When Scott Kazmir first saw Sonny Gray's name penciled in opposite his to start Tuesday's game between the Astros and Athletics, the trash talking between the two began.

Kazmir said he can't remember who instigated it, but as soon as the two friends and former teammates knew they were matched up, the back-and-forth banter was flowing.

"I don't think you want to pitch on Tuesday," Kazmir said he told Gray in a text message.

Kazmir pitched alongside Gray in 2014, and the first half of 2015. Kazmir said he and Gray grew close during their time together in Oakland.

"We do have a close relationship," Kazmir said. "We were a tight-knit group. We were really close, doing everything on and off the field together."

Kazmir said as soon as he was dealt from Oakland to Houston, his Athletics teammates started to poke fun at his eventual return to the mound at O.Co Coliseum.

"As soon as I got traded, [there] was trash talking," Kazmir said. "It was, 'I can't wait 'til you get back here.'"

But the 11-year veteran knew the kidding would reach new heights once it was set in stone Gray would pitch against him.

"With Sonny up there, he's already been texting," Kazmir said. "Once we figured out exactly when he was going to pitch, that's when the trash talking started."

Kazmir said it was strange to be in the visitors' clubhouse at the Coliseum when the two teams met in early August, but this time around he's just trying to "take care of business."

The 31-year-old did not have a chance to face his former team during that four-game series, but said he's excited to be able to face his former team Tuesday.

"They know me, I know them, so it's going to be fun," Kazmir said.

Athletics manager Bob Melvin, who said he was not surprised by the verbal battle between the two friends, took a more serious approach when discussing their relationship. He touched on how big of an influence Kazmir had on Gray during his time with the A's.

"I don't know that there's anyone in the game Sonny looks up to more than Scott Kazmir," Melvin said. "He's done a lot for him, not only on-field stuff with preparation and so forth, but preparation too. They've become very close, so it should be a good matchup tomorrow."

## **Astros' lead shrinks as rally falls short vs. A's**

By Jane Lee and Oliver Macklin / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The A's offense spoiled Mike Fiers' Labor Day, exploding for six runs in the sixth inning, and Felix Doubront pitched into the seventh as Oakland defeated the first-place Astros, 10-9, Monday afternoon at the Coliseum.

"I don't think that's the way you draw up a one-run victory, 10-9," said Josh Phegley, who contributed a two-run homer. "But we stuck with it. Our offense responded and our pitchers hit some bumps in the road there but managed to keep us in the game."

Coco Crisp delivered a tie-breaking double to right field and Billy Burns pulled a two-run single through the right side of a drawn-in infield to help the A's jump out to a six-run lead. Doubront allowed two runs through the first five innings, but could not make it out of the seventh.

The Houston offense did its best to pick up Fiers, clubbing three home runs. Fiers suffered his first loss with his new club. He allowed four runs on five hits and four walks over five-plus innings for the Astros, who had their lead shrunk to two games over Texas -- 3-0 winners over Seattle on Monday night -- atop the American League West.

### **MOMENTS THAT MATTERED**

Pinch me: Crisp has been limited in action of late because of myriad injuries, but he's also been insistent on his availability off the bench, and he's delivered a hit in the pinch in each of his last four games -- the latest a two-run double to get the scoring going in the sixth inning. Crisp is now 4-for-7 as a pinch hitter this season and 11-for-32 in his career.

"That's been one of his trademarks since he's been here," said Sean Doolittle, who notched his first save of the season. "He has a knack for coming up with that big hit late and in clutch situations. I'm really happy for him, and it's definitely a good sign for us."

Brand-new ballgame: Carlos Correa continued his brilliant rookie season with a monster home run. After the A's six-run sixth inning, the Astros responded with four runs of their own in the seventh. Jonathan Villar got the rally started with a pinch-hit leadoff homer, and Correa added a three-run shot for his 17th homer. The blast was projected by Statcast™ to land 434 feet from home plate and left Correa's bat at 112 mph.

The A's added two more runs in the seventh, but the Astros refused to go away quietly. In the eighth, Villar hit a run-scoring groundout and Jake Marisnick hit a two-run homer to cut the deficit to one.

"We're going to play hard until the last out and that's what we did," said Correa. "We battled until the end."

How's the view?: Following a walk to Danny Valencia in the fourth, Brett Lawrie poked a liner to left-center in between Jake Marisnick and Carlos Gomez. Marisnick ran over to the gap in attempt to cut the ball off, but whiffed. Marisnick accidentally blocked the view of Gomez, who was backing up on the play, which caused the ball to sneak by both defenders and give Lawrie an RBI triple.

Youth gone wild: Amid a mostly disappointing season, the A's have watched a handful of their young players flourish -- among them, Rule 5 pick Mark Canha, who notched his 13th home run and 56th RBI in the first inning with a solo shot to left. Fellow rookie

Burns chipped in with two hits, including a first-pitch two-run single in the sixth, his 50th hit when putting the first pitch in play -- most first-pitch hits by an Athletic since Carney Lansford had 55 in 1988. In the seventh, another youngster, Phegley, collected his ninth homer.

"This is where you really take stock on what we're looking for for next year," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "There are a couple young guys that are really making a mark for themselves and creating next year's situation for themselves."

#### QUOTABLE

"Falling behind in counts, giving away free bases isn't how I'm supposed to pitch and [isn't] how to succeed, especially at this level. I just wish I could go back there and redo that one inning." -- Fiers, on the A's six-run sixth inning.

#### SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS

Jose Altuve entered Monday with a 20-game hit streak at the Coliseum, which was tied for the third longest in the stadium's history, but went hitless in four at-bats to end the streak.

#### WHAT'S NEXT

Astros: Scott Kazmir gets the ball for Houston on Tuesday night at 9:05 p.m. CT in his first start against his former A's team since the non-waiver Trade Deadline. The left-hander is 2-4 with a 2.77 ERA in eight starts with the Astros this year.

A's: Sonny Gray takes a 2.36 ERA -- second best in the American League -- into Tuesday's 7:05 p.m. PT matchup against the Astros in the middle matchup of a three-game set at the Coliseum. The right-hander is 1-1 with a 2.57 ERA in two starts versus Houston this season.

## **Kazmir leads Astros in first start against A's since trade**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

Good friends -- and now friendly foes -- Sonny Gray and Scott Kazmir are set to face each other Tuesday in the second game of a three-game set between the A's and first-place Astros at the Coliseum.

It will mark Kazmir's first start against the A's since they dealt him for a pair of prospects ahead of the July 31 non-waiver Trade Deadline. The lefty looks to rebound from his shortest outing since July 8, a 4 1/3-inning start against the Mariners in which he allowed three runs (two earned) on seven hits.

Gray, too, struggled in his last start, yielding a season-high six runs in five innings to the Angels, while surrendering the American League ERA lead to Houston's Dallas Keuchel (2.29). Gray's 2.36 ERA is second, while Kazmir enters with a 2.50 ERA, fourth best in the AL.

#### Things to know about this game

- Gray, who is 1-1 with a 2.57 ERA in two starts against Houston this season, is 11-14 with a 3.13 ERA in 34 career appearances after the All-Star break, compared to 20-6 with a 2.40 ERA in 38 appearances before the break.
- Kazmir has allowed more than three earned runs just twice all season. His .221 opponents average ranks fifth in the AL.
- Astros second baseman Jose Altuve snapped a 20-game hitting streak at the Coliseum on Monday. It's tied with Erick Aybar for the third longest such streak in Coliseum history. The stadium record is a 30-game run, set by the A's Carney Lansford in 1984.

## **Jed Lowrie contributes on his day off, Max Stassi plays first game at home stadium**

By: Jose de Jesus Ortiz / Houston Chronicle

A day after hitting a go-ahead grand slam, the switch-hitting Jed Lowrie was out of the starting lineup Monday against the A's lefthanded starter Felix Doubront.

The decision was made in part to ease the stress on Lowrie's right thumb. He was on the disabled list from April 28 to July 30 with torn ligaments in his right thumb. He also exited a game last month with right hand discomfort.

"This is a good game to give him off," A.J. Hinch said. "The righthanded swing I know he's had a couple of good at-bats. I'm very cautious about that with his thumb."

“The two-three-four days in a row for Jed is something that I’ve mentioned before as his threshold, depending on what I see to get him to the finish line feeling good. And he’s looked as good as anybody on our team.”

Lowrie got a pinch hit in the seventh batting righthanded against lefthander Drew Pomeranz and scored on Carlos Correa’s three-run homer.

...

Astros catcher Max Stassi, a former A’s prospect who grew up cheering for the A’s in Yuba City, Calif., finally got to play a game at O.co Coliseum Monday afternoon.

Stassi had about 15-20 relatives in attendance.

“This is the place I came to as a child,” he said. “I’ve watched many games here, and it’s pretty cool. It’s awesome.”

## **The long-awaited reunion of Scott Kazmir and Sonny Gray**

By: Jose de Jesus Ortiz / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND – A’s ace Sonny Gray started talking trash to his mentor Scott Kazmir almost immediately after Oakland traded his good friend to the Astros on July 23.

Kazmir continued the trash talking recently when he sent his friend a text saying Gray wouldn’t want to be on the mound against the Astros on Tuesday night at O.co Coliseum.

Gray and Kazmir built a close bond as teammates from 2014 until the trade. Now they’ll compete against each other Tuesday night when Kazmir faces the A’s for the first time since he was traded.

“It’s going to be fun. It is,” Kazmir said. “I know there’s going to be a lot of trash talking throughout the whole game. With Sonny back there, we’ve already been texting.”

Kazmir did not pitch in the first series between the clubs here after the trade in August. He spent most of his time away from O.co Coliseum packing up and settling the lease on his local apartment, so he couldn’t hang out with his former teammates. He plans to catch up with them this time around.

“Any time off the field we were hanging out, just close,” Kazmir said. “That’s what we were. That’s what a lot of guys on that squad were. We really truly liked each other.

“That makes for a good team. That makes for some long-lasting friendships. Hopefully after tomorrow we can go out to dinner and have a little trash talking.”

## **Jonathan Villar is making the most of his playing time**

By: Jose de Jesus Ortiz / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND – Jonathan Villar, who was sent down to the minors a day after he lost his starting job to Carlos Correa on June 8, had his best performance since he was recalled last week from Class AAA Fresno.

Villar hit a pinch home run in the seventh inning and drove in another run Monday.

“In one way, I feel good because I’m showing them that I can do the job,” Villar said after the 10-9 loss to the A’s at O.co Coliseum. “But on the other hand, I’m down because we lost. I would have felt better if we had won.

“I’ll keep trying to take advantage 100 percent when they give me opportunities.”

Villar remained in the game at third base.

## **Astros fall just short in slugfest with Athletics**

By: Jose de Jesus Ortiz / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND – Considering the Astros entered Monday afternoon with the second best bullpen ERA in the American League, manager A.J. Hinch moved to protect the psyche of his relievers after a disastrous performance against the A’s.

Starter Mike Fiers wanted some of the blame, and he sure didn't help matters by walking the first two batters in the disastrous six-run sixth inning. But there's no denying the Astros paid dearly for Hinch's decision to use Josh Fields.

The A's pounced on Fiers and Fields and then held on for a 10-9 victory before a crowd of 22,214 at O.co Coliseum. By losing the opener of the three-game series, the Astros' lead fell to two games over the Rangers, who beat the Mariners on Monday.

"Any time the game is in the balance and it doesn't go your way, it's easy to start talking about a bullpen that didn't get their job done," Hinch said. "That's what they do. These guys come in at the most volatile times and try to put out the fire.

"These guys have done too good a job to start piling on now. This is the sixth month of the season where they have been really good."

One year after having the worst relief corps in the majors, the bullpen and the starting rotation are the biggest reasons the Astros have had such a quick, surprising turnaround.

Nonetheless, there have been signs of trouble lately. Pat Neshek suffered consecutive losses last week. Closer Luke Gregerson lost on Saturday before earning the save Sunday after Chad Qualls almost blew a huge lead in the ninth.

Jonathan Villar's solo home run and Carlos Correa's three-run homer helped the Astros cut the deficit to 8-6 with a four-run rally in the top of the seventh, but Josh Phegley's two-run home run off Vince Velasquez in the bottom of the inning provided just enough cushion for the A's to win.

Fiers (7-10) gave up four runs on five hits with four walks and five strikeouts in five innings plus two batters in the sixth for the loss. Fields gave up four hits and four runs with one walk in one-third of an inning.

With the score tied at 2, Fiers issued consecutive walks to Danny Valencia and Brett Lawrie to start the sixth.

"It's just a bad feeling that they didn't earn their way on," Fiers said. "I didn't challenge them. I wasn't aggressive at all, and the pitches weren't even close. I just wish I could go back and make better pitches in that situation."

Billy Butler then greeted Fields with a single to left field to load the bases. Pinch hitter Coco Crisp followed with a two-run double to right, giving the A's a 4-2 lead. One out later, Fields walked Marcus Semien to reload the bases.

Billy Burns followed with a two-run single through the right side. Mark Canha added an RBI single through the right side, giving the A's a 7-2 lead.

Lefthander Joe Thatcher walked Josh Reddick to reload the bases, prompting another call to the bullpen. Velasquez then induced Valencia's fielder's choice, RBI grounder to short.

"We're trying to get to Reddick is what Thatcher was up for, which is why I brought him in," Hinch said. "And he walked him. And then Velasquez behind him to protect against Valencia, who is arguably their best hitter and certainly their best hitter against lefthanded pitching.

"Where it comes to Thatcher being a lefty specialist he was the first lefty to come up. Fields can get all those guys out. He's got plenty of stuff to do it. They found some holes."

Villar got a run back with a leadoff home run into the second deck behind the left field wall in the seventh to cut the deficit to 8-3. Max Stassi followed with a single to center, prompting a call to righthander Fernando Rodriguez.

Rodriguez struck out Jake Marisnick, but he walked George Springer. One out later, Correa hit his three-run home run into the second deck behind the left field wall to cut the deficit to 8-6.

Phegley countered with a two-run home run to left in the bottom of the seventh, giving the A's a 10-6 lead.

Marisnick cut the deficit to 10-9 with a two-run home run to left-center field off lefthander Drew Pomeranz, but that was it.

"We know we can score a lot of runs just in one inning because that's just the kind of lineup we have when everybody is having that good day or good inning," Correa said. "We're going to play hard to the last out. Unfortunately we didn't get the win, but it was a good game."

## **Chris Carter makes rare appearance in Astros starting lineup to begin series in Oakland**

By: Jose de Jesus Ortiz / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND — Astros slugger Chris Carter, who lost his starting spot in early August, was in the starting lineup for only the 12th time in 34 games since Aug. 1.

Carter led the Astros in home runs and RBIs in each of the previous two seasons, but he has had to share first base with Luis Valbuena and Marwin Gonzalez since August.

"We want guys to earn their keep to be in these important games down the stretch," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said. "Obviously the way the soft platoon has gone over the course of the last two or three weeks, I'm trying to mix and match he and Valbuena and Marwin at first like I always have.

"But we want to see production. Obviously we believe in him."

A year after hitting 37 home runs with 88 RBIs, Carter entered Monday with a .182 average, 18 home runs and 52 RBIs. He was 0-for-1 with a walk and an error before Hinch sent Jonathan Villar to hit for him in the seventh inning of the 10-9 loss.

## **Mike Fiers loses as first-place Astros fall to A's 10-9**

By: Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. -- After falling behind by six runs, the Houston Astros showed something to manager A.J. Hinch, even if they fell a little short.

AL West-leading Houston nearly fought back against the Oakland Athletics in a 10-9 loss Monday, but it was unable to overcome a big sixth inning in which pinch-hitter Coco Crisp hit a go-ahead two-run double after Oakland chased Mike Fiers.

"There's a lot of reasons we're a good team, and one of them is because we play 'til the end," Hinch said.

Fiers (2-1) allowed consecutive walks to start the inning before giving way to Josh Fields, who gave up Billy Butler's single to load the bases for Crisp.

Fiers said he felt fine pitching on eight days rest in his second start since throwing 134 pitches in a no-hitter against the Los Angeles Dodgers on Aug. 21. He shouldered much of the blame for this result.

"Falling behind in counts, giving up free bases isn't how I'm supposed to pitch. ... I just need to be better mentally right there," he said. "Just bad command that sixth inning. I put two guys on and put our team in a bad situation. If I eliminate that, we probably win that game."

Pinch-hitter Jonathan Villar hit a home run halfway up the second deck in left leading off the seventh for the Astros, then Carlos Correa added a three-run drive, but the Astros missed a chance to move a season-high-tying 14 games over .500.

Houston began the day with a three-game lead on Texas in the AL West.

Josh Phegley hit a two-run drive in the seventh for the A's after Houston had pulled within 8-6 in the top half. Houston's Jake Marisnick added a two-run shot in the eighth as 15 of the game's 19 runs came from the bottom of the sixth and after.

"We're going to play hard 'til the last out, that's what we do," Correa said.

Lefty Felix Doubront (3-1) worked six-plus innings to win consecutive starts. Sean Doolittle, the fourth reliever, tossed a 1-2-3 ninth for his first save in an injury-shortened year.

"It was awesome. The adrenaline was definitely flowing," the lefty said. "It was right up there with my debut and when I came off the DL as far as the energy level and the atmosphere."

Doubront is someone the A's consider a strong candidate for the 2016 rotation after he "exceeded expectations," according to manager Bob Melvin, with his performance during the season's second half as a fill-in for an injury-plagued pitching staff.

Mark Canha homered and singled in a run, while Billy Burns added a two-run single in the sixth for the A's on a warm Labor Day in which it was 83 degrees at first pitch.

Joe Thatcher, Houston's third pitcher in the sixth, entered with the bases loaded to face Danny Valencia, who drew a leadoff walk to begin the big inning and got Valencia to ground into a force out before Lawrie struck out swinging.

Marisnick hit a sacrifice fly in the second, then Oakland tied it on Brett Lawrie's triple in the fourth.

### **CRISP'S PINCH HITS**

Crisp was a pinch-hitter for the third time in four games and delivered a hit each time. He has a hit in his last four pinch-hit chances overall.

### **TRAINER'S ROOM**

Astros: Lowrie, a former A's infielder, rested most of the day, then was booed as a pinch-hitter in the eighth, when he singled. In his last seven games, he is batting .478 (11 for 23) with three home runs, four doubles and seven RBI. "To get him to the finish line feeling good, and he's looked as good as anybody on our team, today was a day that we chose to get him off at least a start," Hinch said.

Athletics: C Stephen Vogt was resting at home after being hit by a foul tip in the groin Sunday. He said by text message, "I'm feeling a little better today." He had swelling and was scheduled to have a second ultrasound after a first test showed nothing ruptured, Melvin said. ... OFSam Fuld, who last played on Aug. 30 but hasn't batted since Aug. 25 as he deals with back spasms, isn't likely to make a start until this weekend's three-game set at Texas.

#### UP NEXT

Astros: LHP Scott Kazmir (7-9) faces his former club in his ninth start for his hometown Astros, trying to bounce back from throwing just 4 1/3 innings his last time out against Seattle.

Athletics: RHP Sonny Gray (12-7), 0-3 over his last four outings, faces close friend Kazmir. "It's just going to be fun," Kazmir said. "There's going to be a lot of trash talk through the whole deal."

## Elias Says...

By: Elias Sports Bureau

Bradley Jr.'s Ruthian feat

Jackie Bradley Jr. had four hits, including a home run, in four at-bats from the ninth spot of the Red Sox batting order as they beat the Blue Jays, 11-4. The only other players who have gone 4-for-4 or better with a home run from the bottom spot of the batting order in a game for the Red Sox are Babe Ruth and, more recently, Christian Vazquez (last September). The Bambino did it on July 21, 1915, when he went 4-for-4, including the fourth home run of his major-league career. Ruth also earned the win that day, pitching 8<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> innings of five-hit ball in Boston's 4-2 victory over the Browns at Sportsman's Park in St. Louis.

Birdland in the Bronx

Greg Bird's three-run homer on a 0-2 pitch from Brian Matusz in the seventh inning snapped a 5-5 tie in the Yankees' 8-6 triumph over the Orioles. It was Bird's fifth major-league home run, and not only has each of them been hit with at least one runner on base, four of the five have given the Yankees a lead. Bird's four go-ahead home runs, all since August 19, tie him with Yoenis Cespedes, David Ortiz and Ryan Zimmerman for the most in the majors since that date.

What about Matusz? The Orioles southpaw had allowed only one previous home run on a no-ball, two-strike count during his major-league career, and it was also hit by a left-handed batter at Yankee Stadium - Curtis Granderson on August 31, 2012.

Third time is the charm for Greinke

The Dodgers provided Zack Greinke with a 1-0 lead in the top of the second inning before C.J. Cron answered with a solo homer in the bottom of that frame. The Dodgers grabbed a 3-1 lead in the fifth inning, but Greinke handed that back when he served up a two-run homer to Kole Calhoun later that inning. Adrian Gonzalez put the Dodgers back in front for good with a sacrifice fly in the sixth inning before Greinke and six relievers held on for a 7-5 victory over the Angels.

It was the eighth game of Greinke's career in which he twice surrendered leads, and his first game of that kind since July 30, 2013 against the Yankees. But Monday's game was the first of Greinke's career in which he relinquished two leads, both on home runs.

Raburn takes Sale deep twice in one game

Ryan Raburn hit a pair of solo home runs off Chris Sale - a game-tying homer in the fourth inning and a go-ahead shot in the sixth (which stood up as the game-winning run) in the Indians' victory at Chicago. It was the eighth multiple-homer game of Raburn's career and four of them have come at the expense of the White Sox. It is the first time that Sale has ever allowed two home runs in a game to one batter.

Cubs pound Lynn

Lance Lynn was charged with six runs in 2<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> innings and he absorbed the loss in the Cubs' 9-0 trouncing of the Cardinals at Busch Stadium. Lynn has lost each of his three starts versus the Cubs this season while posting a 7.53 ERA in those games, but that puts him in good company. Since 1990, the only other Cardinals pitchers who lost three straight starts against the Cubs in one season with an ERA as high as Lynn's in those games are Matt Morris (2005) and Adam Wainwright (2007).

## Correa's first 75 games

**Carlos Correa homered and drove in four runs in the Astros' 10-9 loss at Oakland. Correa has hit 17 home runs to go along with his 50 RBI in 75 major-league games. The only other player to break into the majors with Houston and produce both as many home runs and RBI through his first 75 games for the team as Correa is George Springer, who did it last year (19 homers and 50 RBI through his first 75 games).**

Mets overcome another shaky inning by Niese

The Mets came from behind to beat the Nationals, 8-5, after Jonathon Niese surrendered a three-run lead in Washington's five-run fourth inning that featured a grand slam by Wilson Ramos. It was Niese's third consecutive game in which he allowed five or more runs in an inning, the longest streak of its kind for any major-league pitcher since Niese himself had a three-game streak in 2010. Niese has been charged with five or more runs in an inning 15 times during his major-league career. The only pitchers who have allowed more innings of five or more runs since 2008 (Niese's first year in the majors) are A.J. Burnett (17) and Rick Porcello (16).

Kendrick homers and beats the Padres

Kyle Kendrick hit the first home run of his major-league career and earned a "five-and-fly" win as the Rockies downed the Padres, 6-4, at Petco Park. Over the last four seasons, the only other Colorado pitcher who won a game in which he homered was Jhoulys Chacin in 2013. Kendrick's home run was the 43rd hit by a Rockies pitcher in their history, and it may surprise you to learn that more of those pitchers' homers were hit in road games (23) than in Denver (20).

Pirates give one away

The Pirates committed four errors and allowed a pair of unearned runs in a 3-1 loss at Cincinnati. It was Pittsburgh's ninth loss this season in which unearned runs accounted for its margin of defeat, tying Atlanta, Philadelphia, and San Diego for the most such losses in the National League. Sean Rodriguez committed two of the Pirates' four errors on Monday in his first start of the season at shortstop, where he had played only 14 innings previously over the last two seasons.

Braves middle infielders contribute to a win

Jace Peterson and Andrelton Simmons both went 3-for-4 in the Braves' victory at Philadelphia. It was the first game this season in which Atlanta's second basemen and shortstops combined to produce as many as six hits. Over the Braves' previous five games (Sept. 2-6) their middle infielders combined for only one hit in 40 at-bats (Peterson 1-for-14, Simmons 0-for-18, Daniel Castro 0-for-4, and Pedro Ciriaco 0-for-4).

Elias has Mariners playing from behind

Adrian Beltre snapped a scoreless tie with his two-run single in the sixth inning off Roenis Elias and the Rangers went on to defeat the Mariners, 3-0. Elias has allowed the first run of the game in 12 of his 16 starts this season (75 percent). The only pitcher who has started at least 15 games this year and allowed the game's first run in a higher percentage of his starts than Elias is Colorado's Eddie Butler (13 of 16 starts, 81 percent).

Royals hit the skids

The Twins handed Kansas City its fourth consecutive loss and snapped Yordano Ventura's six-game winning streak with a 6-2 victory at Kauffman Stadium. The Royals have allowed at least six runs and ten or more hits in each of their last five games. It is their longest streak of that kind since a five-game stretch in May 2011.

Joba Chamberlain pitched one inning and allowed two runs in his debut with the Royals. Over Chamberlain's last five games in the majors (since June 25 with the Tigers), he has allowed eight runs and ten hits, including three homers, in four innings pitched.

Two go-ahead blasts for Davis

Rajai Davis hit two homers in a game for only the second time in his career to help the Tigers defeat the Rays, 5-4. Davis opened the scoring with a two-run clout in the third inning and he capped the scoring with his seventh-inning solo shot that broke a 4-4 tie. They were Davis's second and third go-ahead home runs this year, after he had never hit more than two round-trippers that gave his team a lead in any of his previous nine seasons in the majors.

Another three-hit game for Lucroy

Jonathan Lucroy smacked two doubles and a single for the Brewers as they topped the Marlins, 9-1. It was Lucroy's 29th three-hit game as a catcher over the last three seasons, the most for any major-leaguer from that position during that time (2013-2015).

Corbin shuts down the Giants

Patrick Corbin was the winner in the Diamondback's 6-1 victory over the Giants, allowing six hits over six shutout innings with no walks and five strikeouts. It was the fifth scoreless outing of six or more innings in Corbin's major-league career, but it was the first of those games in which he did not issue a walk.



## Astros' Paulino Another Find in Recent Trade

By: James Chipman / Fangraphs

The Houston Astros acquired right-hander David Paulino and outfielder Danry Vasquez from the Detroit Tigers at the trade deadline in 2013 for a two-month rental of reliever Jose Veras. At the time Vasquez was a rising prospect for the Tigers and the centerpiece of the deal. Paulino was nothing more than a rail-thin project to sweeten the pot.

A lot has changed since then: Paulino has bulked up, his fastball has gained velocity and the breaking ball has taken a step forward developmentally. Across three levels of A-ball this season, the 21-year-old boasts an impressive 72:19 strikeout-to-walk ratio over 67.1 innings. Here are my notes from seeing Paulino in extended spring training this year.

### Physical Description

Lightly listed at 6-foot-7 and 215 pounds, Paulino resembles an NBA small forward, thanks to his athletic workhorse frame. He has long limbs, a high waist, strong thick legs, broad shoulders, large hands and large feet. Formerly the owner of a thin wiry frame, Paulino has worked hard to improve his physical profile, adding exceptional muscle definition throughout his upper and lower body. There is minimal projection remaining for added growth as he appears to be physically maxed out. Paulino's injury history includes Tommy John surgery, performed back in 2013.

### Delivery/Mechanics

Paulino fires the ball from a high 3/4 arm slot, with clean and quick arm action through the release point. He utilizes his tall frame, long levers and high slot to generate steep downward plane, helping yield weak contact and ground balls. Even with the electric velocity, there is minimal effort in Paulino's delivery. Paulino has made great strides, improving the consistency of repeating his delivery, particularly his landing spot and consistent arm slot and arm speed for each pitch. He holds runners well and typically delivers the ball to the plate in 1.30 to 1.35 seconds, which is big-league average.

### Fastball: 60/70

Paulino features two-seam and four-seam fastballs. The four-seamer features solid late life, resting comfortably between 95 and 97 mph, occasionally scraping as high as 98. His two-seamer sits 92-94 mph with natural sink when down in the zone. Paulino already flashes plus-plus velocity and appears to have the aptitude, when considering the movement and command, to get the overall pitch grade to 70 as well.

### Curveball: 50/60

Previously a soft, slow-spinning, loopy offering with inconsistent shape, Paulino's feel for the breaking ball has vastly improved. Thrown now with conviction and desired velocity, the 77-81 mph breaker features 11/5 shape with tight rotation and late-breaking action. Utilized primarily as put-away pitch buried down in the zone, his ability to regularly control the offering and throw it for strikes is still a work in progress. There's work to be done, but the breaking ball has taken a huge step forward, developing into a solid-average pitch now with plus potential.

### Changeup: 40/45

Paulino's 85-86 mph changeup has downward dive with a little fade at its best; however, it's a distant third pitch that lacks life and consistency. Paulino keeps his arm slot but fails to maintain arm speed, which occasionally telegraphs the pitch to advanced batters. The change is currently Paulino's least effective weapon in his repertoire, and its development will likely be a determining factor in his big league role, with relief a likely landing spot if it doesn't get closer to an average pitch consistently.

### Command: 40/45+

Paulino has control, as an aggressive strike thrower that pounds the zone. Like most young prospects, command comes and goes. Regardless, Paulino stays in favorable counts and limits his walks — and he's also a flamethrower with standout stuff, so painting at the corners likely isn't a part of his future.

### Makeup

Paulino is a fierce competitor, but he appears calm and even-keeled on the mound regardless of the results. He enjoys the game and routinely voices a strong desire to be a big leaguer. Paulino is highly regarded by his teammates and coaching staff as a hard worker and a great teammate. He responds well to constructive criticism and has shown the aptitude to overcome injury and polish his craft. There are no off-the-field issues or potential red flags.

### Summary

Paulino is quickly emerging as an absolute steal for the Astros. The progress of his fastball and curveball the past nine months is particularly encouraging, leaving me with reason to believe that the change can also take a step forward. Should the changeup

become an average pitch, I'd project Paulino as a 3/4 starter. However, I think his big-league future is in the bullpen, where his stuff could yield a potential high-leverage reliever.

Paulino's inability to stay on the field naturally creates some added risk. Despite coming stateside in 2012, injuries including Tommy John surgery have limited Paulino to just 106.1 total innings. Staying healthy and logging innings will be imperative for his development. As far as a timeline is concerned, Paulino is probably a couple years away from potentially contributing at the big-league level. In Paulino, I see a big leaguer with slightly above average potential: a nice find when you consider the fact that Veras hasn't pitched in the majors since 2014.

## Monday Morning Ten Pack

By: Baseball Prospectus

Desmond Lindsay, OF, New York Mets (Short Season Brooklyn)

The Mets' top pick in this June's amateur draft, Lindsay impressed me over a couple games last week. He's a standout athlete and it's apparent in all his actions both at the plate and in the field. New to the outfield, his routes and reads need to improve, but he's a plus runner and certainly capable of making the adjustments. At the plate the right-handed hitter shows a very quick bat and his loose hands explode through the zone. Although he's well built for a teenager, there's still room on his frame to get stronger. With his strength, bat speed and feel, it's easy to see Lindsay hitting for at least 40-grade future power - and quite possibly more. Despite being four years younger than much of Brooklyn's roster, Lindsay also handled himself like a mature veteran and fit right in. Poised but loose, the young Met played hard and kept his focus in a meaningless, end of the season game for the last place Cyclones. He put together strong at-bats and made some in game adjustments to pitchers. Off this look I'm looking at Lindsay as an everyday player in the big leagues, but I'd like to see some more before committing to what kind of starter he'll be. The potential is here for a five-tool first-division centerfielder. - Al Skorupa

**David Paulino, RHP, Houston Astros (High-A Lancaster)**

**Acquired after the 2013 season as a PTBNL from Detroit in the immediate aftermath of Tommy John surgery, Paulino has logged 67 innings across three levels this year. Listed at 6-foot-5, 210 pounds, the 21-year-old has to be at least two inches taller and 10 pounds heavier. He's athletic and relatively well-proportioned, yet the limbs just seem like they stretch out forever. The body type is one that yearns for a "bad command" tag, and while there is still a lot of inconsistency in his execution, Paulino demonstrated a surprising feel for the zone in this look.**

**It's an easy motion with good cadence and rhythm in the takeaway through the leg kick, and the arm action to a high three-quarter slot is clean. The high arm angle is key, as Paulino leverages his height very effectively to generate excellent plane on his pitches. Where he gets into some trouble right now is at the drive stage of the delivery, where he showed a repeated tendency to decelerate into his push forward. The slow-down compromised his balance and led to him flying open and repeatedly leaving his arm behind and wasting pitches.**

**His fastball worked 92-95 all night, hitting 96 four times and topping out at 97 to the last batter he faced in the seventh inning. The pitch has late life and plus-or-better boring action, and when the delivery is on time he can really bury it to the bottom of the zone. He held the velocity and movement out of the stretch and through the duration of the start. He was particularly effective working the heater to his arm side, struggling some to control it to the glove side. Still, the overall command showed well enough that it works as a plus pitch already, and there's room for more with further refinement.**

**The curveball is very much a work in progress, but there were flashes of plus potential for that offering as well. He really struggled to snap the pitch off consistently, often getting underneath it and either rolling it or losing it out of the zone, up and to the arm-side. It came in as a mid-70s cement-mixer in those cases, but when he got on top of the pitch it showed nasty two-plane movement with late bite in the 78-81 range. The inconsistency in this start had the pitch playing fringe-average at present, but there's a ton of projection to dream on a solid complement. He also worked in a mid-80s change, going to it increasingly as his preferred secondary as the outing wore on and his feel for the deuce lagged. It's a relatively straight change, but he showed an ability to bury it and keep it out of the danger zone, as well as the confidence to work it right-on-right. His length and plane on the pitch is outstanding, leaving ample room for the 40 present version of the pitch to pick up a grade as he develops.- Wilson Karaman**

Harrison Bader, CF, St. Louis Cardinals (Low-A Peoria)

From his broad-shouldered physique that has room to add muscle, to his high-socks and try-hard mentality, Harrison Bader is a sight out on the Low-A fields. Bader's calling card is his bat speed, which grades out as plus, and he melds the bat speed with his natural strength to produce plus raw power. To this point the 2015 third-round pick hasn't had much of an issue tapping into that power in-game, as he's had a productive pro debut. There are warning signs with the swing, however. Bader has a moderate load and bat wrap, and his swing can get long. He can jump all over a fastball—Bader hit a first pitch fastball for a screaming wall-banger double in my viewing, but he got unbalanced against breaking balls and he was out in front of off-speed offerings. In the

field Bader read the ball well and took efficient routes. On the routine plays he likes to swag it out with a swanky back peddle routine.

Bader is an interesting prospect with obvious tools. There's the possibility that the body matures to be too muscle-bound, which could hurt his swing and push him to a corner. Bader will have to temper his swing mechanics some, but there's talent here. – Mauricio Rubio

Henry Castillo, 2B, Arizona Diamondbacks (Low-A Kane County)

Castillo has been productive all season at Low-A after graduating from a two-year stint at Rookie Ball. He has plus bat speed and moderate feel for the barrel. Castillo shows an ability to cover the plate well against fastballs, and can do so from both sides, as a switch-hitter. Castillo shows more leverage as a righty, as his swing gets a touch more linear from the left side, but the bat speed remains consistent. Castillo can wait back on changeups but breaking balls give him fits. He swings over the top of curveballs and will chase bad sliders, showing an inability to recognize good spin from bad. Defensively Castillo has his lapses at second base. The physical tools are present but his execution is inconsistent. His hands get away from him, and his arm loses accuracy from time to time. Castillo is an interesting player in that he shows some semblance of competence at the plate, but he has a lot of work to do regarding his pitch recognition and defense. – Mauricio Rubio

Manuel Margot, OF, Boston Red Sox (Double-A Portland)

Margot has taken steps forward throughout the 2015 season. Despite some offensive inconsistencies in the middle of the summer, the 20-year-old center fielder has found a late season groove highlighted by showing a better ability to consistently slow sequences down, and work himself into favorable counts. Margot possesses strong bat control, which enables him to get the barrel on a lot of offerings, though it can also lead to situations of the right-handed hitter creating too much weak contact when he's either chasing offerings off the plate or being too passive in stretches.

Margot's time with Portland has served as solid seasoning for the youngster's secondary skills, and also given him the outline for how he needs to approach plate appearances to be successful. The natural offensive skills are certainly here. Look for those skills to continue to translate into game action in the upper levels as the outfielder hones his batting eye, which has been showing the necessary forward progress to close out the year – Chris Mellen

Enyel De Los Santos, LHP, Seattle Mariners (Short-Season Everett)

While he's far from the big leagues, 19-year-old Enyel De Los Santos' present stuff offers plenty to dream on. A solidly built left-hander, he sits 90-93 with a tailing fastball, and hit 94 in the seventh inning in my most recent viewing. He has a quick, loose arm, and he keeps hitters off balance by working quickly and hiding the ball with a slight crossfire. He also induced several whiffs with his slider: the pitch features long, two-plane break, though his best ones are a little sharper with tight, sweeping action.

Still, there are concerns in the profile. De Los Santos' upper and lower halves can get out of synch, and his command wobbled over the course of my viewing. His changeup is a clear third offering, a pitch with limited velocity separation and variable depth. His good ones have a bit of arm-side fade but he also threw a couple of 88 MPH clunkers without any movement — Chris Shaw, the Giants first-rounder this year, deposited one of them halfway to the Space Station.

The safe bet is that De Los Santos eventually settles in as a reliever where, if it all plays up, he can stifle lefties with a mid-90s fastball and an above-average slider. There's a chance for more though: if he can streamline his delivery, his command profile jumps a grade, and he has good enough raw stuff to potentially pitch in a big league rotation. There's work to do, but De Los Santos is a name for Mariners fans to tuck away for the future. – Brendan Gawlowski

Lewis Brinson, OF, Texas Rangers (Triple-A Round Rock)

After spending most of 2015 in High Desert, Lewis Brinson jumped through two levels in a month of games without it seeming to phase him at all. The tall center fielder seems to have finally put some of the pieces together, finding his power outside of the California League, and has demonstrated an improved feel for the zone throughout the season. Concerns about Brinson's ability to hit reliably began with in Hickory in 2013, where he struck out 191 times (503 PA), but he's regularly improved in the years since, striking out only 96 times across two levels in 2014 (albeit, in only 385 PA), and 98 times (452 PA) across three levels in 2015. While this isn't ideal, it does show that Brinson has the ability to make adjustments across time. Visually, Brinson appears calmer, and more in control of his swing, able to access his power more frequently, to the tune of 15 extra-base hits in his short Double-A stint. Defensively, Brinson glides in the outfield. He's quick at reading and adjusting to the path of the ball, and while his best position is center field, he can handle the corners just as well.

At this point, Brinson is one of Texas' top prospects, and 2016 will be an important year in his development. He should start his age 22 season back with Double-A Frisco, where he'll look to continue honing his hitting ability. The tools are all there for an all-star centerfielder with above-average pop for his position, but now more than ever, he has to continue to show that he's able to use them. – Kate Morrison

Williams Jerez, Boston Red Sox (Double-A Portland)

When the Red Sox popped Jerez in the second round in 2011 they thought they were getting a raw but tooled-up outfielder with impact potential; hence the reason they handed him a bonus approaching \$500,000 to sign out of Grand Street High School in Brooklyn. Three rough offensive seasons later—career .529 OPS in three seasons, all shy of full-season ball, and a career high .285 OBP in his debut rookie-league season in 2011—and Jerez was moved to the mound to take advantage of his strong left arm. After translating his impressive athleticism to the mound in 2014, Jerez has rocketed from Low-A Greenville all the way to Double-A in 2015, refining his ability at each stop. In several viewings this summer, Jerez has shown consistent 93-94 mph velocity from the left side, peaking as high as 97 mph when he needs a little extra. He generates his velocity with a strong 6-foot-4, 190-pound frame that is complemented by excellent arm speed and a repeatable delivery. He gets down the mound with ease and generates plane despite a low-3/4 arm slot. His delivery provides some deception, at least in part from his extension out front that gets the ball on hitters quicker than they expect. Behind the plus fastball, Jerez offers an above-average (potentially plus) slider that features tight rotation, two-plane break, and very good depth. He mixes his two-pitch arsenal well, showing a willingness to throw either pitch in any count. On top of the raw ability, Jerez displays excellent makeup on the field, moving with confidence and swagger that gives him an impressive presence on the mound. With continued refinement of his fastball command, Jerez has all the ingredients to develop into a late-inning lefty that pitches when the game is on the line; marking a heck of a turnaround from failed outfield prospect to potential impact reliever. – Mark Anderson

Reese McGuire, C, Pirates (High-A Bradenton)

McGuire is generally considered the top catching prospect in the game, and rightly so. Thanks to his defensive prowess and the lack of quality candidates at the position, it's really not much of a competition, especially considering the importance of defense over offense at catcher.

That importance is the key to McGuire's future, as he's unlike most catching prospects in that his glove is actually well ahead of his bat at present. I discussed McGuire in a Ten Pack early in the season, commending his defense and expecting the bat to progress. Having seen him a number of times this year, he was as advertised, but the development of the bat is coming along slower than expected.

His swing is fundamentally sound, and built for line drives up the middle and to the gaps. If that's all it ever becomes, that'll be fine because he's an elite defender. But he should be capable of more, and his approach and swing aren't conducive to more production. He's aggressive, and because of his contact skills, it leads to as much poor contact as good. His bat speed isn't elite, but it's enough to keep from getting beat repeatedly, assuming he continues to keep himself in good hitter's counts.

I originally thought that McGuire's offense had the potential to be major-league average, which would make it well above average for his position, given his glove. But after further views, it projects more towards being average for a catcher. That still makes him a heck of a prospect, but unless he shows a little more aptitude in terms of driving the ball and making better contact, it limits his elite-level ceiling and keeps him more in line of becoming a major-league regular. – Jeff Moore

Danny Diekroeger, 3B, Cardinals (High-A Palm Beach)

Diekroeger is a case study in the context of draft status. On the general prospect landscape, he doesn't offer a ton of projectability unless you believe in the ability of a 23-year-old to still develop significantly physically. As a senior sign in the 10th round, however, he offers considerable potential, much more than most players in that genre.

What gives Diekroeger a chance is a strong approach at the plate, which helps his average set of physical offensive tools to play to the best of their abilities. He also has enough athleticism and arm strength to play a number of positions, including second and third base, as well as right field should the Cardinals decide to send him to the outfield. What he doesn't offer is a ton of impact potential with the bat, the kind that would be needed to be an everyday player.

That being the case, Diekroeger is in the right system. The Cardinals have a history of getting significant utility out of players with a limited but specific skill set. Diekroeger fits into that mold quite well, and is a "get the most out of his ability" type of player. He struggled to adjust to a promotion to the Florida State League, but he could be the type of player who moves quickly through the Cardinals system, spending about a half-season at each level and eventually fills in a role on the Cardinals bench. – Jeff Moore

## **Hooks End Regular Year with MiLB-Best 89 Wins**

By: CCHooks.com

SAN ANTONIO - An eight-run seventh inning catapulted Corpus Christi to a 12-8 Labor Day victory over the Missions in the regular-season finale at Wolff Stadium.

The Hooks (41-29, 89-51) are the second Texas League team in the last 20 seasons to reach 89 wins in a single campaign, joining the 2011 Missions, who went 94-46.

With the score level at 3, Danry Vasquez reached on an error by the shortstop Benji Gonzalez to begin the seventh. It was one of six errors for San Antonio on the day, the most by a Missions club since 2004.

Following the miscue, singles by Teoscar Hernandez and Chan-Jong Moon led to four consecutive walks from Cody Hebner (0-3). The latter three occurred with the bases loaded. Brandon Alger entered in relief and promptly permitted a single by Leo Heras, making it 8-3 Corpus Christi. Vasquez sent a base hit into right field and Hernandez lifted a sac fly for a seven-run advantage. Moon chopped a high-bouncer to the left side of the infield which was mishandled by Alger, allowing the final run to score.

Reymin Guduan neutralized an error by inducing a double play in the scoreless seventh.

Gabriel Quintana's lead-off double against Michael Freeman in the eighth cut the Hooks' lead to 11-4.

Corpus Christi responded in the ninth with a run against Eric Yardley. A.J. Reed plated Hernandez from second base thanks to a single into left field.

Reed finished the season with a minor-league best 34 home runs and 127 RBIs. The California League MVP reached base safely in 86 of his last 91 games.

Tyler Brunnemann took the hill in the ninth for Corpus Christi but was only able record one out, yielding four hits, including a trio of doubles.

Enter Jandel Gustave who withstood two walks, an infield single and sac fly to end the game with the tying run at the plate.

Francis Martes made the start for the Hooks, yielding two runs on seven hits in four innings. Edison Frias (4-1) earned the victory, holding San Antonio to one unearned run over two innings of work.

Moon led the offensive charge, reaching base five times. He singled and scored twice in addition to a third-inning automatic double.

The Hooks are off Monday before opening the Texas League South Division Series Wednesday night at Whataburger Field. Chris Devenski is Corpus Christi's Game 1 starter against Midland. First pitch 7:05. [Click here for tickets.](#)

## **McDonald slugs 30th homer in regular-season finale**

*Hawks, Mavs to open South Division Mini-Series Wednesday*

By: JetHawks.com

LANCASTER, Calif. - The JetHawks fell behind early on a first-inning, five-run rally and could not recover in a 10-4 loss to the High Desert Mavericks to close the regular season on Monday night at The Hangar.

Marc Wik, Edwin Medina and Chase McDonald all homered for the JetHawks (75-65). Medina's home run was the first of his professional career, and McDonald notched his 30th of the season to become the first JetHawk to hit 30 homers in a season since Jon Gaston hit 35 in 2009.

Lancaster went 0-for-7 with runners in scoring position and was held hitless over the final three innings.

The Mavericks (78-62) plated five runs in the top of the first inning before Christian Powell (3-3) recorded an out. Chris Garia led off the game with a walk, and three consecutive singles by Isiah Kiner-Falefa, Evan Van Hoosier and Joe Jackson gave High Desert a 2-0 lead. Royce Bolinger followed with a three-run homer to cap the rally.

McDonald led off the bottom of the second inning with a double, advanced to third on a groundout and scored the first JetHawks run on a Mott Hyde sacrifice fly.

With two out in the bottom of the third, Wik and Medina hit back-to-back homers off Dallas Gallant (2-1). McDonald led off the home half of the fourth with a home run, but Lancaster would not score again in the game.

Gallant yielded a total of four runs on six hits and three walks over 5.2 innings, but received ample run support to record the win.

High Desert added three runs in Powell's fifth and final inning for an 8-4 lead. A Kiner-Falefa RBI-single in the sixth against Andrew Walter and an eighth-inning RBI-groundout by Jackson off Ryan Thompson extended the Mavericks' lead to six runs.

Troy Scribner and Kevin Comer held the Mavericks scoreless in the seventh and ninth innings, respectively. High Desert received a combined 3.1 innings of scoreless relief from Joeanthony Rivera, Jose Monegro, David Ledbetter and John Fasola.

The JetHawks and the Mavericks will open the South Division Mini-Series on Wednesday at The Hangar with first pitch scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Both teams' starting pitchers are yet to be announced.

## **Beloit's 2-run 8th robs Bandits of finale win**

*Quad Cities finishes with best winning percentage in full-season MiLB, sets franchise ERA mark*

By: Marco LaNave / Quad Cities River Bandits

BELOIT, Wis. - The Beloit Snappers scored two unearned runs in the bottom of the eighth inning to turn a 3-2 deficit into a 4-3 lead and eventual regular season finale victory at Pohlman Field Monday afternoon over the Quad Cities River Bandits, who finished with the best winning percentage in full-season Minor League Baseball for the first time in franchise history.

In addition to their .638 winning percentage, the River Bandits (43-27 second half, 88-50 overall) had their second-best regular season record in franchise history, trailing only the 91-46 mark of the 1992 Quad City River Bandits. At the end of the Minor League Baseball regular season Monday, only the River Bandits, the Houston Astros Class-A affiliate, and the Houston Astros Double-A affiliate Corpus Christi (89-51 in the Texas League) led professional baseball with records 38 games above .500.

After posting a season-high 19 hits Sunday, the River Bandits stole a season-high six bases Monday. Center fielder Bobby Boyd had three stolen bases to match his season high and finish the season with 40 stolen bases - the highest total by an Astros minor leaguer, the third-most in the Midwest League, and the most by a Quad Cities player in 10 years. Boyd also began the scoring Monday. In a scoreless game in the fourth inning, Boyd drew a one-out walk and stole second base with All-Star third baseman Nick Tanielu batting. With first baseman Bryan Muñiz batting, Boyd stole third base - the fourth time he had stolen two bases in the same inning this season - and scored on Muñiz's line-drive RBI single - the River Bandits' first hit - to right-center field for a 1-0 Quad Cities lead.

The Snappers (29-40, 55-84) answered in the bottom of the inning against right-hander Rogelio Armenteros. Shortstop Mikey White drew a leadoff walk, and third baseman Jose Brizuela hit a one-out, two-run home run to right field for a 2-1 Beloit lead. After the home run, Armenteros only allowed two baserunners on a single and a walk, with neither advancing to scoring position. Armenteros finished a career-high seven innings, allowing two earned runs on four hits and two walks with five strikeouts.

Quad Cities tied the game in the top of the fifth inning. River Bandits right fielder Ramon Laureano doubled to left field and went to third base on a flyout by shortstop Kristian Trompiz. After second baseman Jose Fernandez walked, a double steal scored Laureano. In the sixth inning, Boyd hit a leadoff double down the left-field line, stole third base and scored when catcher Argenis Raga overthrew third base.

Right-hander Lachlan Madden (0-2) started the eighth inning with a 3-2 lead by walking center fielder Justin Higley. On first baseman Gabriel Santana's sacrifice, Madden overthrew first base, allowing Higley to score and Santana to reach third base. Designated hitter Joe Bennie hit a go-ahead sacrifice fly to right field. Right-hander Ryan Gorton (1-0) earned the win with perfect eighth and ninth innings.

The River Bandits finished the season setting 56-year Quad Cities Midwest League franchise records for players (61), pitchers (37), and starting pitchers (20), which all led the Houston Astros minor league system. Quad Cities' Midwest League-leading and franchise-record 2.65 team ERA this season was the lowest by a Houston Astros-affiliated domestic team - major or minor league - since 1970, when the Columbus (Ga.) Astros held a 2.57 ERA in the Double-A Southern League.

The River Bandits open a best-of-three Western Division Semifinal at Perfect Game Field at Veterans Memorial Stadium in Cedar Rapids Wednesday at 6:35 p.m. In Game 1, River Bandits right-hander Joshua James (7-4), whose 2.63 ERA led Astros minor leaguers and was fifth in the Midwest League, is scheduled to face Kernels right-hander Felix Jorge (6-7), whose 2.79 ERA ranked seventh in the league.

## **Wernes wins batting title in 6-1 victory over Tigers**

By: TCValleyCats.com

TROY, NY - Bobby Wernes went 2-for-5 with a double, finishing his season with a league-best .351 batting average, as the Tri-City ValleyCats topped the Connecticut Tigers 6-1, to wrap up the 2015 New York-Penn League regular season, at Joseph L. Bruno Stadium, on Monday night.

Wernes helped get the 'Cats in the scoring column in the bottom of the first frame, when he beat out an infield single that drew a throwing error by the Tigers shortstop, which scored Aaron Mizell from second base.

Two frames later, Wernes led off the bottom of the third with a double to right field, before advancing to third on a single by Kolbey Carpenter, and coming home on an RBI base hit by Cesar Carrasco.

The ValleyCats would go on to score three more runs in the bottom of the third, as Hector Roa drove home Carpenter and Carrasco with a two-run single to center field, before scoring himself on a ground-rule double by Brooks Marlow.

Carrasco would go on to score the 'Cats final run in the bottom of the seventh, when he came home on a RBI single by Anthony Hermelyn, after leading off the inning with a double. He led Tri-City in the hit column, finishing 3-for-4, with a double, one run batted in, and two runs scored.

Also posting multi-hit nights were Carpenter (2-for-4 with a run scored), Hermelyn (2-for-3 with a run batted in), Keach Ballard (2-for-4), and Wernes, whose 2-for-5 night helped him become the fifth Tri-City ValleyCat in team history to win the NYPL Batting Title. He also led the league in on base percentage, with a .438 clip.

Also finishing at the top of the NYPL leaderboard in offensive categories included Johnny Sewald, who topped the league in stolen bases (31), runs scored (57), and tied for first in walks (46). Also, left fielder Aaron Mizell's 7 triples tied for the most in the NYPL. Sewald's stolen bases, runs, and walks, as well as Mizell's triples, set ValleyCats' single season records. As a team, the ValleyCats led the league with 365 runs scored, 319 runs batted in, 297 walks, a .345 on base percentage, and finished second with 38 home runs. The Tri-City pitchers also led the league in strikeouts, with 635.

Monday's win over Connecticut gave the 'Cats a record of 42-33 and they will now face the 41-34 Staten Island Yankees in the Semi-Final round, to begin the 2015 New York-Penn League playoffs.

Game 1 of the series will begin at 7 p.m., on Wednesday, September 9, at Richmond County Ballpark, in Staten Island, N.Y., before the two squads head to Joseph L. Bruno Stadium on Thursday, September 10, also with a 7pm start time. If necessary, Game 3 will also take place at "The Joe," on Friday.

## **Astros' dramatic rally evens championship series**

*Deciding game three on Tuesday in Princeton*

By: Greeneville Astros

Princeton, WV - The Greeneville Astros had their largest come-from-behind win of the year on Monday in game two of the Appalachian League Championship Series. Facing a five-run deficit heading into the seventh inning, the Astros rallied for a dramatic 10-8 win over the Princeton Rays to avoid elimination and force a series-deciding game three on Tuesday in Princeton.

The Astros fell into a hole early as the Rays built a four-run lead through the first three innings. In the first inning, Princeton scored on a Greeneville throwing error while trying to get the lead runner at second base before adding a Kewby Meyer two-run double. Then, David Rodriguez led off the third inning with a solo homer.

Over the next two innings, the Astros recovered to get back into the game. In the fourth inning, with two outs, the Astros got back-to-back solo home runs from Kyle Tucker and Connor Goedert. Then, with two outs in the fifth inning, Rodrigo Ayarza doubled and scored on a Myles Straw RBI-single to pull the Astros within a single run.

Princeton answered right back with a two runs apiece in the bottom of the fifth and sixth to increase their lead to five runs, their largest lead of the game. In the fifth, Jose Rojas connected on a two-run double. Then, in the sixth, Jonathan Popadics scored on a wild pitch before Rodriguez knocked in his second run of the game with a RBI single.

Trailing 8-3 at the start of the seventh inning, Christian Correa entered the game for the Astros as a pinch-hitter in place of catcher Kevin Martir and started the inning off with a single. Designated hitter Brauly Mejia followed with another single before Arturo Michelena loaded the bases as he reached on a Princeton fielding error at third. Then, Ayarza came back up to the plate and ripped a grand slam over the right field fence to pull Greeneville back within one at 8-7.

Unable to produce any runs on two hits in the eighth inning, the Astros still needed to overcome a one-run deficit going into the ninth. Once again, Ayarza came through with a leadoff base hit and advanced to second on a sacrifice bunt by Straw. Then, with two outs, Tucker drew a walk and Goedert loaded the bases with an infield single to shortstop.

Following a Princeton pitching change, Astros' third baseman Randy Cesar was at the plate for the Astros. Facing a one-two count, Cesar was able to single into shallow right field. Aided by a fielding error, Cesar ended up on third as three runs came around to score and give the Astros their first lead of the game.

Astros' reliever Samil De Los Santos, who had entered the game in the eighth, came back out to finish it off in the ninth with a one-two-three inning. He faced the minimum over his two scoreless innings, picked up two strikeouts, and was credited with the win.

As a team, the Astros concluded the night with 10 runs on 16 hits, including a season-high three home runs. Cesar and Ayarza led the way for Greeneville with three hits apiece. Ayarza was three-for-four while Cesar was three-for-five. However, four others had multi-hit nights as Daz Cameron, Tucker, Goedert and Correa finished with two hits each.

The winner-take-all game three will take place at Hunnicutt Field in Princeton on Tuesday night. First pitch is scheduled for 7:00pm.

# OAKLAND CLIPS

## **Doolittle caps wild game with five-pitch 1st save**

*Left-hander back with Oakland after two shoulder rehabs*

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- On the mound in a one-run game vying for his first save of the season following two lengthy shoulder rehabs, Sean Doolittle reached for the fastball this home crowd had long missed and needed just five of them to dispatch the heart of Houston's lineup for a 10-9 A's victory on Monday.

"That was awesome," Doolittle said. "The adrenaline was definitely flowing. It was right up there with my debut and when I came back from the DL, as far as my energy level and the atmosphere. This time, I did a better job of harnessing that energy and using it to help myself. Fortunately, I was able to have a quick one."

Jose Altuve and Carlos Correa both jumped on the first pitch they saw from Doolittle, each popping out at the edge of the right side of the infield. Carlos Gomez took note and let a fastball whiz by him for a called first strike. He swung at the next two, missing each time.

Just like that, Doolittle was back -- securing a victory in the kind of game that, so many times this season, has slipped from the A's hands. They entered the day with 31 one-run losses, most in the Majors.

Doolittle has watched the majority of them from the sidelines, having been limited to six prior games because of a pair of shoulder injuries following an All-Star 2014 campaign in which he compiled 22 saves.

"There were a lot of times this year I wasn't sure how or if or when I was going to come back, and I've really felt that every outing I've had so far has been progressively better and I've felt progressively more comfortable, in a better rhythm, gaining confidence in my shoulder," he said. "Today, for it to culminate in a one-run game, going through the teeth of their order, at home, it was a lot of fun."

"If you're drawing it up, not the guys you really want to run a left-hander out there against in the last inning," said manager Bob Melvin, smiling.

But Melvin had spoken with Doolittle prior to the game, mostly inquiring about his readiness for back-to-back appearances for the first time all season.

"I told them, 'I'm feeling really good,' and they said they would take the training wheels off," Doolittle said. "They didn't tell me what scenario or what situation I would pitch. That's just the way it worked out. I'm still shaking."

"It's nice to have him back," Melvin said. "We needed a one-run win."

## **Vogt resting at home after being hit by foul tip**

*No fractures for Oakland's All-Star catcher injured Sunday vs. Seattle*

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's catcher Stephen Vogt remained at home resting during the club's opener against the Astros on Monday, one day after being hit in the groin by a foul tip in a loss to the Mariners.

"Based on the ultrasound yesterday, nothing is fractured or ruptured," manager Bob Melvin said Monday morning. "There was a lot of swelling, so they're going to do another one today to make sure, but he's resting as comfortably as you can rest at this point."

"He won't be here today, and we'll have a better idea in the next coming days when he would be available again."

In Vogt's absence, rookie Carson Blair becomes the backup to Josh Phegley. Blair made his big league debut Sunday as a defensive replacement for Vogt and drew a walk in his first career plate appearance.

Melvin said he would be comfortable giving Blair a start while Vogt is sidelined.

"Usually with a guy like that, you're most concerned with the catching and throwing and receiving part of it, where we saw enough in Spring Training to be very comfortable with that end of it," Melvin said. "At points during the season this year, he's swung the bat very well too."