

Astros daily clips

Saturday, april 30, 2016

Fiers fires 7 strong, while Gattis slugs 1st HR

Astros get key performances before heartbreaking loss

By Rick Eymer / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Everything seemed to be in place for the Astros to finally win back-to-back games this season.

Mike Fiers produced his best game of the season and clubhouse leader Evan Gattis produced his first home run.

Astros setup man Ken Giles came out in the eighth to protect a two-run lead but got into immediate trouble and retired just one batter as the Athletics scored five runs in the last two innings to race past the Astros, 7-4, on Friday night.

Carlos Gomez was thrown out trying to stretch a double into a triple leading off the ninth and things unraveled in hurry.

"It feels like something always happens that we can't finish these games," Fiers said. "Giles' stuff is too good for him to continue scuffling. We trust in him. He'll come out in the eighth the next time and get the job done. We've seen it in the past."

Fiers did his job to give the bullpen some rest. He completed seven innings, leaving the game with a 4-2 lead. He struck out five and didn't walk a batter.

"It was big for me and big for the team," Fiers said. "This starting staff knows it can go deep into games."

Fiers had all of his pitches working and even Coco Crisp's two-run homer in the second inning was a decent pitch.

"He just got on top of it and got it out," Fiers said. "We had a good gameplan and I didn't have to shake off Kratz much."

Fiers threw 74 of his 104 pitches for strikes.

Gattis, who has hit in a season-high four straight games, drove in the Astros' first two runs.

"I've been working with [hitting coach Dave Hudgens] on treating every at-bat the same," Gattis said. "Before I would go after RBIs. It's been better the last couple of games."

Astros manager A.J. Hinch said Gattis has been getting into hitters counts, where he can cover more of the plate and be aggressive.

"When you're behind in the count, you're defensive and you don't cover as much of the plate," Hinch said. "When he gets into an aggressive mindset, he's much better."

On a night when spark-plug Jose Altuve ended a 19-game streak of reaching base safely, the Astros were still in a position to win the game. Instead, Houston lost for the first time in seven games when leading after seven innings.

Gomez collected two hits, showing there's no hangover from Wednesday's game in Seattle when he was forced to leave the game after getting hit by a pitch on his right hand.

George Springer went 1-for-3 and has reached base safely in 14 straight.

McCullers amps up pitch count in shoulder rehab

Astros starter to throw in extended spring training Monday

By Rick Eymer / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Astros right-hander Lance McCullers came out of his most recent bullpen session in good shape and he'll take the next step toward returning to action on Monday when he throws again at extended spring training in Florida.

McCullers, who opened the season on the disabled list with shoulder soreness, is expected to throw between 60-75 pitches.

"That should be comfortable for him," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said. "He'll throw a bullpen after that and then possibly to rehab."

The 22-year-old was 6-7 with a 3.22 ERA in 22 starts last year in his rookie season with the Astros, pitching a career-high 125 innings.

Worth noting

- OF Carlos Gomez was in the starting lineup after X-rays revealed no structural damage on his right hand after being hit by a pitch Wednesday against the Mariners.

"After that, it's about the strength of his hand and his ability to grip the bat," Hinch said. "I trust him when he told me he was ready."

- Hinch said his bullpen has been overused and Thursday's off-day came at the right time.

"I still feel like we've used the bullpen to an extreme," he said. "Will Harris has thrown the most and these guys are used to throwing every other day or every third day."

Fiers solid, but Astros can't hold off A's rally

By Jane Lee and Rick Eymer / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Yonder Alonso notched his first homer of the season in thrilling fashion, launching a walk-off, three-run homer off Pat Neshek in the ninth inning for the A's, who also watched their top pitching prospect, Sean Manaea, make his big league debut in the 7-4 series-opening victory over the Astros at the Coliseum on Friday evening.

Stephen Vogt began the ninth with a double, and Mark Canha's ensuing sacrifice bunt advanced pinch-runner Tyler Ladendorf to third, at which point Coco Crisp was intentionally walked to bring Alonso, batting .174 this season, to the plate.

"I've been putting in extra work every single day to try to get back to what I know I can do," Alonso said. "Given the situation of the game and how we came back says a lot about our team. Just a good team win. We needed that.

"Flying around the bases, you get goosebumps running around. You just want to take it all in. Just speechless."

Yonder Alonso talks about his walk-off home run, his power hitting and his thought process at the plate

The A's trailed by two heading into the eighth inning but tied the game with right-hander Ken Giles on the mound thanks to a solo homer from Marcus Semien -- his team-leading sixth of the season -- and a sacrifice fly off the bat of Jed Lowrie after Billy Burns singled, stole second and advanced to third on an error.

"What's been consistent is every mistake we make has been magnified," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said. "They come back to haunt us."

Manaea was charged with four runs -- two of them scoring with lefty Sean Doolittle on the mound in a three-run sixth -- and four hits and four walks with three strikeouts in five-plus innings. Astros right-hander Mike Fiers strung together seven solid innings, his lone blemish a two-run homer to Coco Crisp in the second inning.

Coco Crisp blasts a two-run homer to right-center field off Mike Fiers to give the A's a 2-1 lead in the 2nd

Evan Gattis homered for the first time this season to begin the second, and it was his RBI single in the sixth that tied the game and fueled the Astros to a three-run inning that also featured run-scoring hits from Tyler White and Marwin Gonzalez.

Evan Gattis drives in his second run of the game, sending a single through the infield and into left to tie the game at 2

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Who's not on third: Carlos Gomez hit a ball off the left-field wall to open the ninth inning and decided to go for three as the ball rolled away from left fielder Crisp. He never made it, getting thrown out by center fielder Burns and denying the Astros a chance to take the lead.

"It was extremely heads up to be over there in a position to make that throw," A's manager Bob Melvin said of Burns. "He's learning all the time. He was very impactful toward the later end of the game for sure."

In a tie game, Billy Burns comes up big and throws out Carlos Gomez attempting to turn a double into a triple with a perfect throw to third

Manaea arrives: Though his first big league pitching line left much to be desired, Manaea still managed to impress much of the night, facing the minimum in three of five full innings and showcasing a lively fastball throughout. Not once did he appear to be pitching with nerves, coming out of the gates with a nine-pitch first inning that ended with his first Major League strikeout. More >

"Obviously I thought he showed a lot of poise in his debut against a tough lineup," Vogt said. "I was joking, he got all the firsts out of the way first four hitters. First out, first hit, first punchout, first homer, and then he got to relax and go to work. He threw some really good pitches tonight."

Sean Manaea records his first Major League strikeout by getting Carlos Correa swinging in the top of the 1st inning

Fiers goes seven: In his longest outing of the season, Fiers proved that by throwing strikes, good things can happen. He did not walk a batter. He threw 104 pitches and he probably only wanted one of them back, the home run ball to Crisp.

Mike Fiers throws seven strong innings, allowing just two runs on seven hits while striking out five on the road against the A's

QUOTABLE

"We would've taken anything in the outfield grass, but right-field bleachers work too." -- Melvin, on Alonso's home run

A's manager Bob Melvin talks about his excitement over the A's walk-off win following Yonder Alonso's 9th inning three-run homer

WHAT'S NEXT

Astros: Right-hander Chris Devenski (0-0, 0.66) gets his first start of the season in Saturday's 3:05 p.m. CT game against the A's. He has 12 strikeouts in 13 2/3 innings against one walk as a reliever. The 25-year-old rookie has given up 11 hits.

Athletics: Right-hander Jesse Hahn will be recalled from Triple-A Nashville on Saturday to make his 2016 A's debut in a start against the Astros, with first pitch at the Coliseum set for 1:05 p.m. PT. Hahn, who posted a 3.35 ERA in 16 starts for Oakland last year, had a 2.04 ERA in four starts for the Sounds.

Relievers blow lead as Astros fall to A's

By Jake Kaplan / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND --- Astros manager A.J. Hinch has stuck with Ken Giles as his set-up man throughout the pitcher's nightmarish start to his tenure with the team.

But after yet another implosion from Giles in Friday night's 7-4 loss to the Athletics at the Coliseum, Hinch may need to already diminish Giles' role. The embattled reliever had faced only three Oakland batters by the time he turned a two-run eighth-inning lead into a tie game.

Yonder Alonso clinched the Astros' fate in the ninth with a walk-off, three-run homer off Pat Neshek. Tony Sipp began the inning for Houston, yielding a leadoff double to Stephen Vogt.

The loss ensured the Astros, pegged by many in spring training as World Series contenders, will finish April without having won consecutive games. Their 7-16 record is tied with the Twins for worst in the American League, their 121 runs allowed 15 more than the next-worst AL team.

"It seems like kind of the perfect storm with the way we're playing right now," Astros designated hitter Evan Gattis said. "We're playing hard. I think everybody knows that. But it just hasn't been really going our way right now."

Giles unravels

The struggles of Giles, the centerpiece of a December trade with the Phillies in which the Astros parted with five prospects, were at the forefront of two losses in a five-game span. The 25-year-old righthander allowed two runs to the Red Sox in Sunday's 12-inning loss, a backdrop for Friday's woeful 1/3 of an inning.

Hinch tabbed Giles on Friday to preserve Mike Fiers' best start of the season and bridge the gap to closer Luke Gregerson. He did neither. The first batter he faced, nine-hole hitting Marcus Semien, launched a full-count fastball into the left-field seats, the fourth homer Giles has allowed in 10 innings.

Billy Burns followed with a single, and the speedy Oakland center fielder didn't stay idle long. He stole second with the help of an errant throw by catcher Erik Kratz, and advanced to third when the ball trickled into center field.

That set the stage for Jed Lowrie to exact a measure of revenge on his former team, skying a fly ball to the warning track in right field. Hinch walked to the mound and patted Giles on the back. The pitcher headed for the dugout.

Giles, who compiled an incredible 1.56 ERA over 115 2/3 innings over the previous two seasons, has a 9.00 ERA in April. He has been touched up for at least a run in six of his 11 appearances. The four home runs he has surrendered over 52 batters faced with Houston is one more than he gave up facing 464 batters while with Philadelphia.

He exited the visitors' clubhouse without speaking to reporters after Friday's game.

Moments earlier, Hinch wasn't ready to make any declarations regarding Giles' role.

"We're always evaluating where guys stand and where the best place to use them is," Hinch said. "I don't think tonight is necessarily the right time to sort of confirm or deny anything. I think we've got to start making pitches. He knows that. It's been the tale of a couple of pitches."

Manaea's debut

The eighth and ninth innings spoiled a great outing from Fiers, who outdueled Sean Manaea, the Athletics' top pitching prospect who made his major-league debut. Fiers completed seven innings for the first time in his five starts, the two runs of damage against him coming on a Coco Crisp home run in the second inning.

Offensively, the Astros exorcised their demons hitting with runners in scoring position for the second consecutive game. They tallied three of their seven hits in such instances, all three coming in a three-run sixth inning.

Gattis, who hit his first home run of the season in the second inning, plated George Springer with a single to left field to open the scoring in the sixth.

Tyler White, slumping enough that he was out of the lineup Wednesday, broke through two batters later with a similarly placed single that scored Carlos Correa. White battled through an 11-pitch at-bat against lefthander Sean Doolittle, fouling off five fastballs and a splitter before connecting on a 95 m.p.h. heater.

Marwin Gonzalez closed the book on Manaea when he scored Gattis on a ground-rule double that bounced over the wall in right-center field. Manaea, a 6-foot-5, 245-pound lefthander, was charged with each of the three sixth-inning runs, and four runs overall in his five-plus innings.

A dismal ninth

After the Athletics tagged Giles for two runs, Sipp stopped the bleeding and gave the Astros a chance to win in the ninth. Carlos Gomez smoked a Ryan Madson cutter off the left field wall for what would have been a leadoff double, but the center fielder's over aggressiveness cost his team for the second time this week. Burns fielded the ball off a long carom and fired a strike to third baseman Chris Coghlan in time to tag a diving Gomez.

"I saw Coco Crisp try to get the ball and the center fielder hustled up and he made the throw," Gomez said. "It should be Coco's throw. That's why I continued to run to third. If he (fielded) the ball, I'd be safe easy.

"You have to give the credit to the center fielder to hustle up and get all the way to left field and make a good throw."

Given Giles' eighth-inning woes and Gomez running into an out at third base to open the ninth, it felt almost inevitable the A's would finish the Astros off in the ninth.

"We just need to figure out how to win as a team," Fiers said. "It just feels like there's always something that happens in a game that we can't finish these games out.

"We're good enough to win these games, and everyone knows that here. It just comes down to doing it."

Astros' Lance McCullers to pitch Monday in extended spring training

By Jake Kaplan / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND -- Lance McCullers' next rehab start will, like his last, come in an extended spring training game.

The Astros' starter will pitch four or five innings and likely 60 to 75 pitches Monday in Florida. A mid-week bullpen session should follow, after which the team will assess whether it's time for the pitcher to continue his rehab assignment with the organization's Class AAA or Class AA affiliate.

McCullers felt good after pitching three innings in extended spring training Wednesday and following his bullpen session in Florida on Friday, Astros manager A.J. Hinch said. Issues recovering between starts stalled the 22-year-old righthander's rehab assignment after a three-inning outing April 11, so Monday's outing will be his most extensive yet. He began the season on the disabled list because of a mid-March bout of shoulder soreness that set him back in spring training.

"I'm encouraged by the continual good news, which is something that we've needed to hear," Hinch said.

New Astros starter Chris Devenski unleashes his inner dragon

By Jake Kaplan / Houston Chronicle

Rodney Linares laughed when the question was posed during a recent phone conversation. Why, the Class AA Corpus Christi manager was asked, is Chris Devenski nicknamed "Dragon."

As Linares tells it, the newest Astros starting pitcher's moniker can be traced to a game played in the first half of last season at Whataburger Field in Corpus Christi. Devenski, yet to lose on the season at that point, was on the mound, in trouble in the fifth or sixth inning and quickly running out of pitches.

RELATED: Chris Devenski to take Scott Feldman's turn in Astros rotation

Two runners were on base, Linares recalls, when Doug Brocail, then the Hooks' pitching coach, asked the manager if he should make a mound visit. "No," Linares told Brocail, "I'll go out there and if I don't like what I see, I'll pull him."

Linares remembers smiling somewhat as he walked to the mound, where he was met with a super-serious look from his pitcher.

"I got him," Devenski assured his manager.

"What do you mean you got him?" Linares asked.

"Jefe, I got him," Devenski said.

"All right," Linares said before walking back to the dugout. "You know what I want you to do? I want you to unleash the dragon."

A new nickname was born.

"After that, I think he struck the guy out on a 3-2 changeup and he came in and all he could talk about was 'The dragon's been unleashed' and 'I've unleashed the dragon,'" Linares said in a recent interview. "So, from there on, he wouldn't want me to call him Devenski or Devo or Chris or anything. Just 'Dragon.' "

Devenski even had his manager write "Dragon" on the lineup card posted in the dugout during games. The pitcher, even now as a major leaguer, travels with a green, fire-breathing dragon toy that sits in his locker during games. It will sit on a shelf in the visitors' clubhouse at the Oakland Coliseum on Saturday afternoon when the 25-year-old righthander makes his first big-league start.

"He did so many things last year that everybody kept saying, 'This dude is crazy,'" said Linares, who recently received a text message from Devenski with a photo of the green dragon. "He would work out so much. He would run so much. But he had a goal in mind (of pitching in the major leagues) and he went out there and he got it. I give him a lot of credit for it."

Elias Says...

By Elias Sports Bureau / ESPN.com

Round 1 to Red Sox after Ortiz's game-winner

From Elias: David Ortiz cleared the Green Monster with a two-run tiebreaking homer in the bottom of the eighth inning, giving the Red Sox a 4-2 victory over the Yankees. That marked Ortiz's 48th homer versus the Yankees (not including five in the postseason), breaking a tie with Harmon Killebrew and Rafael Palmeiro for sixth-most all time against the Yanks. Of the six players with at least 48 homers against the Yankees, five played at least part of their careers with the Red Sox - Jimmie Foxx (70), Ted Williams (62), Manny Ramirez (55), Carl Yastrzemski (52), and Ortiz (48). The only non-Sox player on that list is Hank Greenberg, who ranks fourth with 53 home runs.

Ortiz was the second 40-year-old to homer at Fenway Park on Friday night, after Alex Rodriguez put the Yankees on the scoreboard earlier in the night with a solo homer. Friday's Red Sox-Yankees matchup marked the first game in major-league history in which a player age 40 or older homered for each team.

Cespedes, Mets have huge inning versus Giants

From Elias: A grand slam by Yoenis Cespedes capped a 12-run third inning for the Mets in their blowout victory over the Giants. The 12 runs are a franchise record for New York in a single inning. The team's previous record for an inning was 11 runs, which the Mets did in the sixth inning on July 16, 2006 at Wrigley Field.

Cespedes drove in half of the Mets' 12 runs in the team's record-setting frame, hitting a two-run single off Jake Peavy before his bases-clearing slam off reliever Mike Broadway. Cespedes became the first Mets player to drive in at least six runs in an inning. Butch Huskey had the previous team record for most RBIs in an inning, driving in five runs in the sixth inning on May 26, 1998 against the Marlins.

Cespedes also set another Mets record on Friday night, as his grand slam marked his ninth consecutive game with an extra-base hit. Cespedes entered the day tied with Ty Wigginton, who had an extra-base hit in eight consecutive games in 2004.

Story's not over yet

From Elias: Trevor Story continued his rewrite of baseball's record books on Friday night against the Diamondbacks. The Rockies shortstop homered off Robbie Ray in the fifth inning, marking the rookie's 10th homer of the season. Story joined Jose Abreu (2014) on the short list of players to hit at least 10 homers in April in their rookie season. Story also became the first middle-infielder in major-league history to hit at least 10 home runs in any month within his rookie season, as well as the first player ever to homer at least 10 times in the month in which he made his major-league debut (Abreu missed the cut on this one as he debuted on March 31, 2014).

Conley shuts down Brewers bats

From Elias: Adam Conley dominated the Brewers lineup on Friday, finishing his night with 7T hitless innings to earn his first win of the season. Conley, who left the game with a 5-0 lead after throwing 116 pitches, is the first pitcher in major-league history to be removed from a start with a lead after pitching at least 7T innings without allowing a hit. The previous all-time record had been established just three weeks ago, when Dodgers rookie Ross Stripling pitched 7S hitless innings in his major-league debut on April 8 at San Francisco.

Fielder reaches RBIs milestone

From Elias: Prince Fielder's RBI-single started a three-run rally for the Rangers in their 4-2 victory over the Angels. The RBI was the 1000th for Fielder in his major-league career, making him the fifth player since 1972 (when the Washington Senators relocated to Arlington, Texas) to record his 1000th RBI in a Rangers uniform. The four previous players to do so are Al Oliver (1981), Brian Downing (1991), Will Clark (1997), and Juan Gonzalez (1999).

Fielder is now within eight RBIs of his father Cecil, who drove in 1008 runs in his major-league career. The only other father-son combo in major-league history to produce at least 1000 RBIs apiece is Bobby and Barry Bonds.

Walkoff winner for Howard

From Elias: Ryan Howard had his best game of the season on Friday, capping a three-hit game with a walkoff homer in the 11th inning to give the Phillies a 4-3 victory over the Indians. The game-winning shot was the sixth walkoff home run for Howard, tying him with Cy Williams for second-most in Phillies history. Mike Schmidt leads the team with 10 walkoff homers.

Of Howard's six game-ending homers, five have come in extra innings. That's the most homers of that kind for any Phillies player, and it's tied with Matt Kemp for the third-most among active players. The top two among active players are Albert Pujols, who has eight extra-inning walkoff home runs, and Alex Rodriguez, who has hit six.

Hernandez walks tightrope in 1-0 win

From Elias: Felix Hernandez got just one run of support on Friday, but it was enough to notch his second win as the Mariners blanked the Royals, 1-0. Hernandez. Friday marked the eighth start of Hernandez's major-league career in which he earned a win despite Seattle's offense being held to one run in the game. That's the most starts of that kind for any pitcher in Mariners history - Randy Johnson is next on the list with four 1-0 wins for Seattle. The only other active pitchers with more than four 1-0 wins as a starter are Gio Gonzalez and Anibal Sanchez. Both have exactly five wins of that kind.

Szczur slams Braves at Wrigley

From Elias: Matt Szczur followed Anthony Rizzo's go-ahead RBI single with a grand-slam home run off Braves reliever Chris Withrow, providing more than enough insurance for the Cubs in their 6-1 victory at Wrigley Field. Szczur's longball is the 300th grand-slam home run in a regular season game at Wrigley Field, whose gates first opened in 1914 (it was known as Weeghman Park back then). That's the second-most bases loaded home runs hit at any major-league stadium, past or present. Only Fenway Park, with 339, has more. The first grand slam in Wrigley/Weeghman history was hit on May 6, 1914 by Rollie Zeider, who played for Chicago's Federal League team. Ernie Banks has the most salamis of any player at Wrigley - he hit eight grand slams at "The Friendly Confines" over 19 seasons with Chicago.

Alonso snaps homerless streak with a walkoff

From Elias: Yonder Alonso's three-run homer in the bottom of the ninth inning gave the A's a 7-4 walkoff win over the Astros. Alonso had been homerless in his first 21 games with the A's and had not homered since August of last season, a span of 112 at-bats. Prior to Alonso, the last A's player whose first home run with the team was a walkoff winner for Oakland is Brandon Hicks in July 2012.

Nicasio rolling at home

From Elias: Juan Nicasio pitched seven scoreless innings for the Pirates in their 4-1 victory over the Reds. Nicasio, who signed a one-year deal with Pittsburgh in the offseason, has won all three of his starts at PNC Park since joining the Pirates, striking out 21 batters over 18 innings in those games. Nicasio is the first Pirates pitcher in franchise history to go 3-0 with 21 or more strikeouts in the first three home starts of his tenure with Pittsburgh. Three Pirates pitchers had three wins and exactly 20 strikeouts in their first three home starts for Pittsburgh - Nick Maddox (1907), Larry McWilliams (1982), and Tim Wakefield (1992).

Kemp goes deep at his old stomping ground

From Elias: Matt Kemp's three-run homer in the top of the eighth inning put the Padres in front for good against the Dodgers on Friday night. The go-ahead blast for Kemp was his first home run at Dodger Stadium as a member of the Padres; he homered there 104 times in nine seasons with the Dodgers. Kemp is one of three players to hit a home run at Dodger Stadium against Los Angeles after homering at least 100 times there as a member of the Dodgers. The other two to do so are Steve Garvey (1983) and Ron Cey (1985).

Jays beat Rays thanks to Saunders

From Elias: Michael Saunders hit a pair of solo homers for the Blue Jays in their 6-1 victory over the Rays. Saunders became the first leadoff hitter with a multi-homer game for the Jays since Marco Scutaro, who homered twice from the first slot in the order for Toronto on July 22, 2009 versus the Indians.

Three other players this season homered twice in a game while batting first for their team - Jean Segura (April 7), Enrique Hernandez (April 15), and Curtis Granderson (April 22). No player had a game of that kind in April last season.

Middle of order packs punch for Tigers

From Elias: The Tigers batters feasted on Twins pitching on Friday night, racking up a season-high 18 hits in Detroit's 9-2 victory in Minneapolis. The middle of the Tigers' lineup did most of the damage - cleanup hitter Victor Martinez had four hits while Justin Upton and Nick Castellanos each had three hits apiece from the fifth and sixth slots in the order. That marked the third time in the last 10 seasons that each of the Tigers' middle three hitters of their starting lineup had at least three hits in the same game. Detroit's 4-5-6 hitters also did that on May 25, 2012 at Minnesota and on July 8, 2014 at home versus the Dodgers. The only other team with a game of that kind this season is the Rockies (April 27 versus Pittsburgh).

Watch out for that first pitch, it's a doozy!

From Elias: Nolan Reimold's three-run homer in the seventh inning put the Orioles up for good in their 6-3 victory over the White Sox. Reimold went deep on the first pitch of his at-bat in the seventh inning, marking Baltimore's ninth first-pitch home run this season. That's tied with the Cubs for the most homers of that kind in the majors this season. The Orioles also lead the majors with a .481 batting average in one-pitch at-bats.

Grizzlies fall just short after thrilling 8th inning rally

El Paso escapes Chukchansi Park with 6-5 victory Friday night

By Fresno Grizzlies

The Fresno Grizzlies wound up on the short end of a thriller Friday evening at Chukchansi Park, in front of the second-largest crowd of the season (9,643), and the largest since opening night. El Paso led four separate times en route to a 6-5 victory, despite a three-run Fresno rally in the eighth inning to tie the game.

El Paso struck first in the first, with an Alex Dickerson RBI double, scoring Carlos Asuaje after his double led off the game. Fresno answered with a RBI double of their own, off the bat of A.J. Reed (1-2, 3 BB). It was Reed's club-leading 17th run driven in of the season, extending his team-best current hit streak to six games. The Chihuahuas re-took the lead in the second, on a Diego Goris RBI single, scoring Jason Hagerty after his leadoff double.

Jon Singleton (2-4, BB) tied it again in the third with a solo blast to left field to beat a shift; it was Singleton's second consecutive game with a homer, and he's now hit safely in four of his last five. His fifth home run of the season tied Reed for the club lead. El Paso answered with their only homer of the night in the fourth, when Jason Hagerty went yard in the fourth following a James Loney single, for a two-run shot and a 4-2 lead. That remained the score until the eighth, when a Loney RBI double made it 5-2.

The home half of the eighth saw Fresno send eight batters to the plate, collecting four hits and a walk, scoring thrice thanks to a bases-loaded two-run single to right by Colin Moran (15 RBI), followed a batter later by Singleton's second RBI of the night, a line single to left, sending the big Friday crowd into a frenzy.

In the top of the ninth however, the back and forth affair stayed true to form, when Ryan Schimpf led off with a double. After a sac bunt and a sac fly off the bat of former Grizz Nick Noonan, Schimpf trotted home for a 6-5 lead as the eventual winning run.

The Grizzlies nearly pulled off what would have been their largest comeback win of the season, despite striking out a season-high 15 times, and leaving a season-high 15 runners on base. The Grizz dropped to 3-3 this season in one-run games, their first such loss at home.

Neither starter lasted past the fifth inning; Fresno's Brady Rodgers went four and a third innings, allowing four runs (all earned) on nine hits with no walks and three strikeouts. Carlos Pimentel went four innings, allowing five hits and two runs (both earned) with three walks and six strikeouts for El Paso. James Hoyt (0-2) was the victim of El Paso's ninth, saddled with the loss. Derek Eitel (1-0) picked up the win, tossing an inning and a third of scoreless, hitless relief to end the game.

Game three of this four game series, part of an eight-game Grizzlies homestand through May 5, is set for Saturday night at 7:05. RHP Jeremy Guthrie (0-4, 11.00) will start for El Paso, opposite RHP Mike Hauschild (1-2, 6.35) for Fresno.

Frisco Continues Historic Start

Hooks Falter Late in Frisco

By Corpus Christi Hooks

FRISCO - The Frisco RoughRiders scored five runs in the bottom of the 8th to defeat Corpus Christi by a final score of 8-7 in front of 7,577 fans at Dr. Pepper Ballpark on Friday night.

The Frisco RoughRiders (16-4) are off to their best 20-game start in franchise history and extended their winning streak to five with the win.

Cody Palmquist (1-0) won his first decision with the RoughRiders after pitching two innings, giving up three hits, walking one, and striking out one.

The Hooks (9-11) lost their fifth game in a row and eighth out of their last nine games.

Corpus Christi got off to a great start as Chase McDonald singled home Jack Mayfield in the 1st to open the scoring. Frisco answered with a two-run double from Ronald Guzman in the bottom half that scored Isiah Kiner-Falefa and Lewis Brinson to give the Riders a 2-1 lead.

The Hooks got single runs in the 3rd and 4th inning to regain the lead. Another RBI for Chase McDonald on a sacrifice fly to center once again scored Mayfield and tied the game. They went ahead in the 4th when Alfredo Gonzalez grounded out to short, scoring Danry Vasquez.

The Riders answered a couple innings later in the bottom of the 6th. Alberto Triunfel drove home his third run of the season on a fielder's choice that allowed Zach Cone to score and tie the game again, this time at 3.

Chase McDonald would not go quietly into the night. Already with two RBI's, he stepped up in a big spot with the bases loaded and two outs in the top of the 7th. He took the first pitch he saw from David Perez and launched it over the center field fence to give the Hooks their second grand slam of the season and most importantly a 7-3 lead.

On a night where Francis Martes (1-2) had looked pretty solid in his first two innings of work, things quickly unraveled in the 8th. Back-to-back doubles by Alex Burg and Zach Cone plated one right away to cut the lead to three. After a walk to Garrett Weber and strikeout of Triunfel, Kiner-Falefa lined a triple to right center field that scored two to make it 7-6 Hooks. An RBI single by Chris Gimenez two pitches later would score Kiner-Falefa and tie the game.

Michael Freeman came on in relief of Martes looking to halt the Riders' charge in its tracks. Instead, Brinson reached on a fielder's choice and advanced on a throwing error by Mayfield. Ryan Cordell, who had been hitless and was in danger of losing his league-best 14-game hitting streak, delivered with a single that scored Brinson and gave the Riders the run they needed to hold on.

Despite the tough sequence of the events, Corpus Christi fought back to load the bases and put the pressure on Palmquist in the top of the 9th. He got the out Frisco needed when J.D. Davis struck out to end the inning and the game.

Lost in the shuffle was a fantastic start by Brian Holmes. The Hooks' southpaw pitched five strong innings, surrendering seven hits, two runs, walking one, and striking out four. His only mistake was giving up the two-run double to Guzman in the 1st.

The Hooks will play the second of four against the Riders on Saturday night with first pitch coming at 7:05. Michael Coffin and Kevin Piel will bring you all the action on NewsRadio 1360 KCTX.

Thornton, James combine to toss gem at Diamond

Duo allows just one-hit, faces one over the minimum in shutout win over Storm

By Jason Schwarz / Lancaster JetHawks

LAKE ELSINORE, Calif. - Trent Thornton and Joshua James combined a one-hit shutout to lead the JetHawks to a series opening, 1-0, victory over the Lake Elsinore Storm on Friday night at The Diamond.

Thornton (1-0) started the game and retired 15 of the 16 batters he faced over a career-high matching five inning of work. He struck out five and did not walk a batter. The lone Storm hit of the game came with one out in the second inning on an Edwin Moreno double.

James, the tandem starter, picked up where Thornton left off and tossed the final four innings to pick up his first save. The right-hander struck out six, did not allow a hit and issued one walk. Javier Guerra, the batter who drew James' lone walk, was caught stealing.

Lancaster (8-11) jumped on the board in the top of the first inning. Bobby Boyd drew a leadoff walk and stole second base, the first of two steals on the night for the outfielder. Two batters later, Nick Tanielu lined a single to right field to drive in the game's only run.

Dinelson Lamet (3-1) lasted five innings in his start for Lake Elsinore. He allowed three hits and struck out five.

The one-hitter marked the first time the JetHawks had allowed fewer than two hits in a game since the club's no-hitter in May of 2014.

The JetHawks take on the Storm (9-13) in the second of the three-game series on Saturday night at The Diamond. Brock Dykxhoorn (1-0) is scheduled to start against Thomas Dorminy (0-3). First pitch is 6 p.m.

Bandits tame Whitecaps, win third straight

Error helps Bandits take late lead in one-run victory

By Quad Cities River Bandits

DAVENPORT, IA. - The Quad Cities River Bandits pitchers put up nothing but zeros after the first inning in a 2-1 victory over the West Michigan Whitecaps on Friday night in front of 6,637 fans at Modern Woodmen Park. Bobby Wernes had a perfect 3-for-3 night at the plate with two doubles and Christian Correa had a pair of hits with a run scored.

With the game tied at 1-1 in the eighth, Kyle Tucker singled to put the go-ahead run on base for the Bandits (10-12). Connor Goedert knocked a base hit to left field and Cam Gibson let the ball skate under his glove. Tucker came all the way home to score what would be the eventual winning run.

Sebastian Kessay worked out of a bases loaded pickle in the seventh and tossed three scoreless innings to pick up his first win (1-2) this season. The Arizona-native struck out a season-high six batters and allowed three hits and a walk. Kevin McCanna got the start and gave up the first-inning but nothing more in four innings. Ryan Deemes used a double-play ball to face the minimum in one frame of work.

The Whitecaps (10-11) jumped ahead with a first inning run. Derek Hill led off the game with a single and was driven in thanks to a single from Will Allen, which scooted off the glove of a diving Wernes, to give West Michigan a 1-0 lead.

Quad Cities answered in the fifth frame, tying the contest. Christian Correa singled and Wernes doubled to move Correa to third. Brooks Marlow grounded into a fielder's choice and Correa slid under the tag at the plate to tie the game, 1-1.

Matt Hall was untouchable through two innings, striking out four batters. He got into a jam in the third but forced Tucker to strand the bases loaded with a groundout. Hall left after the fifth inning and Toller Boardman (1-3) gave up just the one unearned run in the eighth the rest of the way, but suffered the loss.

RHP Justin Ferrell makes his first start of 2016 for the River Bandits on Saturday night. West Michigan counters with RHP Beau Burrows. First pitch is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. CT at Modern Woodmen Park and you can join Jake Levy and Lance Ragland for the Lloyd Agencies Pregame Show at 6:45 p.m. on 1170 AM K-BOB in the Quad Cities, and on RiverBandits.com or the Tuneln app anywhere.

4.30.16 opponent at oakland athletics

Manaea brings moxie to mound in MLB debut

'Unreal experience,' A's top prospect says after 7-4 win

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Sean Manaea arrived on the scene Friday -- with hair that hasn't been cut in nearly a year barely contained by an A's cap -- along with an even greater volume of poise that served the big lefty well in his big league debut.

Manaea's final line was nothing extraordinary; in fact, it looks mediocre at best on paper, with four runs, four hits and four walks allowed in five-plus innings. But that hardly told the whole story, for the 24-year-old Manaea, considered the club's top pitching prospect, greatly impressed in Oakland's 7-4, walk-off victory over Houston.

"He was excited," catcher Stephen Vogt said. "He was antsy, probably a little nervous. I don't think many people saw it, but right when he took the mound for his warmup pitches, he kind of looked around and took a deep breath. I thought that was really cool to notice that and just make you love the moment."

• A's Top 30 Prospects

From there, Manaea let loose, facing the minimum during his first inning of work despite offering up a one-out single to George Springer, who was promptly caught stealing. Young phenom Carlos Correa swung through a 3-2 slider from Manaea to end the frame.

Sean Manaea records his first Major League strikeout by getting Carlos Correa swinging in the top of the 1st inning

That Manaea was able to induce outs with that pitch was telling; it was the one the A's instructed him to fine-tune when he was directed to Triple-A Nashville following an extended stay in big-league camp -- his first with an Oakland club that reeled him in last summer in the Ben Zobrist trade with the Royals, who drafted Manaea with their second first-round pick in 2013.

The slider wasn't quite consistent all night. None of his pitches were, and he admitted to being too fine with many of them, but Manaea threw plenty of good ones -- particularly with his lively fastball -- to remind the A's of their fortune to strike such a deal.

A's manager Bob Melvin talks about his excitement over the A's walk-off win following Yonder Alonso's 9th inning three-run homer

The southpaw surrendered a leadoff homer to Evan Gattis to begin the second, but he wouldn't find trouble again until the sixth, when he was touched for three runs -- two with Sean Doolittle on the mound.

"I think I got past the point where I was really, really nervous and anxious and just kind of felt numb for a little bit," Manaea said. "Just going out to the mound for the first inning and looking around and seeing all the fans, it was amazing. I was really, really excited. I was just trying to keep all those emotions in check and keep as calm as possible and it was kind of hard at times, but I tried my best."

More than 20 friends and family members, most of them from Manaea's home state of Indiana, were in attendance at the Coliseum, where all were treated to a walk-off ending.

"Unreal experience," Manaea said. "I'm so happy to be here."

"I thought he was good," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "It's not an easy lineup for a lefty to have to go through."

Bassitt to DL with elbow strain; Hahn recalled

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Not even the anticipation that accompanied the big league debut of A's top pitching prospect Sean Manaea on Friday could distract from the concern surrounding another member of Oakland's suddenly jumbled rotation.

Right-hander Chris Bassitt was placed on the disabled list earlier in the day with an elbow strain, leading the A's to recall righty Jesse Hahn from Triple-A Nashville and slot him into a Saturday start against the visiting Astros. Rich Hill will start Sunday's series finale, and Kendall Graveman will follow on seven days' rest against the Mariners on Monday, with Sonny Gray pitching on an extra day of rest Tuesday.

Bassitt, who was knocked around for seven runs and 10 hits in just 3 2/3 innings in Detroit on Thursday, said Friday he'd been pitching with pain all season, though to a much greater extent in his most recent outing, at which point he informed the medical staff. He underwent an MRI on Friday and will seek a second opinion, according to A's manager Bob Melvin, who said later in the night, "It's something that we have to look a little further into."

The right-hander initially believed the discomfort to be a non-issue and a common occurrence early in the season, as pitch counts steadily progressed. But then Bassitt watched his velocity drop -- his fastball, which routinely reached 95 and 96 mph in his first start, sat in the low 90s Thursday -- "and that's obviously affected everything else," he said.

"I can't throw offspeed. I literally can't throw offspeed," Bassitt said. "My curveball was nothing, my slider was straight. My best pitch honestly out of every pitch I threw was my changeup."

"I was, to say the least, really upset after yesterday. Hopefully we caught it before it's anything significant, but I guess we'll find out."

Bassitt logged a 2.79 ERA over his first three starts and a 13.50 ERA in his last two.

"It's certainly disappointing for him and for us that he has to go through this, but he's a talented guy and hopefully we get him back sooner than later," Melvin said. "My guess is he thought it would go away, and it ended up getting a little worse and it got to a point yesterday where he needed to say something."

"I didn't want to say anything because I've worked harder than I ever have this offseason," Bassitt said. "I felt so excited and prepared going into this season, and for this to happen, it really sucks. The way I'm feeling right now, I can't throw right now."

Hahn returns to the A's after pitching to a 2.04 ERA in four starts with the Sounds following a disappointing spring in which he compiled an 11.15 ERA and .382 opponents average.

"Jesse did a great job for us last year, had a little bit of a tough spring and had to work his way back, but [he] has, and we're looking forward to seeing him," Melvin said.

"I was pretty motivated," said Hahn, who made 16 starts last year before suffering a season-ending forearm injury. "I just wanted to make it a short stay and do everything I needed to do to get back up here as quick as possible. So I went down there, continued working on things I needed to work on, and I'm here right now, hopefully for good."

Worth noting

- The A's called up right-handed reliever Andrew Triggs with Manaea from Triple-A on Friday and also optioned catcher/outfielder Matt McBride to Nashville. Triggs is expected to return to Nashville on Saturday when Hahn is officially added to the active roster.

Washington gets foul present on birthday

A's 3B coach hit by ball on shin, stays in game

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's third-base coach Ron Washington was gift-wrapped a foul ball on his birthday Friday night, but in an unexpected and unfortunate way.

In the fifth inning, A's outfielder Billy Burns fouled off a pitch from Astros starter Mike Fiers that shot toward Washington, who took a direct hit to the side of his right shin.

Washington, who turned 64 on Friday, assured reporters after the game he was fine, but A's manager Bob Melvin noted, "For a minute there, it was scary."

"He's going to be a little bit sore tomorrow," Melvin said. "He had nowhere to go, and it was a bullet. You expect a righty to maybe pull one down there, you don't expect a lefty to hit one there, so he was hurting there for a minute, but I'm sure the win makes him feel a little bit better, and we'll see how he feels tomorrow."

Fuld set for season-ending shoulder surgery

A's OF injured shoulder March 20 in Spring Training

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's outfielder Sam Fuld will undergo season-ending shoulder surgery next month, with plans for a repair of the rotator cuff and the capsule of the shoulder joint, he told MLB.com on Friday.

Manager Bob Melvin confirmed the surgery, which is scheduled for May 18 with Dr. Neal ElAttrache in Los Angeles.

"I knew there was significant damage in there and I knew it was a possibility," Fuld said. "I obviously wanted to try to avoid doing it and treat it conservatively, but it just wasn't progressing and unfortunately this was the best decision. It's tough to come to grips with that obviously, because that's the whole season."

Fuld's rehab will likely take him into 2017, as well, with at least a year's recovery ahead of him, he said. The 34-year-old will be a free agent at season's end.

"Hopefully it minimizes the impact of the 2017 season, and hopefully I can come back with full health, but of course it's frustrating," he said. "It's never fun to be hurt, but I was excited to have a good year this year and bounce back from what I deemed a poor year the year before."

Fuld, who hurt his shoulder March 20 while throwing home during an exhibition game, played in 120 games for the A's last year, logging 325 plate appearances and batting .197 with a .276 on-base percentage in that span. He's a .227 career hitter in parts of eight big league seasons but extremely valuable in the field, where he can play all three outfield positions with above-average defense.

Worth Noting

- Third baseman Danny Valencia (left hamstring strain) is progressing extremely well, said Melvin, who noted Friday, "I don't have much doubt he'll be ready once the 15 days are up." Valencia is eligible to return May 6.
- Right-hander Henderson Alvarez is scheduled to make his next rehab start Saturday with Class-A Advanced Stockton. He'll throw four innings, or up to 60 pitches.