**Astros Daily Clips**

**Wednesday July 20, 2016**

**Astros' bullpen squanders lead in loss to Athletics**

*Keuchel's gem goes for naught as parade of relievers falter*

​By Angel Verdejo Jr.

OAKLAND, Calif. - Even a bullpen that leads the American League in ERA since May 1 is going to have an off day.

Tuesday was one of those days for the Astros bullpen, as the Athletics tied the game in the bottom of the ninth off closer Will Harris, who was a perfect 9 for 9 on save chances going in, and won it 4-3 in the 10th in walk-off fashion at the Oakland Coliseum.

Josh Reddick's opposite-field, broken-bat single off Tony Sipp came against the shift and scored Marcus Semien, who beat Carlos Correa's throw to the plate to win it.

The Athletics also had chances to tie the game in the seventh and eighth innings.

"Definitely a winnable game (but) we had a rough game out of the bullpen," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said. "Not too many of our guys came in and had clean innings. It wasn't their nights, so when that happens - especially at this ballpark - bad things happen."

It's the second time this season the Astros (50-44) will lose two games of a series in Oakland. The last-place Athletics took 2 of 3 at the end of April. They close the series Wednesday and the teams won't meet at the Coliseum again until September.

"They get paid too," Sipp said. "I think everyone wants to play well and it just so happens that these guys seem to hit another gear when we play them, but they're talented too. You can't take anything away from them."

Dallas Keuchel held the Athletics in check for six innings. The lefthander, who hadn't pitched since July 10 and said the extended rest threw him off, put together his sixth straight quality start.

This comes after a miserable two-month stretch from April to June. In 11 starts, Keuchel was 1-8 with a 6.58 ERA.

Since, Keuchel has allowed more than two earned runs once.

He threw a season-high 116 pitches in 6 1/3 innings, allowing two runs while striking out six and walking three.

"Had to battle all night," Keuchel said. "A lot of 3-2 counts. Was able to establish fastball in and work the two-seam (fastball) and cutter off that. Did some good but other than that, I felt real rusty."

He also got some help from the defense.

In the second, Ryon Healy singled to left with two on and two outs. Colby Rasmus fired a strike to the plate where a waiting Evan Gattis tagged out Semien. The out was Rasmus' ninth assist from left field and 10th overall to put him second in the American League.

In the fifth, Jake Smolinski walked but was thrown out trying to steal second base. Gattis has thrown out six of his last nine would-be base stealers.

Keuchel got an out in the seventh before giving up a Billy Butler single and Smolinski double.

Ken Giles came in and couldn't keep the shutout. On his second pitch, Healy hit a 98-mph fastball to the right-center gap, clearing the bases with the double and cutting the lead to 3-2. Stephen Vogt flew out for the second out, but Coco Crisp singled, putting runners at the corners as Healy was held at third base.

Giles got out of it, deflecting a Jed Lowrie comebacker that Correa was able to handle.

In the eighth, Luke Gregerson worked around a pair of two-out walks and a wild pitch, leaving Semien at third on a Reddick flyout.

Harris gave up back-to-back doubles, the second from Crisp scoring Vogt to tie the game.

"This game was more about us not being able to close the game out late in the game," Hinch said. "It never felt like we had enough runs and it turned out we didn't."

Lost in the defeat is the hitting stretch Jose Altuve is putting together, especially on the road. After getting four hits Sunday against the Mariners and just missing on a fifth, the four-time All-Star notched a single, double and triple in his first three at-bats Tuesday.

He struck out in his fourth appearance but singled in the ninth for his 94th career game with at least three hits.

Altuve has 10 hits in his last 14 at-bats and has reached safely in 34 straight road games. For the year, he's hitting .415 on the road.

"I'm going to the plate expecting to get a hit," Altuve said. "If you go up there not expecting to get a hit, you're wrong."

The Astros got on the scoreboard first against Dillon Overton, who was recalled from Class AAA to make a spot start after Tuesday's scheduled starter (Sean Manaea) had to pitch five emergency innings Sunday.

With runners in scoring position in the third inning, Carlos Correa hit a comebacker toward the mound and Overton flipped to catcher Matt McBride, who tagged Marwin Gonzalez just before the first baseman could get his hand on the plate.

Luis Valbuena hit the next pitch back up the middle, scoring Altuve with the two-out RBI single.

George Springer made it 2-0 with his 21st home run, a deep drive off the batter's eye that carried an estimated 420 feet. The solo shot set a new career best - Springer hit 20 as a rookie in 2014.

Altuve followed with his triple and scored on a Correa sacrifice fly.​

**Athletics walk off on Astros in 10th inning**

​By: Angel Verdejo Jr. / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND - Jose Altuve made the first three look easy.

A single in the first inning. A double in the third. A triple in the fifth.

It's a feat he's done three times.

But there's a reason the "natural cycle" - getting all four hits in order from single to home run - has only occurred 14 times in the history of Major League Baseball. Altuve missed out on history and a cycle.

And it all came in a 4-3 loss in extra innings. Josh Reddick hit a broken-bat single the other way against the infield shift, scoring Marcus Semien in the 10th inning after the Athletics tied the game in the ninth off Will Harris.

The Athletics left the tying run at third base in the seventh and eighth inning, but got back-to-back doubles in the ninth, the second by Coco Crisp to score Stephen Vogt.

In the 10th, Marcus Semien singled off Pat Neshek before he was replaced by Tony Sipp. The lefthander walked Yonder Alonso before Reddick hit one the other way.

Carlos Correa reached it and threw home, but Semien beat the ball for the walk-off win.

The Athletics go for the sweep Wednesday, while the Astros failed to gain ground on the Rangers, who lost Tuesday to the Angels.

Altuve's chance for history came up short against reliever Daniel Coulombe. Leading off the eighth inning, Altuve fouled off two changeups and swung through another. Coulombe's sixth pitch was a curveball, and Altuve - and his .353 batting average - was caught looking.

He got another chance in the 10th inning for a cycle, sending a Liam Hendriks fastball to center for a single. The four-hit game was Altuve's second in three days.

Altuve, who has reached in 34 straight road games and is hitting .507 in his last 17, is still searching for his first five-hit game. The four-time All-Star has 94 career games with three or four hits.

The Astros got on the scoreboard first against Dillon Overton, who was recalled from Class AAA to make a spot start after Tuesday's scheduled starter (Sean Manaea) had to pitch five emergency innings Sunday. It was his third start since June and the 24-year-old saved a run before giving one up.

With runners in scoring position in the third inning, Carlos Correa hit a comebacker toward the mound and Overton flipped to Matt McBride, who tagged Marwin Gonzalez just before the first baseman could get his hand on the plate.

Luis Valbuena hit the next pitch back up the middle, scoring Altuve with the two-out RBI single.

George Springer made it 2-0 with his 21st home run, a deep drive off the batter's eye that carried an estimated 420 feet. The solo shot set a new career best - Springer hit 20 as a rookie in 2014.

Altuve followed with his triple and scored on a Correa sacrifice fly.

Dallas Keuchel took the no-decision but put together his sixth straight quality start. This comes after a miserable two-month stretch from April to June. In 11 starts, Keuchel was 1-8 with a 6.58 ERA.

Since, Keuchel has allowed more than two earned runs once.

He threw a season-high 116 pitches in 6 1/3 innings, striking out six and walking three.

He also got some help from the defense.

In the second, Ryon Healy singled to left with two on and two outs. Colby Rasmus was there and fired a strike to home plate where a waiting Evan Gattis tagged out Semien. The out was Rasmus' ninth assist from left field and 10th overall to put him second in the American League.

In the fifth, Jake Smolinski walked but was thrown out trying to steal second base. Gattis has thrown out six of his last nine would-be base stealers.

Keuchel followed with back-to-back strikeouts.

His night ended in the seventh. Semien flew out, but Keuchel fell behind Billy Butler before giving up a single. Keuchel fell behind Smolinski as well, and gave up a double before exiting.

Ken Giles came in and couldn't keep the shutout. On his second pitch, Healy hit a 98-mph fastball to the right-center gap, clearing the bases with the double and cutting the lead to 3-2. Stephen Vogt flew out for the second out, but Coco Crisp singled, putting runners at the corners as Healy was held at third base.

Giles got out of it, deflecting a Jed Lowrie comebacker toward Correa for the final out.

The Athletics also put the tying run on third in the eighth inning, getting a pair of two-out walks off Luke Gregerson before a wild pitch moved Semien up 90 feet. Josh Reddick pinch hit for Smolinski, but flew out to Rasmus.

Harris, who hadn't pitched since July 10, struck out Healy to start the ninth before Vogt worked the 12-pitch at-bat. Crisp then doubled off the wall in right, but thought it was a home run and was jogging around second base when the throw came in. Crisp was tagged out but Vogt scored to tie the game.

It was the first blown save by Harris on the season.​

**Carlos Gomez gets some rest at DH against Athletics**

​By: Angel Verdejo Jr. / Houston Chronicle

Carlos Gomez was the designated hitter Tuesday, which was already scheduled but came at a good time after the center fielder jumped into the wall Monday and had the trainer out to check on him after sliding head first on an infield single.

Jake Marisnick was in center and Colby Rasmus was in left against Oakland lefthander Dillon Overton, who was called up Tuesday from Class AAA Nashville to make a spot start.

"Gomez's body has been beat up the last few games," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said before Tuesday's game. "The DH is a half day for him. I wanted Colby to face this lefty and give him a few different looks. And I love Jake in center field whenever possible.

"Again, we only have 12 position players and as the season is going to go on here, a couple of these guys are going to get some days off (and) a couple of these are going to get some DH days to rest them up."

In all, nine different players have been the DH this season. It's the third for Gomez, who said only hitting doesn't bother him.

"Especially at this field in this weather," he said. "If it's in Houston, I might say, 'No, no, no - I want to play center.' But here, you get frozen out there. So taking a little break helps."​

**Michael Feliz looks to bounce back after rough outing against Athletics**

​By: Angel Verdejo Jr. / Houston Chronicle

Overshadowed in Monday's fireworks and meltdown was a pitching performance Michael Feliz will probably want to forget, which is a surprise with how dominant the 23-year-old righthander has been since returning to the team.

Astros manager A.J. Hinch went to Feliz with two on and two outs in the fourth inning. Three runs already scored with two outs, ending Mike Fiers' night.

But Feliz, who has come back to Earth after breezing through competition in June and early July, couldn't end the inning unscathed. He walked the first three batters he faced - the second two forcing in runs with the bases loaded - before getting a flyball to end the Athletics' 11-batter, five-run frame.

Feliz threw 18 pitches, with just five strikes.

"Everybody has a bad day but you have to learn from the bad day and bring something new to the next day," Feliz said. "I'm always trying to learn from the bad days."

He had a scoreless inning Friday against the Mariners, striking out a pair. But in the six outings before the All-Star break, Feliz allowed runs in all but one (eight total earned runs).

Before that, Feliz was lights out after rejoining the team following an appearance in long relief on the season's second day. From May 2 to June 17, Feliz posted an 0.71 ERA, striking out 35 batters in 25 1/3 innings pitched.

"I'm just trying to figure out how it was in May and try to redo how it was," Feliz said. "I don't feel anything different. There's just a bad day in baseball."​

**Mike Fiers, Astros move on from Monday night's commotion**

​By: Angel Verdejo Jr. / Houston Chronicle

The day after, the Astros still had 25 players on their roster and they were all going through the same routine before a game as they always have.

Monday's display, that included Mike Fiers having teammates come between him and manager A.J. Hinch at first, and then center fielder Carlos Gomez, wasn't part of Tuesday's preparations.

There's emotion in the sport and incidents happen, whether fans see them or not.

"We love competing," Hinch said before Tuesday's game. "We have a lot of opinions. We love being ourselves.

"And what comes with that is some emotion. I welcome it in the sense that if it's channeled in the right direction. We want our guys to care. We want our guys to have passion. We want our guys to want to be competitive, but we're also on the same team."

The emotion spilled over during a fourth inning Monday in which Fiers' struggled to get a third out and the Athletics ultimately sent 11 batters to the plate, turning a one-run deficit into a 6-2 lead.

Hinch went out to get Fiers after the righthander faced seven batters in the inning. Five reached in a row with two outs and three crossed the plate.

Fiers and Hinch exchanged words on the mound and again in the dugout. They were separated before eventually talking their differences through.

At the same time, Michael Feliz was struggling to get out of the inning. The Athletics scored twice more before the fourth ended.

Between the fourth and fifth, Gomez and Fiers exchanged words.

"We're teammates and I love my teammates," Gomez said before Tuesday's game. "I'm always going to be behind my teammates and I protect my teammates like my kids. So it happened, but I took it to mean that he really cares.

"I care how he feels, but sometimes it's not the right place to do it."

Said Fiers: "My emotions just got the best of me and I need to be more professional about what I'm doing out on the field and when I'm coming out of the game."

Incidents and differences aren't always captured on camera, but they happen.

"Any time you spend as much time as we spend with one another, some of these things are going to happen from time to time," Hinch said. "Either on the bus or the plane or the clubhouse or now, sometimes on the field.

"All's well that ends well, and when it all comes from a good place - which is all being on board, being in the same clubhouse and being on the same team - we can handle any of this."

The Astros have shown that with the movement among roles in the bullpen to players accepting different tasks.

Five different relievers have earned a save. Luke Gregerson started the season as the primary closer and has now bounced back and excelled in a set-up role.

The batting order has seen plenty of change, even at the top. Jose Altuve has gone from leading off and setting the table to second to now becoming a run producer in the third spot in the batting order.

Hinch said after Monday's game that the best interest of the 25 players overrides the best interest of one.

And the Astros moved on, going through their preparations before Tuesday's game as they did the day before.

"We try to relax together and make that time that we're in the stadium as fun as possible," Gomez said. "That doesn't mean we're not going to have an issue sometime. It's part of life."​

**Astros report: Alex Bregman hints at promotion**

​By Angel Verdejo Jr. / Houston Chronicle

OAKLAND, Calif. - Highly touted Astros prospect Alex Bregman made his first start at third base for Class AAA Fresno on Tuesday and, according to Astros manager A.J. Hinch, will also be seeing time in left field. But last year's second overall pick in the MLB draft caused another stir earlier in the day.

In a radio interview with KILT (610 AM), Bregman said he envisioned facing a pitcher wearing "red and gray" in his first big league at-bat. The Astros face the Angels, who wear red and gray, at Minute Maid this weekend at home.

Asked about the comment before Tuesday's game, Hinch said he assumed it to be a joke.

"Because there's been no discussion, no target date or no idea. We're trying to win tonight's game," Hinch said. "He's going to help us eventually, but I'm not sure what that's all about."

Hinch did say the organization has put a plan in place to start having Bregman, 22, play third base and left field. That would give the Astros additional flexibility when the time comes that Bregman and Yulieski Gurriel are both in the majors. Gurriel, the Cuban free agent who signed with the Astros last week, is a natural third baseman and expected to be in Houston within a few weeks.

Bregman played his first 13 games with Fresno at shortstop, but he did play 11 games at third while with Class AA Corpus Christi.

Feliz trying to get out of rut

Overshadowed in Monday's Mike Fiers meltdown was a pitching performance Michael Feliz would like to forget.

Astros manager A.J. Hinch went to Feliz with two on and two out in the fourth. Three runs already had scored with two outs in the inning, ending Fiers' night.

But Feliz, who has come back to earth after breezing through May and early June, couldn't end the inning unscathed. He walked the first three batters he faced - the second two forcing home runs with the bases loaded - before getting an over-the-shoulder catch from right fielder George Springer to end the Athletics' 11-batter, five-run frame.

Just five of Feliz's 18 pitches were strikes, and the Astros lost 7-4.

"Everybody has a bad day, but you have to learn from the bad day and bring something new to the next day," Feliz said. "I'm always trying to learn from the bad days."

Feliz had a scoreless inning Friday at Seattle, striking out a pair. But in his last six outings before the All-Star break, he allowed a total of eight earned runs, going unscored upon just once.

Before that, Feliz had been lights-out. From May 2 to June 17, he posted a 0.71 ERA, striking out 35 batters in 251⁄3 innings.

"I'm just trying to figure out how it was in May and try to redo how it was," said Feliz, who is 6-1 with a 4.14 ERA. "I don't feel anything different. There's just a bad day in baseball."

A game at DH is OK by Gomez

Carlos Gomez was already scheduled to be the designated hitter Tuesday, but the timing proved good after the center fielder jumped into the wall Monday and also had the trainer out to check on him after a headfirst slide on an infield single.

Jake Marisnick was in center and Colby Rasmus in left against Oakland lefthander Dillon Overton, who was called up Tuesday from Class AAA Nashville to make a spot start.

"Gomez's body has been beat up the last few games," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said. "The DH is a half-day for him. I wanted Colby to face this lefty and give him a few different looks. And I love Jake in center field whenever possible.

"As the season is going to go on here, a couple of these guys are going to get some days off, (and) a couple of these are going to get some DH days to rest them up."

Nine players have served as Astros DH this season. Tuesday marked the third time for Gomez, who said it doesn't bother him when his involvement in a game comes only on offense.

"Especially at this field (the Oakland Coliseum) in this weather," he said. "If it's in Houston, I might say, 'No, no, I want to play center.' But here, you get frozen out there. So taking a little break helps."

Odds and ends

The Angels announced two starters for their weekend series against the Astros. Matt Shoemaker will start Friday, with Jered Weaver to follow Saturday. … George Springer is the Astros' winner of the MLB Players Alumni Association's Heart and Hustle Award. The final winner is announced in November.​

**Bullpen falters late as Astros fall to A's in 10**

​By Jane Lee and Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Josh Reddick hit a walk-off single against Astros reliever Tony Sipp in the 10th inning, spoiling a four-hit night from Jose Altuve and helping the A's secure a series-clinching 4-3 victory at the Coliseum on Tuesday night.

The A's tied the game in the ninth inning against Houston closer Will Harris, getting back-to-back doubles from Stephen Vogt and Coco Crisp, who was tagged out on the basepaths on the play for the second out to help the Astros send the game into extras.

A two-out single from Marcus Semien sparked the 10th-inning rally, as Yonder Alonsofollowed with a walk ahead of Reddick's infield base hit between third and shortstop, with Semien scoring from second as Carlos Correa's throw on the run went off line.

"I was wondering why he was going and being sent in the first place," Reddick said. "Then I saw the throw and I was like, 'Thank you, thank you, thank you.' I think he'd agree he had no business going. But sometimes you have to push the issue, and it worked."

Astros lefty Dallas Kuechel continued his recent run of success and outfielder George Springer blasted his 21st home run, while Altuve finished a homer shy of the cycle.

Altuve singled, doubled and tripled in consecutive at-bats, scoring twice in support of Keuchel, the reigning American League Cy Young Award winner who limited Oakland to two runs on five hits in 6 1/3 innings.

The A's were held scoreless through the first six innings before rookie third baseman Ryon Healy delivered a double off reliever Ken Giles to allow two of Keuchel's runners to score.

Called up from Triple-A Nashville earlier in the day, A's starter Dillon Overton went 6 1/3 innings, allowing three runs on nine hits, including Springer's solo shot in the fifth.

"Definitely a winnable game," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said. "We had a rough game out of the 'pen. Not too many of our guys came in and had clean innings. It wasn't their night. When that happens, especially in this ballpark, bad things happen. They put up some good at-bats, we had some ill-timed walks, a few seeing-eye hits, and we walk out of here feeling like we should have won a game."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Altuve stays hot: Altuve had his third consecutive multi-hit game, and singled in the 10th for his sixth four-hit game of the season and 18th of his career. He's 10-for-14 in his past three games, and has reached base in 34 consecutive road games, including 18 in a row with a hit (hitting .514 in that span).

"He is our everything," Hinch said. "It's incredible to watch the kind of run he's been on for four months now. This isn't a hitting streak, this isn't a good series, this is a terrific player."

Crisp runs into critical out: Though Crisp was responsible for driving in the tying run in the ninth inning, the veteran made a head-scratching mistake on the basepaths on the same play, running into an out as he rounded second base because he thought it was a home run.

"I was running around the bases like it was a home run," Crisp said. "It's just bad baserunning, I guess, when it's all said and done. I didn't see it and thought it was a home run until I realized it wasn't. Thankfully we won the game, because that could've been a big play. It was a big play regardless. It did get the run in and it kept us playing."

Beard is back: Keuchel, working for the first time since July 10, appears to have recaptured his Cy Young form by throwing well once again. He carried a shutout into the seventh inning and was in line to get the win before the A's tied it. Still, he has a 2.79 ERA in his last six starts and has thrown six consecutive quality starts.

"Dallas was great," Hinch said. "He had dominated until the end and then was one pitch away from maybe a double play, and he ends up giving up a double and they nicked him for a couple of runs when they came in, but really quality outing by him."

Overton impresses: The lefty made good on his most recent promotion, turning in a performance that proved much more effective than his last -- a three-inning, eight-run shelling against the Giants on June 30 that resulted in a trip back to Triple-A. Overton racked up six strikeouts and walked none in his return, stranding five baserunners to limit the damage and keep the A's within striking distance.​

"I thought he was great," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "We needed him to go deep in the game. I'm not sure he knew that. But it's the most pitches he's thrown this year, too, at the Major or Minor League level. Against a lineup like that, that was really good. I think he takes a lot from this outing and feels really good about himself."

SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS

After throwing out Jake Smolinsky in the fifth inning, Evan Gattis has now thrown out six of nine potential basestealers in his last 19 games and seven of 15 on the season (47 percent).

WHAT'S NEXT

Astros: Right-hander Doug Fister, who kicked off the second half of the season Friday in Seattle by allowing three runs in five innings for his ninth win, gets the start in Wednesday's 2:35 p.m. CT series finale. In eight starts since June 3, he's 5-3 with a 3.38 ERA.

A's: Right-hander Daniel Mengden gets the start against his hometown Astros club in Wednesday's 12:35 p.m. PT series finale at the Coliseum. The rookie faced Houston on July 8, allowing six runs in 4 2/3 innings in a road loss.

**No place like road for hit-machine Altuve**

​By Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Astros second baseman Jose Altuve continues to make batting look as easy as child's play, going 4-for-5 and finishing a homer shy of the cycle in Tuesday's 4-3, 10-inning loss to the A's at the Coliseum.

The numbers are astonishing. Altuve, who leads the American League in batting average (.354) and the Majors in hits (131), had his second four-hit game in three days and is 10-for-14 during that span. He extended his road hitting streak to 18 games -- he's batting .514 in that span -- and has reached base in 34 consecutive road games.

In 44 games since May 29, he's hitting .400 with a .452 on-base percentage.

"He is our everything," manager A.J. Hinch said. "It's incredible to watch the kind of run he's been on for four months now. This isn't a hitting streak, this isn't a good series, this is a terrific player."

Altuve, who was a triple shy of the cycle on June 25 at Kansas City and tripped rounding second base in his final at-bat, singled in the first inning Tuesday, doubled in the third and tripled in the fifth. He struck out in the eighth, and then singled with two outs in the 10th for his 18th career four-hit game (sixth this year).

When asked if this was as well as he has seen the ball all year, Altuve said: "Probably."

Unlike June 25, when he came to the plate looking for a triple to complete the cycle, Altuve wasn't thinking homer when he came to bat in the eighth.

"In that situation, you just want to get on base," he said. "It's different when it's a tie game. Last inning, you want to get on base. I was trying to look for one good pitch to get a single or a double, walk or whatever, and let [Carlos Correa] hit behind me, and like I said, you just want to put a couple of hits together to win the game."

Altuve is the first Astros player to reach base in at least 34 consecutive road games since Jeff Bagwell had a 51-game streak from Sept. 23, 1998-July 31, 1999.

Altuve is batting .415 on the road this season, including a mind-boggling .500 in his last 23 road games.​

**Keuchel affected by long rest between starts**

​By Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Taking the mound on eight days' rest was something Astros left-hander Dallas Keuchel would like to avoid, but it certainly didn't seem to have a negative effect on the way he pitched in Tuesday's 4-3, 10-inning loss to the A's at the Coliseum.

Keuchel, however, said he thought he extra rest threw him off despite his sixth consecutive quality start. He's 3-0 with a 2.79 ERA in his last six starts and was in line for his fourth consecutive win Tuesday before the Astros faltered in the ninth and fell in the 10th.

"Dallas was great," manager A.J. Hinch said. "He had dominated until the end and then was one pitch away from maybe a double play, and he ends up giving up a double and they nicked him for a couple of runs, but really quality outing by him."

Keuchel hadn't pitched since July 10 because of the All-Star break. He was slotted into the fifth game in the schedule coming out of the break and then threw a season-high 116 pitches.

"[Eight] days off kind of threw me off, and I got pretty tired there at the end," he said. "They got two [runs in the seventh]. I had to battle all night. A lot of 3-2 counts and was able to establish the fastball in and work the cutter and two-seam off that and did some good, but other than that, I felt real rusty. [Eight] days off, that's tough for a control pitcher like myself."

Keuchel carried a shutout into the seventh inning before giving up a single to Billy Butlerand a double to Jake Smolinski to put runners at second and third with no outs. Both runners eventually scored on a Ryon Healy double off Ken Giles.

"I left a few pitches up," Keuchel said. "Like I said, I was getting a little tired, but still trying to get that last pitch and didn't get it tonight. That's tough, but at the same time, there's a lot of positives to this game, and hopefully we'll take some out of that."

Keuchel said the long layoff was like skipping a full turn on the rotation.

"I had just started finding my groove [before the break]," he said. "I felt like the days off was a little excessive, but at the same time, I know we have to keep other guys on rest. So be it. We'll look to be a little bit better next time out, and be a little bit more crisp."​

**Hinch: Astros' clubhouse can handle newcomers**

​By Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A day after dugout confrontations involving pitcher Mike Fiers made news in the Astros' loss to the A's, manager A.J. Hinch said Tuesday that his team is equipped to put such matters behind them. A bigger issue Hinch may soon deal with is the arrival of Cuban infielder Yulieski Gurriel, who signed last week and is expected to join the team in a few weeks.

The likely eventual arrival of Gurriel, as well as top prospect Alex Bregman from Triple-A Fresno, means a couple of players currently on the roster will lose their spots. The players are cognizant Gurriel and Bregman are coming, and Hinch said his team's position player youth and enthusiasm will make that easier.

"That's generally the easier type of personalities that can adapt to new additions," Hinch said. "Obviously, an older team with more established veterans, more established roles that have been together for a long time, it's a tough shell to crack. The makeup of our team is our veterans are mostly in the pitching staff, with a couple of veteran position players, and certainly will pay attention to any new arrival, whether it be Gurriel or a younger player in the Minors."

Gurriel, a Cuban defector who signed a four-plus-year deal for $47.5 million, will have to get a work visa and get some time in Minor League games before joining the club. Bregman is crushing the ball at Fresno and could be up sooner than Gurriel. He started at third base Tuesday for the first time since he was at Double-A, and he'll be in left field for the first time Wednesday.

Gurriel and Bregman will be in the lineup daily, taking at-bats away from others. They could both play third, moving Luis Valbuena to first base, as well as left field. They're both expected to get time at designated hitter as well.

"I think my job is to set the culture and the expectations and the environment," Hinch said. "The chemistry is built by the players. Certainly, I'll be one of the first guys that welcomes any new player to our clubhouse and let them know their situations, their expectations, their playing time, their role on this team, and then it's up to him and the players to adapt to one another.

"It starts with communication before these guys get here. Obviously, with Gurriel, we know he's coming at some point. He's going to be a big-fixture part of our organization moving forward, and that process is already underway to give him an understanding of the type of team he will be joining eventually, and also give our players who are already here an opportunity to understand where he fits."

But Hinch admits the difficult part is somebody will have to lose their job to make room for Gurriel.

"And that hits the clubhouse hard," he said. "I don't care if you're the 25th man on his team or if you're a primary player who ends up getting traded. Any time you change the mixture, like any good family, any good group together, it's going to have an impact. We're strong enough to handle any of the change or any personality that enters our clubhouse. We have that good of chemistry. It will be a test over time to see how it truly impacts us."​

**Springer is Astros' Heart and Hustle winner**

*Award recognizes passion, desire and work ethic*

​By Matt Kelly / MLB.com

The Major League Baseball Players Alumni Association (MLBPAA) announced the 30 preliminary winners of the 2016 Heart and Hustle Award on Tuesday, honoring one player from each of the 30 Major League teams.

The Heart and Hustle Award, given annually, celebrates active players who demonstrate a passion for the game of baseball and best embody the values, spirit and traditions of the game. It's the only award in the Majors that is voted on by former players, and voting is conducted prior to the All-Star break.

The MLBPAA formed a total of 30 committees made up of former players to vote choose a winner for each team. Near season's end, all members of the alumni association, as well as active players, will vote once again to choose a final winner from the pool of the 30 preliminary team winners of the award. The criteria for the Heart and Hustle Award considers a player's passion, desire and work ethic demonstrated both on and off the field.

The final winner will be announced Nov. 15 at the 17th annual Legends for Youth Dinner in New York, an event that serves as a fundraiser for the series of free Legends for Youth Baseball Clinics held across the country. The list of previous overall winners includes David Eckstein (2005), Craig Biggio (2006, 2007), Grady Sizemore (2008), Albert Pujols (2009), Roy Halladay (2010), Torii Hunter (2011), Mike Trout (2012), Dustin Pedroia (2013), Josh Harrison (2014) and Anthony Rizzo (2015).

Here are this year's 30 preliminary team winners who will ultimately be considered for the final winner of the 2016 Heart and Hustle Award:

AMERICAN LEAGUE

Baltimore Orioles: Adam Jones

Boston Red Sox: Dustin Pedroia

Chicago White Sox: Todd Frazier

Cleveland Indians: Mike Napoli

Detroit Tigers: Ian Kinsler

**Houston Astros: George Springer**

Kansas City Royals: Eric Hosmer

Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim: Kole Calhoun

Minnesota Twins: Eduardo Nunez

New York Yankees: Didi Gregorius

Oakland Athletics: Marcus Semien

Seattle Mariners: Nelson Cruz

Tampa Bay Rays: Logan Forsythe

Texas Rangers: Ian Desmond

Toronto Blue Jays: Kevin Pillar

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Arizona Diamondbacks: Paul Goldschmidt

Atlanta Braves: Nick Markakis

Chicago Cubs: Anthony Rizzo

Cincinnati Reds: Zack Cozart

Colorado Rockies: Charlie Blackmon

Los Angeles Dodgers: Chase Utley

Miami Marlins: Marcell Ozuna

Milwaukee Brewers: Jonathan Lucroy

New York Mets: Curtis Granderson

Philadelphia Phillies: Andres Blanco

Pittsburgh Pirates: David Freese

San Diego Padres: Jon Jay

San Francisco Giants: Brandon Crawford

St. Louis Cardinals: Stephen Piscotty

Washington Nationals: Daniel Murphy​

**Fister seeks win No. 10 in series finale vs. A's**

​By Mark Chiarelli / MLB.com

Astros starter Doug Fister faces the A's for the fourth time this season as Houston takes on Oakland in their series finale Wednesday at the Coliseum.

Fister is 2-1 with a 1.31 ERA in three starts against the A's this season, but took the loss in his last start against them July 7, despite twirling eight innings while allowing just two runs. He was overshadowed by A's lefty Rich Hill in the 3-1 loss, as Hill struck out 10 over six innings and surrendered only one run.

Fister's been sturdy this year, going 9-6 with a 3.64 ERA in 18 starts, and he's 3-4 with a 3.02 ERA in eight career starts at the Coliseum.

He'll oppose slumping A's rookie Daniel Mengden, who is 0-1 with a 10.80 ERA in three July starts. It's Mengden's first stretch of struggles in the Majors this year, following a June in which he went 1-3 with a 2.81 ERA while striking out 26 batters in 25 2/3 innings.

Mengden, a Houston native, was drafted by the Astros before being traded to Oakland last year in a deal for Scott Kazmir. He faced Houston on July 8, allowing six runs on six hits in 4 2/3 innings. He didn't factor in the decision.

Things to know about this game

• Astros second baseman Jose Altuve extended his road hitting streak to 18 games Tuesday night, and has reached base in 34 straight home games.

• Mengden struggled with his control over his last three starts, walking nine batters in 13 1/3 innings. He walked nine batters in 25 2/3 innings in all of June.

• Only one batter (Asdrubal Cabrera) has more career plate appearances against Fister than A's designated hitter Billy Butler, who is tied for second all-time with 41. Butler isn't likely to face Fister, however, as the A's have used him primarily in a platoon role against lefties this year.​

**Musgrove among top prospect performers Tuesday**

By Mike Rosenbaum / MLB.com​

​• No. 97 overall prospect Joe Musgrove yielded six hits over seven scoreless innings in his finest start as a member of Triple-A Fresno. With a season-high nine strikeouts and zero walks, the Astros' No. 7 prospect improved his strikeout-to-walk ratio to 71-9 through 71 1/3 innings between the Double-A and Triple-A levels.

**Athletics rally from 3 down to beat Astros 4-3 in 10**

By: Michael Wagaman / Associated Press

​OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Marcus Semien scored from second base on Josh Reddick's two-out infield single in the 10th inning to lift the Oakland Athletics to a 4-3 win over the Houston Astros on Tuesday night.

The A's rallied from three runs down and trailed 3-2 before Coco Crisp's game-tying double off Astros closer Will Harris in the ninth.

After the Astros stranded the bases loaded in the top of the 10th, Reddick won it with the sixth walkoff hit of his career.

Semien singled with two outs off Pat Neshek (2-2) and stole second. Yonder Alonso walked before Reddick singled to deep shortstop. Houston's Carlos Correa fielded the ball cleanly but threw wide of home as Semien slid safely in with the winning run.​

Crisp finished with two hits while Ryon Healy added two hits and two RBIs for the A's. Oakland has won four of five since the All-Star break.

Jose Altuve matched his career-high with four hits while George Springer hit his career-high 21st home run for the Astros.

Mark Rzepczynski (1-0) got the last out in the top of the 10th for the win.

Houston starter Dallas Keuchel took a shutout into the seventh before giving up consecutive one-out hits to Billy Butler and Jake Smolinksi. Healy followed with a two-run double off reliever Ken Giles to pull the A's to 3-2.

Oakland tied the game in the ninth with back-to-back doubles by Stephen Vogt and Crisp. Crisp was thrown out trying to take third on the play.

Altuve padded his majors-leading hit total with his sixth four-hit game of the season. Houston's All-Star second baseman singled in the first, doubled and scored in the third and tripled and scored in the fifth. He struck out looking in the eighth and singled again in the 10th.

Keuchel allowed two runs and five hits over 6 1/3 innings. The reigning AL Cy Young Award winner, who beat the A's in his final start before the All-Star break, struck out six and walked three.

Springer homered leading off the fifth against A's starter Daniel Overton, who was called up from Triple-A Nashville before the game.

Overton allowed three runs over 6 1/3 innings. The rookie left-hander struck out six and didn't walk a batter for the first time in three career starts.

ROAD WARRIOR

Altuve's three hits raised his AL-leading average to .352 and extended his road hitting streak to 18 games. The diminutive infielder has also reached safely in 34 consecutive road games, the second-longest streak in Astros history.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Athletics: Rich Hill's status remains in limbo because of a blister issue on the middle finger of his left hand. Hill left his most recent start Sunday after throwing just five pitches. ... RHP Andrew Triggs was placed on the 15-day disabled list with a bruised left shin. ... INF Tyler Ladendorf was optioned to Triple-A Nashville and LHP Daniel Coulombe was called up from the minors.

UP NEXT

Astros: RHP Doug Fister (9-6) pitches the finale Wednesday afternoon at the Coliseum and has two wins and a 1.31 ERA in three starts against Oakland this season.

Athletics: RHP Daniel Mengden makes his second start against the Astros this season. He allowed six runs over 4 2/3 innings but took a no-decision in Houston on July 8.

**Carlos Correa Looks Historically Great**

​by Craig Edwards ​/ Fangraphs

Carlos Correa placed second last week on the trade-value list that Dave Cameron puts together every season. That placement seemed to surprise some, given that Correa is having a very good, but not great season. Correa’s 120 wRC+ is hardly spectacular, even if that number increases to 150 if you start with the latter part of May. He has improved over the last few months, but even with that improvement, the placement might seem high. What definitely seemed high was Correa’s ZiPS projections over the next five years, starting at 7.9 WAR next season and totaling more than 40 wins from ages 22 to 26. Cameron, too, was surprised, and in the comments, his explanation caught my eye:

I was shocked by the Correa forecast myself, and asked Dan to double check that there wasn’t an error in the code or something, given how bullish it is on Correa’s future. But Dan said the system just loves Correa, as the history of guys who can hit like this at 20/21 in the big leagues is almost universally fantastic. The age really is the key thing to keep in mind here; it’s easy to forget how big of a leap guys can make early on, and at 21, there’s still a lot of room for growth.

Carlos Correa is currently in the midst of his age-21 season, and he’s accumulated 820 career plate appearances. Over the last 100 years, only 59 players have received at least 800 plate appearances before the end of their age-21 season and then eventually made their way to a Hall of Fame ballot. One finds that — without regard for how they played or for how long — an astonishing 36% (21) of those players eventually made in the Hall Of Fame. If you move the bar up to 1,000 plate appearances, 21 of 44 players are in the Hall of Fame. Of more recent players, it looks like that trend might continue. Edgar Renteria, Starlin Castro, and Elvis Andrus probably will not make the Hall of Fame and Justin Upton and Jason Heyward have a ways to go, while Alex Rodriguez, Ivan Rodriguez, Miguel Cabrera, Adrian Beltre, and Andruw Jones all have at least decent statistical cases.

I’ll keep going…

Of the 22 players to record at least 800 plate appearances (again, Correa has 820 now) and 6.0 WAR (Correa’s current WAR) before the end of their age-21 season, 77% (17) are in the Hall of Fame. Only Cesar Cedeno (50 career WAR), Vada Pinson (47 career WAR), Tony Conigliaro (12 career WAR, but a terrible eye injury hurt his career), Buddy Lewis (26 career WAR), and Butch Wynegar (27 career WAR) failed to make the Hall among that group. The current/recently retired players are Alex Rodriguez, Andruw Jones, Adrian Beltre, Giancarlo Stanton,Mike Trout, Bryce Harper, Manny Machado, and Jason Heyward. Of the 13 retired players with more than 800 plate appearances and a 127 wRC+ (Correa is at 127), 11 are in the Hall of Fame, with the aforementioned Conigliaro as well as Bob Horner (837 PA) not making the cut.

Just a little bit more…

The only shortstops in the last 100 years to accumulate at least 800 plate appearances and 6.0 WAR through the age-21 season are Alex Rodriguez (1523, 12.9), Arky Vaughan (1210, 10.3), and Travis Jackson (1436, 7.2). Rodriguez (128 wRC+), Vaughan (131), and Correa (127) are the only shortstops with at least 800 plate appearances at the end of their age-21 season and at least a 110 wRC+.

All of this is to say, yes, Carlos Correa certainly seems to be historically good, having produced an early career reminiscent of some of the best players of all time. Here is where the projections might seem a bit optimistic, however. Consider the table below, which features the 10-best age-22 through age-26 seasons ever.

Best Age-22 to Age-26 Seasons in Last 100 Years

Name Team WAR

Mickey Mantle Yankees 48.2

Babe Ruth – – – 43.2

Rogers Hornsby Cardinals 43.0

Jimmie Foxx Athletics 42.1

Joe DiMaggio Yankees 40.8

Alex Rodriguez – – – 39.9

Lou Gehrig Yankees 39.6

Albert Pujols Cardinals 38.6

Arky Vaughan Pirates 37.6

Hank Aaron Braves 36.5

Correa’s projections place comfortably within that top 10 (a couple more seven-win seasons from Mike Trout would do the same). Projecting anyone as a top-10 all-time player seems improbable. So let’s dig a bit deeper and get some specifics.

Carlos Correa still has half a season left before he finishes up his age-21 season. If he meets his projections, his career line so far will look like this:

Carlos Correa Projected Career Stats Thru 2016

thru Age 21 (with Proj) PA HR SB ISO BA OBP SLG wRC+ WAR

Carlos Correa 1101 47 30 .212 .270 .349 .482 124 7.9

We can handle this a couple different ways. First, let’s just take offense and take a pretty wide sweep. I looked for players within 25% of Correa’s PA total and within 18 points (15%) of his 124 wRC+ who have finished their age-26 season. I found the following players:

Carlos Correa wRC+ Comps Through Age-21

PA HR AVG OBP SLG wRC+ Off Def WAR

Eddie Mathews 1274 72 .274 .366 .541 142 69.4 -0.3 11.2

Frank Robinson 1345 67 .307 .378 .543 141 68.5 12.7 12.4

Arky Vaughan 1210 13 .316 .382 .448 131 46.9 18.3 10.3

Bob Horner 874 56 .295 .332 .547 130 29.8 -13.5 4.8

Orlando Cepeda 1291 52 .315 .349 .517 127 43.6 -24.4 6.5

Hank Aaron 1174 40 .299 .347 .499 127 39.7 -5.2 7.1

Miguel Cabrera 1031 45 .285 .352 .497 121 25.2 -27.3 3.2

Rickey Henderson 1120 10 .292 .392 .376 120 38.4 -7.5 7.1

Johnny Bench 1292 42 .275 .323 .444 114 16.6 24.1 9.5

Terry Puhl 912 3 .292 .355 .377 113 16.6 -4.7 4.4

Justin Upton 1157 43.0 .272 .350 .485 111 25.6 -13.4 5.0

Rick Manning 1141 9 .289 .342 .377 110 10.5 -2.1 4.8

Ron Santo 1037 32 .271 .343 .453 110 11.0 -14.0 3.2

Roberto Alomar 1313 16 .282 .338 .378 108 15.7 16.1 7.7

Jim Fregosi 867 12 .286 .330 .412 108 7.9 7.6 4.3

Boog Powell 1002 40 .252 .317 .433 107 7.0 -16.7 2.0

AVERAGE 1128 35 .288 .350 .458 120 29.5 -3.1 6.5

Carlos Correa (thru 2016) 1101 47 .270 .349 .482 124 36.1 3.0 7.9

Correa is a step above these guys on both offense and defense. Let’s see how they did from ages 22 to 26.

Carlos Correa wRC+ Comps Age-22 Through Age-26

PA HR AVG OBP SLG wRC+ Off Def WAR

Arky Vaughan 3152 52 .339 .442 .499 158 235.4 55.5 37.6

Hank Aaron 3356 179 .325 .377 .582 158 241.4 4.2 36.5

Rickey Henderson 3022 65 .296 .408 .443 144 200.4 34.6 34.7

Johnny Bench 3295 170 .267 .347 .499 133 127.0 82.1 34.1

Eddie Mathews 3183 181 .278 .389 .541 150 202.2 31.2 34.0

Ron Santo 3428 135 .286 .366 .489 134 128.7 42.9 31.3

Frank Robinson 3148 174 .309 .395 .584 153 213.4 -17.6 31.0

Jim Fregosi 3314 64 .268 .338 .402 119 71.4 73.2 26.1

Miguel Cabrera 3410 164 .319 .392 .555 143 170.3 -40.8 24.0

Orlando Cepeda 3143 170 .307 .356 .545 145 169.1 -64.8 22.4

Roberto Alomar 3174 48 .305 .378 .437 123 107.7 -6.5 21.2

Justin Upton 3157 121 .275 .355 .473 125 106.1 -33.4 18.0

Boog Powell 2738 125 .261 .355 .463 136 108.5 -45.3 15.5

Terry Puhl 2754 40 .277 .342 .393 113 41.6 9.2 14.6

Bob Horner 1971 105 .275 .346 .503 132 68.7 -23.3 11.7

Rick Manning 2490 18 .249 .314 .322 77 -63.0 0.7 1.9

AVERAGE 3046 113 .290 .369 .483 134 133.1 6.4 24.7

We see an average of a five-win season. One-third of the players averaged a seven-win season, and nearly half posted a wRC+ in excess of 140 over a five-year period. That’s good, but still not commensurate with the sort of performance being projected by ZiPS.

But what if we didn’t think Correa’s plate appearances were truly reflective of his talent level? As a rebuilding club — one unlikely to fight for every last marginal victory — it’s certainly possible the Astros, at least before their surprise run last season, were cognizant of potential super-two status. If we relax the plate-appearance constraint by just a little and give Correa 200 extra PA, and then zero in on his wRC+ of 124, only putting players within 10 points in his comps, here is how those players performed from ages 22 to 26.

Carlos Correa Targeted wRC+ Comps Age-22 Through Age-26

Name PA HR AVG OBP SLG wRC+ Off Def WAR

Alex Rodriguez 3449 234 .307 .386 .599 150 233.8 58.7 39.9

Arky Vaughan 3152 52 .339 .442 .499 158 235.4 55.5 37.6

Hank Aaron 3356 179 .325 .377 .582 158 241.4 4.2 36.5

Rickey Henderson 3022 65 .296 .408 .443 144 200.4 34.6 34.7

Johnny Bench 3295 170 .267 .347 .499 133 127.0 82.1 34.1

Vada Pinson 3433 106 .304 .347 .485 126 110.6 16.0 25.7

Miguel Cabrera 3410 164 .319 .392 .555 143 170.3 -40.8 24.0

Orlando Cepeda 3143 170 .307 .356 .545 145 169.1 -64.8 22.4

AVERAGE 3283 143 .308 .382 .526 145 186.0 18.2 31.9

AVG/YR 657 29 .308 .382 .526 145 37.2 3.6 6.4

That’s an average wRC+ of 145 over five seasons. Using this set of criteria, we get the average up above six wins, but we are still a win and a half short of those ZiPS projections. Assume even slightly above-average defense, however, and you get to seven wins pretty easily. But we still seem short. Of course, when projecting five years out, the next year is the most important, followed by the year after that. If you’re looking at potential overall outcomes, it might be best to look at a list like the above. When making projections, however, using a relatively standard aging curve is probably best.

Now look at that chart above and let’s see who most resembles Correa. The only two shortstops on that list also happened to top that list. And as Correa relative to Alex Rodriguez, they appear to be incredibly similar players by rate stats as of right now.

Best Shortstops Through Age 21

Position ISO BABIP BA OBP SLG wRC+

Carlos Correa SS .217 .314 .271 .350 .488 127

Alex Rodriguez SS .220 .349 .314 .366 .534 128

By rate stats, Correa is just a bit of BABIP behind, and given the era, they are virtually even. At 22 years old, Alex Rodriguez, put up a 7.9 WAR, precisely what Correa is projected to do in ZiPS. Of course, it isn’t quite that easy and projections consider a wide range of factors and players including minor leagues, but when the seemingly best-fit comparable puts up a 7.9 WAR at age 22, it’s hard to ignore the coincidence.

Those projections for Correa might seem a bit crazy, but next year’s projection really doesn’t seem that far off even when considering broader comps and factoring in position. When a great season is the base at age 22, it’s only natural for the subsequent seasons to fall in line. With the large number of seemingly great shortstops coming through, it is natural to group them together, but with his age and accomplishments, Correa might be in a class by himself.​

**Joe Musgrove pitches gem in Grizzlies 1-0 win over Express**

*Musgrove strikes out season-high nine in seven shutout innings*

By: Fresno Grizzlies​

The Fresno Grizzlies won a 1-0 pitchers' duel over the Round Rock Express Tuesday night at Dell Diamond. Fresno starter Joe Musgrove (4-3) earned the win after he spun seven shutout innings (matches season-high), allowing six hits and striking out nine (season-high). He threw 82 pitches, with 63 for strikes. Round Rock starter Nick Martinez (6-5) took a tough-luck loss after dazzling for eight innings, allowing one run (earned), on five hits, while punching out eight.

Fresno took a 1-0 lead in the top of the third when Tyler White singled to left, scoring Alex Bregman (2-for-4), after he doubled to left. The RBI single by White extended his team-high hit streak to 15 games. Bregman also had his seventh multi-hit game since joining Fresno, raising his average to .371.

Grizzlies' reliever Josh Fields hurled a scoreless eighth, allowing one hit and striking out one. Closer James Hoyt also tossed a scoreless ninth, picking up his PCL-leading 24th save. He gave up one hit and struck out one. On the season, he has 79 strikeouts in 45.2 innings pitched.

Fresno picked up their 10th shutout win of the year, extending the road win streak to three games.

The two teams meet for game three of the four-game series Wednesday night. First pitch is scheduled for 5:05 PT. Grizzlies' RHP Cesar Valdez (7-1, 3.19) toes the rubber with Express' RHP Austin Bibens-Dirkx (0-1, 3.24).

**Musgrove posts seven zeros for Fresno**

*No. 7 Houston prospect matches career high with nine strikeouts*

​By Josh Jackson / MiLB.com

Joe Musgrove isn't one to waste many pitches.

"When I look at myself as a pitcher, I don't have trouble pitching in the strike zone," the Astros' No. 7 prospect said. "I might have trouble spotting or hitting a location in the zone, but I am able put the ball in the zone and make them swing."

Musgrove (4-3) scattered six hits over seven innings in Triple-A Fresno's 1-0 shutout at Round Rock on Tuesday. He notched nine strikeouts -- a career high he hit on four previous occasions -- without issuing any walks.

"I kind of did exactly what I was hoping to do. I knew I wanted to get early contact, and I ended up in more two-strike situations than I expected," the 23-year-old righty said. "When the opportunity for the punchout was there, I went for it. I was getting a lot of swings-and-misses on my slider, and I set it up with my fastball and sinker. I threw a lot of strikes and took advantage of the situation."

A 2011 sandwich pick by Toronto, the No. 97 overall prospect came to Houston in a July 20, 2012 nine-player trade involving J.A. Happ. This year, he's gone 6-4 with a 2.76 ERA over 15 games -- 13 starts -- between the Pacific Coast League and the Double-A Texas League. He's struck out 80 and walked just nine over 78 1/3 innings. The last time he surrendered more than one free pass in an outing was May 13, the day he made his Triple-A debut.

"I try to pitch to contact as much as I can," he said, adding that aggressiveness can result in a lot of strikeouts. "When I'm throwing that many strikes, they come up there in swing mode."

That was the case for the Express on Tuesday. The first inning was the only frame they managed more than one hit off Musgrove in a single frame, and he believed it was because they were ready for pitches in the zone.

"They know I don't walk many people, so they go up there looking to be aggressive," he said. "A couple of them were looking for fastballs and got around on them, so I made an adjustment from there and started them with offspeed stuff early in the count. I was almost pitching them backward."

In the fourth, left-handed hitter Brett Nicholas tried to bunt his way on with top Astros prospect and Grizzlies third baseman Alex Bregman out of position in a defensive shift. Musgrove made a sliding stop on the third-base side and fired to first to retire him.

"It's tough -- the shift is always in play, and when you're in your rhythm, you don't think about it much," Musgrove said. "But when he bunted, the first thing I thought was, 'The third baseman's not there,' but after that it was pretty much instinct. I don't really remember it -- I just reacted."

Round Rock's Patrick Cantwell doubled twice off Musgrove -- once to start the third and once with two outs in the fifth.

"The first one, it was a two-strike slider that he got out in front of and capped over [shortstop Jack Mayfield's] head into no man's land. That one was a good pitch -- I could have buried it in the dirt, but I felt good about it," the native of El Cajon, California said. "The second one, it was another two-strike situation, and since I'd been throwing a lot of two-strike sliders, I tried to freeze him with a fastball. I missed with it a little bit. You can't let it bother you if you give up hits -- I rely on my defense all the time."

Musgrove threw 63 of 82 pitches for strikes, and after a scoreless inning by reliever Josh Fields, No. 20 Astros prospect James Hoyt worked around a hit and struck out one in the ninth for his 24th save. The right-hander stands second in the Minor Leagues in that category, three behind Colorado righty Matt Carasiti of Double-A Hartford.

"Especially on a night like tonight, he makes a 1-0 lead feel like a 5-0 lead," Musgrove said of Hoyt, who originally signed with the Braves out of independent ball for $500 in November 2012.

"In general, his entire journey to how he got to where he's at is incredible. He's a good guy to learn from. On the field, he's something to watch. All of his pitches look the same for the first 40 or 50 feet."

Bregman, baseball's No. 18 overall prospect, went 2-for-4 with a double and a run scored. He's batting .371 since his promotion from Double-A Corpus Christi 14 games ago.

"He's an incredible athlete, a good hitter. He's versatile, and just a pro hitter -- he analyzes the situation and takes an approach based on what he's seeing," Musgrove said. "He's not on a hot streak. This is not a fluke. He's just a really good hitter."​

**Ugly Start Wrecks Hooks**

​By: Corpus Christi Hooks

MIDLAND - The RockHounds sent 18 to bat and scored 10 times over the first two frames Tuesday night, beating the Hooks 14-2 at Security Bank Ballpark.

Midland (17-8, 50-45) went 11-for-21 with men in scoring position and featured six players who boasted a multi-hit performance. Matt Chapman led the charge, going 4-for-5 with three doubles and four RBIs. All but three starters drove in runs for the home team.

Corpus Christi (12-13, 59-36) was the first to score Tuesday night. Garrett Stubbs hit a lead-off single and moved to second on a Joel Seddon wild pitch. Stubbs promptly advanced to third via a ground ball, and then came home when Seddon uncorked another wild one.

Seddon (4-8) settled down and, at one point, retired 11 in a row. The Hooks got to him for another run in the seventh. Danry Vasquez worked a walk but was quickly erased on a double play. James Ramsay, Nick Tanielu and Stubbs followed with singles for Corpus Christi's final run.

Cy Sneed (4-3) absorbed the loss for the Hooks, failing to record an out in the second. In their first two turns at bat, the Hounds notched 10 runs on nine hits (five doubles) and four walks. The final two tallies were charged to Gonzalo Sanudo.

Eric Peterson retired the first six men he faced before allowing three unearned runs in the sixth. Lefty Albert Minnis worked the final two frames.

Midland's output matches the most runs and hits (17) allowed by Corpus Christi this season.

The Hooks hope to rebound and force a split of this series Wednesday night. Francis Martes (5-4, 3.91) draws RockHound veteran Chris Jensen (6-4, 4.85). First pitch 6:30.

**JetHawks rally, hold on for Thornton**

*Right-hander ties season-high with nine strikeouts as 'Hawks earn split*

​By: Lancaster JetHawks

RANCHO CUCAMONGA, Calif. - Trent Thornton rebounded after a tough first inning and the JetHawks rallied for a 5-4 win to split the four-game series with the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes on Tuesday night at LoanMart Field.

Thornton (7-4) allowed three runs on five hits in the first inning to put the JetHawks behind early. Edwin Rios hit a two-run home run against the right-hander, and Joey Curletta added a solo homer later in the frame.

Thornton did not allow a run and yielded just two hits over his next five innings. The right-hander matched a career-high with nine strikeouts and walked one over his six innings.

The JetHawks (52-44) got on the board to begin the game on a Bobby Boyd leadoff home run against rehabbing Dodgers reliever Yimi Garcia. The home run was Boyd's eighth of the season and his third leadoff home run.

Bryan Muniz cut the Quakes' lead to one with an RBI-single in the third inning against Josh Sborz (7-4). Lancaster put three on the board against Sborz in the fifth inning to chase him from the game and take the lead. Brooks Marlow picked up an RBI with a ground ball to first base and reached on a Matt Beaty throwing error. Boyd later singled home two runs to knock Sborz from the game.

The Quakes (56-40) scored an unearned run in the eighth to make the score 5-4.

Ryan Deemes pitched a scoreless eighth inning and retired the first two batters in the ninth before issuing two two-out walks. Kevin Comer entered from the bullpen and got Edwin Rios to foul out to catcher Trent Woodward to end the game. Comer earned his first save.

Ramon Laureano finished 0-for-3 with two walks to end his hitting streak at 14 games.

The JetHawks have an off day on Wednesday before returning home to begin a four-game series against the High Desert Mavericks. First pitch on Thursday is 6:35 p.m.​

**'Cats drop series finale to Batavia**

*Johnson finished 4-5 with a solo home run and a double in the loss*

​By Peter Fiorentino / Tri-City ValleyCats

The Tri-City ValleyCats (17-15) let a one-run lead slip away in the 8th inning, and eventually fell 6-4 to the Batavia Muckdogs (7-25) in 10 innings Tuesday afternoon at Joseph L. Bruno Stadium. Tri-City finishes 4-2 during the six game homestand, taking two out of three from Connecticut and Batavia.

Sean Stutzman (L, 1-2) surrendered a two-run single to Pablo Garcia in the top of the 10th, scoring Kris Goodman and Samuel Castro.

The 'Cats got on the board first when Spencer Johnson unloaded his third home run of the year to right field in the 2nd inning, the first of four hits he had on the afternoon. Johnson, whose batting average sat at .130 before the game, finished 4-5 with a homer, a double and two singles, raising the figure to .250 by game's end.

Batavia added three runs in the 3rd when Isaiah White led off with an infield single. Alex Jones doubled, scoring White, and Chavez gave up back-to-back walks to Aaron Knapp and Eric Gutierrez. JJ Gould made Chavez pay for the free passes when he knocked a two-run single to left, giving the Muckdogs a 3-1 lead.

The tandem of Chavez and Hector Perez (BS, 1) allowed four hits on nine runs, striking out ten batters over nine innings. Perez came on for Chavez in the 6th, allowed his only run in the 8th when Eric Gutierrez came into score on one of two passed balls by Jake Rogers (4), which tied the game at four.

The 'Cats scored two in the 4th on a two-run single from Ryne Birk, and one in the 5th on an RBI base-hit from Brauly Mejia, which scored Chuckie Robinson. Robinson finished the game 2-4 with a single and a double, raising his batting average from .378 to .388 in the loss.

For the Muckdogs, Dustin Beggs earned the win in relief (2-0), striking out two batters and allowing four base runners in two scoreless innings. Dylan Lee closed out the 10th and took the save, his first of the season.

Tri-City has an off-day tomorrow before they head to Staten Island to take on the McNamara Division-leading Yankees for three games beginning Thursday. Dustin Hunt will get the start Thursday, with first pitch scheduled for 7:00 p.m.​

**Cardinals snap Astros 8-game win streak**

*Greeneville's third straight game to end in a walk-off*

By: Hunter Reed / Greeneville Astros

​Johnson City, TN - The Greeneville Astros (14-12) had their eight-game win streak snapped by the Johnson City Cardinals (14-10) on a walk-off single on Tuesday night. For the Astros, it was their third consecutive game to end in such a manner.

The game went back-and-forth early on as each team traded runs in both the first and third innings. The Astros scored first on a Bryan De La Cruz RBI double before Johnson City's Matt Fielder matched with one of his own in the bottom of the first.

In the third, with two outs, Marcos Almonte got on with a single for the Astros and stole second before Troy Sieber knocked him in on a ground ball single to right field. Then, the Cardinals once again came back with Fielder driving in a run on a single to even the game at 2-2.

Still with one out in the third and the bases loaded, Astros left-hander Ben Smith entered the game and forced the Cardinals to ground into a double play to end the threat. Smith would go on to pitch a total of four and two-thirds innings, striking out seven while surrendering one run on three hits.

The Astros answered the Cardinals tying score in the fourth with a go-ahead run that would stand until late in the game. With one out, Abraham Toro doubled and advanced to third on a Connor MacDonald single. Then, Jonathan Arauz hit a sacrifice fly to bring Toro home to put Greeneville on top, 3-2.

It would be the bottom of the seventh inning before another score would occur as the Cardinals came back to even the game for the third time. This time, Yariel Gonzalez hit a sacrifice fly to plate the tying run.

The Astros were unable to get anything going at the plate in the eighth or ninth innings. However, the Cardinals got a leadoff double from DeAndre Asbury-Heath in the bottom of the ninth to instantly get a runner in scoring position. After moving over to third on a sacrifice bunt, Asbury-Heath scored the game-winning run on an Allen Cordoba walk-off single to give the Cardinals a 4-3 win and the lead in the Appalachian League West Division.

Cardinals reliever Estarlin Arias (3-0), who was one of three Johnson City pitchers to throw a scoreless inning in relief, picked up the win after entering for the final frame.

The loss for the Astros ended the second longest win streak in club history at eight games. Coincidentally, the 10-game win streak in 2013 also ended on a previously suspended game in Johnson City.

The Astros will look to even the series against the Cardinals on Wednesday night with lefty Carlos Hiraldo taking the mound. Game time will be at 7:00pm.​

**Opponent Clips – at OAK**

**Walk-off win masks Crisp's baserunning gaffe**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A wacky sequence of events unfolded at the Coliseum on Tuesday night, all of them adding up to a walk-off, broken-bat single from Josh Reddick.

The A's 4-3, 10-inning victory over the Astros featured mighty fight, and a dose of awkwardness.

Fortunately for Oakland, the former trumped the latter: Reddick sneaked a slow grounder between third and shortstop that Carlos Correa had to field on the run from the outskirts of the infield, as Marcus Semien rushed all the way home from second, scoring ahead of a throw that proved off line.

Coco Crisp was off the hook, then, after getting thrown out between second and third following a game-tying double off Astros closer Will Harris in the ninth inning that he believed to be a home run.

"I thought it was a home run," Crisp said. "I was running around the bases like it was a home run. It's just bad baserunning, when it's all said and done. I didn't see it and thought it was a home run until I realized it wasn't. It was like a uh-oh, back slash, exclamation point, all that stuff.

"Thankfully we won the game, because that could've been a big play. It was a big play regardless. It did get the run in and it kept us playing."

The A's were down to their final out in the 10th inning when Semien singled off Pat Neshek, prompting left-hander Tony Sipp from the bullpen. Sipp immediately walked Yonder Alonso, setting up Reddick's sixth career game-ending RBI.

It was a doozy, too.

"I hit the crap out of it. I hit a missile," a smiling Reddick said. "It was definitely a big league knock."

That it resulted in a run was even zanier.

"I have no idea how that worked out," Reddick said. "Something special. The baseball gods looking out for us, I guess.

"I was wondering why [Semien] was going and being sent in the first place. Then I saw the throw and I was like, 'Thank you, thank you, thank you.' I think he'd agree he had no business going. But sometimes you have to push the issue, and it worked."

Semien said he didn't expect third-base coach Ron Washington to give him the green light home. Crisp called the decision "scary," while manager Bob Melvin defended it.

"It's one of those basketball shots, where 'No, no, no ... yeah' when it goes in," Melvin said. "It actually was a good call if you look at all the variables involved, and that takes experience from the third-base coach, and aggressiveness."

**Triggs to DL; A's recall lefty Coulombe**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The A's placed right-hander Andrew Triggs on the disabled list with a left shin contusion Tuesday, leading them to call on left-hander Daniel Coulombe from Triple-A Nashville to take over long-relief duties out of the bullpen.

Additionally, utility man Tyler Ladendorf returned to Nashville to make room for Tuesday starter Dillon Overton, leaving the A's without a backup middle infielder.

"We have some versatile guys, and who knows how long it's for, but we really did need an arm," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "We were under the gun yesterday, and we're going to be under the gun again [Tuesday].

"Triggs was basically our length, and not having him and him not responding to the point where we feel comfortable using him in the next couple of days, we made the move for Daniel."

Triggs was rushed into relief duties in the first inning of Sunday's loss to the Blue Jays when starter Rich Hill aggravated a blister, but he, too, was shortly out of the game after taking a line drive to his shin. There's still no timetable for when Hill will make his next start, though Melvin said he's not yet a DL candidate.

"Probably a little bit more careful with it right now," Melvin said, "but it's probably going to be a few days before we have any inclination of when he's going to play catch and then potentially start again."

Coulombe, 26, joins the A's for the fifth time this season, having posted a 4.50 ERA in 13 relief appearances. He's been tremendous for the Sounds, pitching to a 1.08 ERA in 20 outings.

Worth noting

• Catcher Josh Phegley, who underwent right knee surgery earlier this month to remove a cruciate ligament cyst, began a series of baseball activities Tuesday, taking a handful of swings and playing catch. It's not yet known when he will begin a Minor League rehab assignment.

**A's lend support to juvenile diabetes research**

By Mark Chiarelli / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The A's held their 17th annual Root Beer Float Day prior to Tuesday's game against the Astros at the Coliseum, an event in which players, celebrities and members of the media served root beer floats to fans to raise money for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, which combats Type-1 Diabetes.

The A's sold floats and limited-edition mugs to fans, and raised $38,460 and have now raised more than $486,000 throughout the event's history. A's outfielder Sam Fuld has Type 1 Diabetes and had a lengthy line of fans waiting for him throughout the event as he signed commemorative ice cream mugs and took pictures with fans.

Fuld, who sits on the board of JDRF's Tampa Bay chapter and organizes an annual sports camp for youth athletes with Type 1, acknowledged the event's importance, adding that JDRF "is near and dear to my heart."

"It's a physically demanding disease, but it's also a mentally and emotionally demanding disease, too," Fuld said.

Type 1 Diabetes is rarer than Type 2, and occurs when the body's immune system destroys cells that release insulin, meaning those with Type 1 have a total lack of insulin, according to WebMD.

"I think the majority of people probably can't even distinguish between Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes, which is quite a difference," Fuld said. "There's still a lot of stereotypes we have to overcome, too. That's half the battle. As much as we'd like to find a cure, we're also concerned with just educating and promoting awareness."

A's manager Bob Melvin's daughter, Alexi, also has Type 1 Diabetes, and he was on hand to scoop ice cream and meet fans Tuesday.

"It just seems like [the event] gets bigger and bigger every year," Melvin said. "It's humbling to see all the stars that come out for it. … I think it's one of a kind, as far as things go here, certainly during the season and at the ballpark. I'll do all I can for it."

"It's very much a close-knit community," Fuld said. "People on the outside really don't know what we go through on a daily basis. You immediately have that bond and you can sympathize with each other immediately. Unless you're really a parent of a Type 1 or a Type 1 yourself, you don't know what we go through."

Tuesday's event also provided fans, particularly young fans, a chance to interact with players and celebrities.

A bevy of players attended, including Josh Reddick, Stephen Vogt, Sean Manaea, Liam Hendriks and Ryan Dull. Media personalities also scooped ice cream and handed out sugar-free Zevia soda, and former players such as Rickey Henderson and Terrence Long took pictures with fans.

As Long was asked about the event, a fan approached him to say his signature was her first-ever autograph when she was a child.

"The fans out here are great," said Long, who participated in the event for the second straight year. "They always show me love every time, regardless of the situation. It's my pleasure to come back and help out any way I can."

**Semien is A's Heart and Hustle winner**

By Matt Kelly / MLB.com

Here are this year's 30 preliminary team winners who will ultimately be considered for the final winner of the 2016 Heart and Hustle Award:

AMERICAN LEAGUE

Baltimore Orioles: Adam Jones

Boston Red Sox: Dustin Pedroia

Chicago White Sox: Todd Frazier

Cleveland Indians: Mike Napoli

Detroit Tigers: Ian Kinsler

Houston Astros: George Springer

Kansas City Royals: Eric Hosmer

Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim: Kole Calhoun

Minnesota Twins: Eduardo Nunez

New York Yankees: Didi Gregorius

**Oakland Athletics: Marcus Semien**

Seattle Mariners: Nelson Cruz

Tampa Bay Rays: Logan Forsythe

Texas Rangers: Ian Desmond

Toronto Blue Jays: Kevin Pillar

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Arizona Diamondbacks: Paul Goldschmidt

Atlanta Braves: Nick Markakis

Chicago Cubs: Anthony Rizzo

Cincinnati Reds: Zack Cozart

Colorado Rockies: Charlie Blackmon

Los Angeles Dodgers: Chase Utley

Miami Marlins: Marcell Ozuna

Milwaukee Brewers: Jonathan Lucroy

New York Mets: Curtis Granderson

Philadelphia Phillies: Andres Blanco

Pittsburgh Pirates: David Freese

San Diego Padres: Jon Jay

San Francisco Giants: Brandon Crawford

St. Louis Cardinals: Stephen Piscotty

Washington Nationals: Daniel Murphy​