

Houston Astros Daily Clips

Monday, September 19, 2016

Mariners light up Doug Fister, Astros

By Jake Kaplan / Houston Chronicle

SEATTLE - For much of the year, Doug Fister was the Astros' most dependable starter.

But for going on six weeks now, he has been the weakest link in a beleaguered rotation.

Fister's season continued to unravel Sunday afternoon at Safeco Field. In losing to the Mariners, 7-3, the Astros squandered a golden opportunity to boost their odds at a postseason berth. Instead, after winning two of three crucial weekend games, they find themselves 3 games back of the Blue Jays with only 13 to play.

An 11-2 finish will probably be required if the Astros (78-71) wish to have even a chance at a second consecutive trip to the playoffs. Of their remaining games, 10 are against either the fourth-place Athletics – winners of six of their last seven – or the last-place Angels. The other three are against the Mariners, who pulled a game ahead of them Sunday.

Fister is in line to make two more starts, including one more against Seattle. The Mariners lit him up Sunday for seven earned runs, four in a fourth inning he did not survive. Seth Smith tagged the 6-foot-8 sinkerballer for a pair of home runs, both on sub-90 mph fastballs over the middle of the plate.

The dreadful outing inflated an ERA that long hovered in the mid-3.00s to 4.45. Fister has completed five innings only twice in his last seven starts. Over his last eight starts, he has allowed 34 runs in 39 innings, equaling a 7.85 ERA.

Sunday's first inning foreshadowed a laborious afternoon for the Astros' starter. Kyle Seager ripped a two-run double over right fielder George Springer's head with two outs to key a two-run first for the Mariners.

After Springer halved the Astros' deficit with a solo homer in the third, Smith negated it with a blast of his own in the bottom half of the frame. In the fourth, Nori Aoki crushed a ground-rule double that made for a 4-1 score. A batter later, Smith provided the dagger, a three-run shot.

Rookie lefthander Ariel Miranda held the Astros to only three hits over seven innings. The home run from Springer and another from Carlos Correa - his 20th - signified the only blemishes against the Mariners starter.

Yulieski Gurriel drove in the Astros' third run on an eighth-inning double off Tom Wilhelmsen

Astros' Carlos Correa has back-to-back 20 HR seasons

By Jake Kaplan / Houston Chronicle

SEATTLE - Carlos Correa's 450-foot blast in the seventh inning of the Astros' 7-3 loss to the Mariners on Sunday didn't play a factor in the game's result.

But the home run, a solo shot off rookie lefthander Ariel Miranda, didn't lack for significance.

The longball was Correa's 20th of the season, making him only the second shortstop in major league history after Alex Rodriguez with two seasons of 20 or more home runs by the end of his age-21 campaign. Cal Ripken Jr., is the only other shortstop with even one season of 20 or more home runs at such a young age.

Correa, who turns 22 on Thursday, has 42 home runs through his first 240 major league games. He's the fourth Astros player this season to reach the 20-homer plateau, joining George Springer (28), Evan Gattis (27) and Jose Altuve (24).

Odds & ends

- Consecutive 0-fers by Jose Altuve leave the star second baseman still two hits shy of 200 on the season.

- The Astros' pitching staff's 1,284 strikeouts this season mark a new single-season record for the team.

- David Paulino made his first appearance Sunday since his Sept. 8 major league debut, working around a hit and a walk in a scoreless seventh.

Chris Devenski has become high-leverage option for Astros

By Jake Kaplan / Houston Chronicle

SEATTLE - In the span of a season, Chris Devenski has gone from non-roster invitee to Astros' big league camp to high-leverage reliever in a wild card race.

Long manager A.J. Hinch's go-to guy when in need of multiple innings of relief, Devenski has recently become a sixth- or even seventh-inning option when the Astros lead late. The rookie breakout season affords Hinch three reliable righthanders to use as a bridge to closer Ken Giles.

Devenski pitched in probably his biggest spot yet on Saturday night, recording a scoreless seventh inning of a one-run game against the Mariners in a situation that would typically call for Will Harris. He worked around singles by Kyle Seager and Leonys Martin by striking out Nelson Cruz, Dae-Ho Lee and Mike Zunino.

The reason Hinch opted for Devenski over Harris on Saturday was strategic, according to the manager. Devenski had warmed up the inning before in case starter Mike Fiers ran into trouble, and especially this late in the season Hinch would rather not get a reliever "hot" and then sit him back down.

But the decision also shows the manager's confidence in Devenski, whose 1.41 ERA in 76 1/3 innings out of the bullpen would be the best in a single season for a relief pitcher in Astros history if the season ended this weekend.

"I really do have at a minimum four guys that I feel like I can mix and match at any time – Devenski, Harris, (Luke) Gregerson and Giles," Hinch said. "Giles, obviously, is pitching the ninth. The other three, if I get them up to come in in a situation, I'd like to not just get them up and then sit them down (because) it's like using them all over again.

"On top of that, Harris has been used as much as any of that group. With Devenski hot, Devenski's good, the order that they had with the lefties coming up, I felt really good about it and so I decided to stick with him."

Saturday's was Devenski's 10th consecutive scoreless outing. His bread and butter remains his fastball-changeup combo but increased usage of an improved slider has made him that much more effective. He threw seven sliders Saturday compared to four fastballs and nine changeups.

"I've developed some trust in that pitch," Devenski said. "I've been working on it all year. I felt like I threw a good one last night to Zunino, 3-2. That was big. I could do that with my changeup. I could do that with my slider. I'm going to keep on working on that."

On deck: Astros at Athletics

By: Jake Kaplan / Houston Chronicle

- When/where: Monday 9:05 p.m., Tuesday 9:05 p.m., Wednesday 2:35 p.m.; Oakland Coliseum
- TV/radio: Root Sports SW; 790 AM and 94.1 FM (Spanish).
- Pitchers
- Monday: Brad Peacock (0-0, 2.70) vs. Jharel Cotton (1-0, 1.50); Tuesday: Joe Musgrove (3-4, 4.71) vs. Sean Manaea (6-9, 4.23); Wednesday: Collin McHugh (11-10, 4.66) vs. Daniel Mengden (2-7, 5.68)
- Astros update: The Astros are 10-6 against the Athletics this season. ... Yulieski Gurriel has at least a hit in 13 of his last 14 games. ... Musgrove has an 8.71 ERA on the road (20 2/3 innings) opposed to a 1.86 ERA at Minute Maid Park (29 innings).

Loss to Mariners sets Astros back in WC race

By Greg Johns and Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- Seth Smith revived the Mariners' offense -- not to mention their postseason aspirations -- with two home runs and four RBIs and southpaw Ariel Miranda did the rest as Seattle salvaged the final game of its series against the Astros with a 7-3 win on Sunday at Safeco Field.

Smith's second multihomer game of the season helped Seattle snap a two-game skid and lifted the Mariners to two games back of the Blue Jays in the race for the American League's second Wild Card berth. Seattle and Detroit remain tied for the spot immediately behind the Wild Card leaders at 79-70 with 13 games remaining.

Smith was 0-for-10 in his career against Astros starter Doug Fister coming in, but worked a pair of 3-1 counts and got fastballs he could drive for his 15th and 16th home runs of the year, putting him one shy of his career high.

"Guys that know what they're doing when they're pitching are able to pitch to the corners," Smith said. "You want to take the close ones and get in the good hitter's counts where they have to come after you."

The Astros saw their three-game win streak end as they fell a game back of the Mariners and Tigers and three games behind Toronto in the Wild Card chase at 78-71. Fister lasted just 3 2/3 innings as he allowed eight hits and seven runs in falling to 12-12 with a 4.45 ERA.

"Overall, just a difficult time ending at-bats in his favor," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said. "He would either fall behind or when he got ahead he couldn't end the at-bats."

The Astros launched long solo home runs, with George Springer going deep in the third and Carlos Correa belting one in the seventh, but that was all the damage they could muster against Miranda. The 27-year-old rookie allowed three hits and two runs in his longest stint of the year at seven innings, with one walk and a career-best eight strikeouts. He's 4-1 with a 3.35 ERA in eight starts since being acquired from the Orioles for Wade Miley on July 31.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Seager strikes early: After totaling just one run in the first two games of the series, Seattle struck quickly with Kyle Seager's two-run double in the first off Fister. Seager has been sizzling the past six weeks at Safeco Field, where he's hit .400 (28-for-70) with three doubles, five home runs, 15 RBIs and 16 runs over 20 games since Aug. 6.

"We really hadn't had much offense the first two games of the series, so it was nice to jump out to an early lead," said Seager. "And Smitty obviously got things going, too."

Fister falters: The Astros' run of solid starting pitching came to an abrupt end when Fister was roughed up for the third time in his last four starts. Fister, who was the Astros' most consistent starting pitcher in the first half of the season, is 0-4 with a 10.71 ERA in his last five outings, with the Astros losing all five times he's been on the mound.

"You know what, I just didn't execute today," Fister said. "That's what it comes down to. Balls down, balls up, going all over the place. I let my team down."

Miranda mows 'em down: The lefty kept the Astros off base most of the afternoon. And when he did get in a little trouble in the second following a leadoff single by Correa and a walk to Evan Gattis, the Astros helped him out when Gattis ran into a double play on a fly ball to left fielder Norichika Aoki by Marwin Gonzalez. Correa tagged and faked going to third on the drive to the warning track before retreating to second. But Gattis thought Correa was going all the way and got caught in a rundown before being tagged out on the 7-5-3 double play. Miranda is 4-0 with a 2.16 ERA in four September starts.

"I don't think he's really thinking about the pennant race," said Mariners manager Scott Servais. "He's doing what he needs to do to create a future for himself and along the way, we're benefiting. His confidence is growing and it's fun to watch."

Record falls: Astros pitchers struck out six batters Sunday to set a club record with their 1,284 strikeouts this season, breaking the previous mark of 1,282 set by the 2004 team that included Roy Oswalt, Roger Clemens and Andy Pettitte. Astros relief pitchers have accounted for nearly half of those, with a club-record 562 strikeouts for the bullpen. That is also the highest mark for relievers in the AL this season.

QUOTABLE

"Every win at this point is huge. Everything gets magnified here at the end, for sure. It's good to at least salvage this one and we've got a big series coming up." -- Seager as the Mariners prepare to host the Blue Jays the next three days at Safeco

SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS

When Miranda gave up a home run to Springer in the third, it ended a streak of 19 innings without an earned run allowed by the left-hander. That's the fifth-longest streak in Mariners history by a rookie, with Matt Young holding the record of 23 1/3 in 1983.

Correa is the youngest shortstop in baseball history to have consecutive seasons with at least 20 homers.

WHAT'S NEXT

Astros: Right-hander Brad Peacock (0-0, 2.70 ERA) will start for the Astros in Monday's 9:05 p.m. CT series opener at Oakland. Peacock is making just his third start of the season after being called up to replace the injured Dallas Keuchel. Peacock held Texas to one run in six innings in his most recent start Tuesday.

Mariners: Taijuan Walker (6-10, 4.28 ERA) pitches Monday's 7:10 p.m. PT series opener against the Blue Jays at Safeco Field against right-hander Marco Estrada (8-9, 3.78 ERA). Walker is coming off his first career shutout, a three-hit gem with no walks and 11 strikeouts against the Angels, and has won two straight since going to a revamped delivery.

Frustrated Fister battling but not getting results

Astros right-hander has struggled following strong first half

By Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- Astros pitcher Doug Fister wasn't in the mood to dive too deeply into what has caused his season to go awry following Sunday's 7-3 loss to the Mariners, but the second-half struggles of the veteran starter have weakened a rotation already without injured front-line arms Dallas Keuchel and Lance McCullers.

Fister dropped his fourth consecutive decision when he was rocked for seven runs and eight hits in 3 2/3 innings against Seattle. In his last five starts, he's 0-4 with a 10.71 ERA with 40 hits allowed in 21 innings. Opponents are hitting a whopping .404 against him in that span.

"You try and compartmentalize a little bit and kind of break things down, game by game, pitch by pitch," Fister said. "Obviously, it's a frustrating thing to not get your job done and not help the team put up the victory."

Astros manager A.J. Hinch, who's had to patch the rotation together following the likely season-ending injuries to Keuchel (shoulder inflammation) and McCullers (mild elbow sprain), said Fister simply had a hard time ending at-bats in his favor Sunday.

Kyle Seager's two-run double in the first put the Mariners ahead, 2-0, and Seth Smith tagged him for homers in the third and fourth.

"They were clearly trying to lay off some secondary pitches that were close, drew a couple of walks, came up with the big blow when they needed it," Hinch said. "Good team offense for them today, which was at Fister's expense."

Fister was the Astros' most consistent starting pitcher in the first half of the season, going 8-3 with a 3.21 ERA in his first 14 starts, 11 of which were quality. In 87 innings in that span, he allowed just 76 hits. In his last 16 starts, covering 87 innings, Fister is 4-9 with a 5.69 ERA and 109 hits allowed.

Considering the Astros are already short-handed in the rotation with two weeks to go in the season, there's not much Hinch can do but keep giving the ball to Fister. If he can iron things out, Fister probably gives the Astros a better shot to win than unproven rookies Brady Rodgers and David Paulino.

"He's always going to battle," Hinch said. "I don't worry about him showing up for work and giving his best. He's a consummate pro. He expects a lot out of himself, so when he wobbles a little bit he takes it pretty hard and wants to try to find a solution."

Devenski part of Astros' Big 4 at back of 'pen

Rookie might return to starting role down the line, but he's proven valuable as reliever

By Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- After starting pitcher Mike Fiers had thrown six scoreless innings against the Mariners on Saturday, the visiting bullpen door swung open in the seventh and Chris Devenski made his way to the mound. That would have normally been the spot for All-Star reliever Will Harris, but Astros manager A.J. Hinch showed how much faith he has in Devenski, a 25-year-old rookie, by sending him to the hill late in a tight game the club would go on to win, 2-1.

Devenski has emerged as a huge weapon in Houston's bullpen and now sits alongside Harris, setup man Luke Gregerson and closer Ken Giles as Hinch's four main relievers in the back end of the bullpen. Not bad for a guy who came to camp as a non-roster player.

"I've come a long way and done a lot of climbing, a lot of growth," Devenski said.

Hinch said Sunday he pitched Devenski instead of Harris in the seventh because Devenski had warmed up in the sixth and he didn't want to waste him after he had gotten ready. But more than anything, it's a sign of the confidence Hinch has in Devenski, who has a 1.41 ERA as a reliever this year -- the lowest by a reliever in club history.

"I've talked a lot about how much I've used our 'pen and I want to be very strategic when I got guys hot and get them in the game," Hinch said. "I really do have, at a minimum, four guys I can mix and match at any given time -- Devenski, Harris, Gregerson and Giles. Giles, obviously, is pitching the ninth, and the other three, if I get them up to come in a situation I'd like to not just get them up and sit them down. It's like using them all over again.

"And on top of that, Harris has been used as much as any in that group. With Devenski hot and Devenski's good, the order they had with the lefties coming up, I felt really good about."

Devenski was a starter throughout the Minors, but Hinch has recognized his value in relief in that he's able to use him more often and in a variety of roles. He's made five spot starts, thrown multiple innings in relief 18 times (nine times of at least three innings) and even recorded his only save when he threw the final 3 1/3 innings of a game against the Reds on June 19.

Devenski has a devastating changeup and a good fastball and is working on a breaking ball that could make him a more viable candidate to start going forward.

"I'm comfortable with the ball in his hand at any time," Hinch said. "It's very much a dilemma we're going to have to think about moving forward [starter vs. reliever]. I want to use him as much as possible. When he's in the rotation, it's once every five days. The value of those innings are immense over the season. The value of Chris Devenski down the stretch in these types of games has been ridiculously high."

Wild Card-chasing Astros head to Oakland

By Brian McTaggart / MLB.com

The Astros, coming off a stretch where they played 16 consecutive games against postseason contenders, including winning a series over the weekend in Seattle, will try to keep pace in the American League Wild Card race in Monday's series opener against the A's at the Oakland Coliseum.

Right-hander Brad Peacock (0-0, 2.70 ERA) will take the mound for his third start of the season for the Astros, who swept three games from Oakland Aug. 29-31 in Houston. The Astros are 10-6 against the A's this year, but are just 2-4 in Oakland.

Oakland will start right-hander Jharel Cotton (1-0, 1.50 ERA), who was recalled from Triple-A Nashville on Sept. 7 and will make the third start of his career. He began the season at Triple-A Oklahoma City in the Dodgers organization and went 8-5 with a 4.90 ERA in 22 Minor League games (16 starts) before being traded to the A's with Frankie Montas and Grant Holmes for Rich Hill and Josh Reddick on Aug. 1.

Things to know about this game

- Astros second baseman Jose Altuve, who has 198 hits, is batting .378 (111-for-294) on the road through 74 games this year.
- The A's are 33-42 at home, which is the second-worst home record in the AL. They will finish with a losing record at home in back-to-back seasons for the first time since 1996-98, when they did it three straight years (went 34-47 last year).
- The Astros on Sunday set a club record for most strikeouts by their pitchers in a single season (1,284), eclipsing the previous record of 1,282, set in 2004. Houston's relievers have 562 strikeouts, which is also a franchise record for a season.

Seth Smith's two HR, 4 RBI help Seattle beat Astros 7-3

By: Associated Press

SEATTLE -- Seth Smith powered Seattle past Houston and put the Mariners closer in the wild card chase.

He hit a pair of home runs and drove in four runs on Sunday to help the Mariners beat the Houston Astros 7-3. His effort backed up a strong performance by lefty Ariel Miranda as the Mariners remained in the thick of the congested wild-card race.

The Mariners (79-70) are one game behind Toronto, which holds the second wild-card spot.

Smith had a solo shot in the third and a three-run shot in the fourth, both on 3-1 pitches from Doug Fister (12-12). Smith had been 0-for-10 in his career against Fister but the eight-year veteran had a plan.

"Guys know what they're doing when they are pitching and able to pitch to the corners," Smith said. "You try to take the close ones, try to get into a good hitter's count when they come after you."

Smith, who now has 16 home runs on the season -- one short of his career high -- was patient enough to work both into hitter's counts then connected on fastballs into the right-field seats.

"You're constantly learning, how to approach at-bats, knowing what kind of swing you have going into a game, knowing what the pitcher is trying to do to you," Smith said. "Over the course of a career you kind of fit the pieces a little better together."

Fister said, "I was just trying to attack with my sinker; he put a couple good swings on balls -- clearly.

"I just didn't execute today, that's what it comes down to. Balls down, balls up, all over the place. I let my team down."

Miranda (5-1), acquired in a trade with Baltimore on July 31 for lefty Wade Miley, went seven innings -- his longest outing in 10 starts with Seattle -- allowing two runs on three hits. He walked one and struck out eight.

"Heck of an outing," Mariners manager Scott Servais said. "He's on a heck of a roll. We certainly needed it. He's gained so much confidence. You can certainly see it."

Miranda has won all four of his starts in September. The Cuban defector said, through an interpreter, "it's been a dream of mine (to be in a playoff chase) but never been there. It's really great to get there. I'm happy with the work I've been doing and happy to help the team."

Houston manager A.J. Hinch said Miranda "has a good fastball and a good split-change thing that he throws. Our guys hadn't seen a ton of him. ..He did a good job challenging us, but just above the zone and we swung under today and hit a lot of pop-ups in the infield, a few balls to the outfield. A couple balls to the track that could have changed the game a little bit. He kept enticing us with fastballs."

The Mariners have won nine of their last 11 games.

RECORD WHIFFS

With Jandel Gustave's strikeout of Shawn O'Malley in the sixth, the Astros staff established a club record for strikeouts with 1,283. They've done it without even a 200-strikeout pitcher. "For the most part we have a few guys who can spin their breaking balls when they need to," manager A.J. Hinch said. "and the changeup is a big component of our pitching staff."

SLOW START; FAST FINISH

Nori Aoki, who was sent to the minors twice this season to work on his offense, has found his batting eye this month. Entering the game, he was hitting .387 in September, fifth best in the American League. He had been hitting .255 overall to start the month. For his career, he is a .324 hitting in September, fourth best among active players. He had two hits Sunday.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Mariners: 1B Adam Lind had not played since Sept. 12 with a sprained finger in his right hand but was back in the lineup Sunday, missing five games.

UP NEXT

Astros: RHP Brad Peacock (0-0, 2.70) will make his third start, seventh appearance, in his effort to win his first game since 2014. Last time out, Sept. 13, he was solid, going six innings and allowing just three hits and one run in a 3-2 loss to Texas. Now the Astros are counting on him to step up at the most critical stage of the season. He is 1-4 with a 4.97 ERA in nine career appearances against Oakland.

Mariners: RHP Taijuan Walker (6-10, 4.28) is coming off his best starting effort of his career (59 starts). He allowed just three hits and no runs -- first career shutout -- in an 8-0 win over the L.A. Angels. He had a no-hitter through 5 2/3 innings. He is 0-2 with a 3.66 ERA in three career starts against the Blue Jays but has not faced them this season.

Elias Says...

By: Elias Sports Bureau, Inc. / Special to ESPN.com

Milestone hit for Cabrera

Miguel Cabrera's third-inning single in the Tigers' victory at Cleveland was the 2,500th hit of his major-league career. Cabrera reached that milestone at a younger age (33 years, 153 days) than any player since Hank Aaron, who produced his 2500th major-league hit in 1967, 127 days after his 33rd birthday.

Another comeback by Boston

The Red Sox completed a four-game sweep of the Yankees by erasing a 4-0 deficit in their 5-4 victory on Sunday night. Boston also trailed 4-0 in its 7-5 triumph in Thursday's series opener and was down by 3-0 and 5-2 scores in its 6-5 victory on Saturday. The last team to win as many as three games in one series in which it erased deficits of three or more runs was the Orioles, in a three-game sweep of the Nationals in June 10. The last such series for the Red Sox came against the expansion Washington Senators in June 1961. And the last time the Yankees were on the losing end of three three-run comebacks in one series was in September 1982 at Baltimore.

Indians snap long hitless streak with two outs and men on base

The Tribe opened the scoring in the second inning of their loss to the Tigers when Brandon Guyer's two-out single plated Carlos Santana from second base. Guyer snapped Cleveland's streak of 36 consecutive hitless at-bats with two outs and runners on base. It was the longest streak of that kind for any major-league team this season and the longest for the Indians since 1984, when they went hitless in 38 straight at-bats in those situations.

Reds tie NL record for home runs allowed in one season

The Reds topped the Pirates, 7-4, at Great American Ballpark while handing Ivan Nova (5-1) his first loss since he was traded to Pittsburgh. Sean Rodriguez's sixth-inning home run off Dan Straily was the 239th round-tripper surrendered by Cincinnati this year, tying the National League record for a single season which they now share with the 2001 Rockies. The only major-league team that has ever allowed more home runs in one season than this year's Reds was the 1996 Tigers (241). Cincinnati's 135 four-baggers allowed at home this season ties the third-highest total in major-league history. The Rockies gave up 159 homers at Coors Field in 1999, 144 there in 2001, and 135 in 2002.

A long time between walks for Pujols

Albert Pujols walked in the second inning and came around to score the game's first run in the Angels' 4-0 win over the Blue Jays. Pujols had not drawn a base on balls in any of his 109 previous plate appearances (since August 18). That was the longest streak of consecutive times up without a walk for Pujols during his major-league career. His next-longest streak of that kind was 61 straight plate appearances in 2012, his first season with the Angels.

Rookie Drury does it all on offense for Arizona

Brandon Drury collected four hits, including a home run and a 12th-inning walk-off single in the Diamondbacks' 10-9 win over the Dodgers. Drury is the second major-league rookie in the last month to have at least four hits, a home run, and a walk-off RBI in a game; Ryan Schimpf did that for the Padres against Arizona on August 19. Before Schimpf, no rookie had a game like that since the Rockies' Clint Barmes, against San Diego on April 4, 2005.

Dodgers end long streak

Sunday's loss (10-9 in 12 innings at Arizona) was the first for the Dodgers in a game in which they scored as many as eight runs since a 10-9 defeat in ten innings at San Francisco on May 4, 2013. In the interim, Los Angeles won each of the 86 games in which it scored at least eight runs, the longest such streak in the long history of the Dodgers.

Duffy remains undefeated at home

The Royals scored ten runs in support of Danny Duffy (12-2) and defeated the White Sox at Kauffman Stadium. Duffy, who has won each of his seven home decisions this season, is the first Royals pitcher to begin a season 7-0 or better at Kansas City since 1989, when Tom Gordon won his first eight home decisions, the first seven of which were as a reliever.

Peralta beats Hendricks

Kyle Hendricks absorbed the loss as the Brewers defeated the Cubs, allowing two runs (both earned in the second inning) in six innings to inflate his major-league-leading ERA to 2.06. But Hendricks, who entered the game with only 11 hits in 134 career at-bats (.082 BA), recorded the second multiple-hit game of his career at the plate, going 2-for-2 (singles in the third and fourth innings) against Wily Peralta, who was the winner for Milwaukee. Hendricks had never before produced hits in consecutive plate appearances.

Rivera shines as a starter

T.J. Rivera went 2-for-4 with a home run in the Mets' 3-2 victory over the Twins. Rivera has a .365 batting average (19-for-52) in the 13 games that he has started for New York and in those 13 starts he has produced a four-hit game, two three-hit games and three two-hit games. Rivera has generated more multiple-hit games for the Mets (six) than Jay Bruce (five in 38 games with New York).

Nothing to show for Odorizzi

Jake Odorizzi allowed only one run in six innings but he was not involved in the decision in the Rays' 2-1 loss at Baltimore. It was Odorizzi's 12th start this season in which he failed to earn a decision despite allowing no more than two earned runs. That's the most such starts in one season by an American League pitcher since the AL began keeping track of earned runs in 1913.

Herrera is on a roll

Odubel Herrera went 2-for-4 with a home run in the Phillies' loss to the Marlins. Herrera, who is batting .500 over his last six games (12-for-24 with four doubles and a homer), is the only Phillies player to produce 12 or more hits with at least five of them going for extra bases over a period of six games this season. Two players had six-game spans of that kind for Philadelphia last year: Maikel Franco and Chase Utley.

Cardinals rookie baffles the Giants

Alex Reyes allowed four hits in seven innings and was credited with a victory in the Cardinals' 3-0 win at San Francisco. Reyes became the first rookie to start a shutout victory against the Giants since Williams Perez tossed seven innings of the Braves' 8-0 win at San Francisco in May 2015. Reyes was the first Cardinals rookie to do so since Shelby Miller pitched seven innings to earn the victory in an 8-0 triumph over the Giants at St. Louis in June 2013.

What more can he do?

Seth Smith homered in both of his at-bats and walked in his only other plate appearance in the Mariners' victory over the Astros, yet the left-handed-swinging Smith was replaced by a pinch-hitter when Houston southpaw Kevin Chapman took the mound in the sixth inning. Smith became the first major-leaguer to be pinch-hit for in a game in which he was 2-for-2 with two round-trippers since Cleveland's Ryan Raburn was replaced under those circumstances last September. The only other Mariners player who was ever replaced by a pinch-hitter in a game in which he had homered in his only two at-bats was Ken Phelps in May 1986.

Kemp making a habit of scoring

Matt Kemp scored the game's first run in the second inning of the Braves' rain-abbreviated victory over the Nationals. It was the ninth consecutive game in which Kemp crossed the plate, the longest current streak of that kind in the majors and the longest such streak for the Braves since Martin Prado scored at least one run in 11 straight games in 2010.

Healy is hot

Ryon Healy, who went 2-for-5 for the Athletics in their victory at Texas, is batting .426 (23-for-54 with five doubles and four home runs) over his last 13 games. The only other major-leaguer with as many hits as Healy during that time (since September 5) is Washington's Trea Turner (24).

A's bats sizzle ahead of Astros series

By: Stats LLC

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The hot-hitting Oakland Athletics will attempt to continue their torrid pace in front of the home fans when they open a three-game series against the Houston Astros on Monday.

When last seen in Oakland, the A's were totaling just 26 runs in a nine-game homestand, losing six of the nine contests.

When they take the Oakland field again Monday night, they will do so as one of the hottest teams in baseball.

The A's scored 43 runs in a four-game sweep at Kansas City to start last week, then added 22 more in taking two of three at Texas.

"That was a great trip," A's manager Bob Melvin gushed Sunday after Oakland's 5-2 win over the Rangers. "Beating Kansas City four in a row, losing just a really, really tough game (7-6 at Texas on Friday) and responding the next two games ...

"I can't say enough about the desire and commitment these guys still have to finishing out the season strong. You want to play for your team, you want to play for your job, and all these things combined. We have a lot of hungry guys."

Outfielder Khris Davis became the first member of the A's to reach 40 home runs in a season since 2000 (Jason Giambi) when he smacked a pair Sunday.

Davis will take his cracks Monday at Astros right-hander Brad Peacock, against whom he has batted just one time in his career and struck out.

Peacock (0-0, 2.70 ERA) pitched the final two innings of the Astros' 6-0 home win over the A's on Aug. 29, the only time he faced Oakland this season.

Peacock has a miserable overall history against the A's, having gone 1-4 with a 4.97 ERA in nine outings (eight starts). But that must seem like a different lifetime.

He has allowed just one hit to a current member of the A's (Stephen Vogt) in 18 at-bats.

The A's will counter with Jharel Cotton, who unlike A's hitters, will attempt to duplicate what he did during the club's last homestand.

Cotton (1-0, 1.50 ERA) won his major league debut at home on Sept. 7, allowing just two hits and one run in 6 1/3 innings against the Los Angeles Angels.

He followed that up with a no-decision on the road in a 5-4 win at Kansas City on Tuesday, when he yielded three runs (one earned) in 5 2/3 innings.

Cotton will be facing an Astros team that enters the final two weeks of the regular season three games out of the final playoff spot in the American League.

Houston helped itself by winning two of three at Seattle, and it now looks to take advantage of an Oakland team that has struggled at home.

"Every series is huge now," Astros designated hitter Tyler White said after his team clinched the series win over Seattle on Saturday night. "We go out every day, try to take care of the task at hand, and we'll see where we stand at the end."

The Astros have a 10-6 lead in the season series over the A's but have lost four of six in Oakland.

The schedule surely gives Houston an opportunity to move up in the wild-card standings. The Astros finish the regular season with 10 of their final 13 against the bottom two in the AL West, including seven against the last-place Angels.

Magic number watch: Where MLB pennant races stand on Sept. 19

By: Jason Foster / Sporting News

The magic number is the combined number of wins by the first-place team and losses by the trailing team that will eliminate the trailing team from winning the division.

Here is how the magic numbers for Major League Baseball's division titles look on the morning of Monday, Sept. 19:

AL East

First-place team: Red Sox

Magic number to eliminate:

2. Orioles (11)
3. Blue Jays (10)
4. Yankees (6)
5. Rays (Eliminated)

AL Central

First-place team: Indians

Magic number to eliminate:

2. Tigers (7)
3. Royals (4)
4. White Sox (Eliminated)
5. Twins (Eliminated)

AL West

First-place team: Rangers

Magic number to eliminate:

2. Mariners (5)
3. Astros (4)
4. A's (Eliminated)
5. Angels (Eliminated)

NL East

First-place team: Nationals

Magic number to eliminate:

2. Mets (6)
3. Marlins (Eliminated)
4. Phillies (Eliminated)
5. Braves (Eliminated)

NL Central

First-place team: Cubs (clinched division)

Magic number to eliminate:

2. Cardinals (Eliminated)
3. Pirates (Eliminated)
4. Brewers (Eliminated)
5. Reds (Eliminated)

NL West

First-place team: Dodgers

Magic number to eliminate:

2. Giants (9)
3. Rockies (2)
4. Diamondbacks (Eliminated)
5. Padres (Eliminated)

Opponent Clips - at OAK

Davis homers twice as A's slow Rangers' roll

By Jane Lee and T.R. Sullivan / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- The Athletics, trying to avoid a second straight last-place finish, are making it tough on the first-place Rangers in the final month of the season.

Khris Davis, who has been pummeling the Rangers all season, hit two home runs and the Athletics won for the second straight game with a 5-2 victory on Sunday afternoon at Globe Life Park. The Athletics have won six of their last seven and they are 8-8 against the Rangers with three games left next weekend in Oakland.

"We had a great trip," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "Beat Kansas City four in a row, lose just a really, really tough game here and then respond with wins in the next two games. I can't say enough about the desire and the commitment these guys still have to finish out the season strong. You want to play for your team, you want to play for your job next year. All these things combined, we have a lot of hungry guys that are playing well."

The Rangers finished Sunday with an 8 1/2-game lead over the Mariners in the American League West with 12 games to play. The Rangers' magic number is five as they go into a three-game series with the Angels beginning Monday in Arlington.

"We've been focused since day one," Rangers third baseman Adrian Beltre said. "It doesn't matter when we clinch. Hopefully it will be sooner rather than later. I think our mentality is still the same. We come out here trying to win ballgames and prepare our best to win those games."

Left-hander Ross Detwiler earned his second victory for the Athletics by holding his former team to two runs on five hits and three walks in 5 1/3 innings. He left with a 3-2 lead with one out in the bottom of the sixth inning.

Colby Lewis took the loss for the Rangers in his second start since coming off the disabled list by allowing three runs in 5 1/3 innings. He allowed just three hits, but walked five, including three in the Athletics' two-run sixth inning.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Eibner, Smolinski save the day: Brett Eibner took away extra bases -- and likely two RBIs -- from Beltre with a diving, over-the-shoulder catch on the warning track in center field to end the fifth, with the A's trailing by one. Ian Desmond and Carlos Gomez were stationed at first and second, respectively, when Eibner made the inning-ending play. Left fielder Jake Smolinski then made a leaping catch to take extra bases away from Elvis Andrus with one out in the eighth. Andrus' liner left his bat at 104 mph and traveled a projected 343 feet, per Statcast™. Similar batted balls have been hits 70 percent of the time this year.

"Eibner's catch might be the play of the game, because if that gets by, now we're in a completely different game," Melvin said. "We're behind, I don't have my bullpen guys that I'm probably wanting to use at that point. The whole game changes on that catch. When the ball was hit, I didn't think he had a chance at it."

Davis strikes Rangers, again: Davis continued to feast on Rangers pitching with his two home runs -- a solo homer in the fourth and a two-run shot in the eighth. Davis has hit 10 homers against the Rangers this year, most by an opponent in a single season against them. The previous record-holder was Reggie Jackson, who hit nine against the Rangers in 1974. Davis' second homer also gave him 40 home runs on the year, making him the first A's hitter to hit 40-plus home runs in a season since Jason Giambi in 2000.

"I feel comfortable against their guys," Davis said. "The numbers don't lie."

DeShields keys rally: Delino DeShields, starting in the leadoff spot, was instrumental in the Rangers' two-run rally in the third. Robinson Chirinos reached on a one-out double and DeShields followed with a run-scoring single. Gomez then lined a single to left and DeShields raced to third on the play. He scored on Desmond's infield single.

"This has been awesome to be around these guys and pick their brains and see how they go about their business," said DeShields, who spent over two months with Triple-A Round Rock after making the Opening Day roster. "I'm just taking something from it and learning and trying to be the best I can be."

Check Mazara: The Rangers, trailing 3-2, loaded the bases with two outs in the sixth. With right-handed hitting DeShields up against right-handed reliever Liam Hendriks, Rangers manager Jeff Banister wanted a left-handed hitter so he went with Nomar Mazara over Carlos Beltran. Hendriks struck out Mazara when he chased a 1-2 slider low and couldn't check his swing in time.

"If we use Beltran, it's a two-player move," Banister said, referring to the need for a defensive player in the seventh inning. "Mazara has come up big in those situations, he has had some good at-bats as a pinch-hitter. We felt good using Mazara. He goes out and plays defense and we save Beltran for later."

WHAT'S NEXT

Athletics: The A's will head back to the Bay for their final homestand of the season, beginning play against the Astros on Monday. Right-hander Jharel Cotton will start the 7:05 p.m. series opener at the Coliseum and look to build on his first two big league outings, allowing just one earned run in each of them.

Rangers: Martin Perez (10-10, 4.20 ERA) will start the opener of a three-game series against the Angels at 7:05 p.m. CT on Monday at Globe Life Park. Perez is 2-0 with a 1.96 ERA over a string of three straight quality starts.

Davis reaches 40-homer mark with two dingers

A's left fielder is first in franchise to reach milestone since Giambi in 2000

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- Khris Davis looked downright giddy as he circled the bases a second time at Globe Life Park on Sunday afternoon. The newly minted member of the 40-homer club had every reason to be.

The A's slugger also had reason to want more.

"It's pretty cool," Davis said. "I'm proud of myself. At the same time, we still have a couple more weeks, so I don't know why 45 isn't out of the question."

"We have 13 games left," A's manager Bob Melvin said, "so I know he's not looking for a day off tomorrow."

Not since 2000 had the A's employed a 40-homer player before Davis totaled two in the A's series-clinching 5-2 victory over the Rangers to reach the mark. His previous career high was 27, set with the Brewers last year.

Davis, 28, is obliterating another prior career high, too, heading back to the Bay with 99 RBIs in tow -- 30 more than he's tallied in any of his other three seasons, even while playing his home games in the ultimate pitcher-friendly confines of the Coliseum.

"He's really comfortable here," Melvin said. "He likes it here, gets along great with the guys. A lot of power hitters don't really want to come to Oakland, based on the fact it's a little tougher to hit the ball out of the park, but I don't think that crosses his mind."

The left fielder is one of only four players in the Majors with at least 40 homers this season and, with 13 games to play, could easily surpass Jason Giambi's total of 43 with the A's in 2000 -- even after waiting until his 14th game of the season to notch his first one.

Sunday's blasts, giving him 10 against Texas this season, more than any other opponents in Rangers history, perfectly showcased Davis' incredible power, with one being sent to left, and the other to right for an opposite-field shot.

"It's impressive," Melvin said. "I told him 45 was more impressive than 40, though."

Just eight times have the A's seen a 40-homer season from one of their own since the club moved to Oakland in 1968.

"That fuels me," Davis said. "It's easy getting here, but staying here is the hardest part. It's cliché, but true."

A's quash Rangers with pair of nifty catches

Eibner robs Beltre with diving catch; Smolinski steals hit from Andrus

By Ryan Posner / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- Two tremendous plays by A's outfielders robbed the Rangers of extra bases, and a chance at a victory, as Oakland went on to win the finale of the three-game series, 5-2, Sunday afternoon at Globe Life Park.

A's center fielder Brett Eibner was responsible for the first catch, which came in the fifth inning, and was a pivotal factor in the direction of the game.

"I thought the ball was going to go over his head," Rangers third baseman Adrian Beltre said.

To Beltre's surprise, Eibner snagged his liner with a headfirst dive and his back facing the infield to end the inning and keep two runs off the board.

"I just got a good jump on it," Eibner said. "Once I saw that angle I tried to run to the spot where I thought it was going to be and put my glove up there. I didn't have too much time to really think about it."

A's manager Bob Melvin agreed that it would be hard to count out Eibner's catch as the play of the game.

"If that gets by, now we're in a completely different game," Melvin said. "We're behind, I don't have my bullpen guys that I'm probably wanting to use at that point. The whole game changes on that catch. When the ball was hit, I didn't think he had a chance at it."

The A's would go on to take the lead in the sixth and wouldn't look back. Maybe the biggest benefactor of Eibner's fine play was A's starter Ross Detwiler, who picked up his first win since his first start with the A's on Aug. 10, due in large part to the run-saving grab.

"I kind of put my head down and ran to back up a base, then I looked up and he was diving for it," Detwiler said. "That really kept the momentum on our side."

The Rangers' next best chance at regaining the momentum came with one out in the seventh and Elvis Andrus at the plate, trailing by three. Andrus sent a line drive that looked like it was on its way over left fielder Jake Smolinski's head.

But Smolinski brought in Andrus' liner with a last-second leap to squash the hopes of another Rangers comeback. Andrus' line drive left his bat at 103.7 mph, with a 17-degree launch angle, and traveled a projected 343 feet, per Statcast™. Similar batted balls this season have been hits 70 percent of the time.

"The left fielder made a great catch and their center fielder made a tremendous catch," Rangers manager Jeff Banister said. "We barreled a number of balls hard. A tremendous catch by their center fielder. If he doesn't make that catch, it's a different ballgame."

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