

## A's News Clips, Saturday, September 5, 2009

### One bad inning beats A's rookie

By Joe Stiglich, OAKLAND TRIBUNE

Clayton Mortensen didn't make a great early impression Friday night against the Seattle Mariners.

The A's right-hander endured an adventurous four-run second inning that had Oakland's bullpen stirring early.

But he recovered nicely, and while the Mariners continued taking it to the A's with a 6-3 victory at the Oakland Coliseum, Mortensen's rebound was a silver lining for the A's.

Mortensen — filling in for fellow rookie Vin Mazzaro, who has shoulder tendinitis — lasted seven innings and didn't allow another run after the second.

He retired 16 of the final 20 batters he faced.

"I just started leaving the ball up," Mortensen said of the second. "These guys, if you leave the ball up, they're going to hit it hard. I'm more of a ground-ball guy."

That four-run second was all the Mariners would need to win their 11th against the A's in 14 contests this season.

Nomar Garciaparra's two-run homer in the seventh pulled the A's to within 4-3.

But Seattle added a run off A's reliever Michael Wuertz in the eighth, and Jose Lopez's solo homer off Jeff Gray in the ninth provided more cushion.

It was just the third major league appearance for Mortensen, 24, one of three players the A's received from St. Louis in the Matt Holliday trade. He had made one previous start with the A's, giving up eight runs in four innings at Kansas City on Aug. 8.

With Mazzaro likely out for his next scheduled start, Friday in Minnesota, A's manager Bob Geren said Mortensen probably would draw that assignment if Mazzaro can't go.

Mortensen (0-2) got the first two outs in the second, but two walks helped load the bases. Jack Wilson shot a two-run single back up the middle to break a scoreless tie.

Then Ichiro Suzuki lined a shoulder-high pitch into left to bring home another run, and Franklin Gutierrez's RBI single made it 4-0.

"When you have two outs and nobody on base, and then you look up and have four runs, that doesn't happen too often," Geren said. —... (But) he rebounded for us."

The A's got a run back when Ryan Sweeney led off the third with a double and came around to score on Adam Kennedy's double to left to make it 4-1.

Geren wanted to start as many right-handed hitters as possible against Seattle left-hander Ryan Rowland-Smith (3-2), but he kept the left-handed hitting Kennedy at third base and started Bobby Crosby at first in place of Daric Barton.

Garciaparra, who hits right-handed, drew just his second start since Aug. 18. His two-run homer in the seventh went to straightaway center. Gutierrez made a leaping effort above the wall, and the ball glanced off his glove and went over.

It was Garciaparra's first homer since May 14.

A's shortstop Cliff Pennington made three standout plays defensively, including a barehanded grab and throw to get Adrian Beltre at first in the fifth. Pennington did commit a fielding error in the ninth, which snapped his 35-game errorless streak.

Geren said Pennington has done everything defensively required of an everyday shortstop, and that he must do the "little things" offensively since he's not a power hitter.

Mazzaro had an MRI on Thursday that showed the tendinitis. He said he first felt soreness "about two starts ago. I didn't really recover the way I normally do. I felt a little soreness. "... I'll get a few days off and bounce back."

## **A's notebook: Cutter could make Blevins a permanent fixture in bullpen**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

New pitch could give Blevins another chance

Jerry Blevins has spent much of this season trying to master a cut fastball.

He'll spend the next few weeks giving his new pitch a trial run against major league hitters.

Blevins, a lefty reliever whom the A's called up Sept. 1, has added the pitch to expand his arsenal against right-handed hitters.

Gil Patterson, the A's minor league roving pitching instructor, and Rick Rodriguez, the pitching coach for Triple-A Sacramento, have worked extensively with Blevins on his cutter.

"They thought it was just something else to put in hitters' minds," Blevins said. "It's still a work in progress, but I feel confident enough to throw it in games."

Blevins made the A's Opening Day roster but struggled in two outings. He received a second brief call-up in May but has spent the majority of 2009 with Sacramento.

The A's relief corps is a strength this season, and the pieces are in place for the unit to be strong again next season.

Blevins, who turns 26 on Sunday, will face a challenge working his way into the mix next spring, but having another pitch at his disposal will help his cause.

Blevins primarily is throwing his cutter away to lefties and inside to righties. As he gains a feel for the pitch, he hopes to spot it all over the strike zone.

He used his cutter to coax a pop-up from Kansas City's Brayan Pena on Wednesday, Blevins' second scoreless outing since being recalled.

"(The cutter) is something that's pretty easy to leave flat," he said. "You've got to focus on getting the movement."

A's left fielder Scott Hairston has experimented with Rawlings' S100 batting helmet in batting practice but doesn't think he'd wear it in a game.

The helmet is bulkier than the model currently used and offers more padding if a player gets struck by a pitch in the head.

The New York Mets' David Wright, beamed by pitch from the Giants' Matt Cain and hospitalized Aug. 15, wore the S100 helmet for two games before going back to the old model.

"The one I wore was too big," Hairston said before Friday's game with Seattle. "I was just curious about how it feels. It's comfortable, but it just seems like it would be a distraction. I can't see myself wearing one next year, put it that way."

The S100 helmet will be required for use in the minors next season.

In other news, Hairston returned to the A's lineup after missing two games with his troublesome left quad.

A's pitcher Dallas Braden was voted by his teammates as Oakland's nominee for the Marvin Miller Man of the Year award, which is organized by the Players' Association and recognizes a player's community work.

## **Losing doesn't taint Ellis' enthusiasm for A's**

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Mark Ellis remains a team guy on a disassembled team. He broke in when the A's were annual postseason participants and was a proud member of Oakland's ALCS roster three short years ago.

The second baseman has seen many established teammates/friends get traded or released, and now he's the lone survivor, wearing green and gold longer than anyone else in the clubhouse and the only one (other than out-of-uniform Eric Chavez) who's under contract for 2010.

The A's are in the American League West cellar and rank last in the league in both attendance and payroll, yet Ellis comes off as upbeat and said he wants to stick around despite a third straight losing season and the gloomiest September around the Coliseum in years.

Another tiny crowd appeared Friday night - tinier than the announced 11,738 - and the A's fell behind early and lost to Seattle 6-3. Their so-called tragic number reached single digits. Any combination of eight A's losses or Angels wins would eliminate Oakland from contention.

"I've been here my whole career," Ellis said. "I enjoy it here. It's a good place to play. I like it here as long as the organization is moving forward."

Is it?

"When you have Brett Anderson, Vin Mazzaro and Trevor Cahill, along with Andrew Bailey, an incredible closer - if you can pitch, you can win ballgames," Ellis said. "We learned that when we had Hudson, Mulder and Zito."

None of those current A's pitched Friday. Clayton Mortensen, who arrived from St. Louis in the Matt Holliday trade, made his second big-league start and had just one bad inning out of seven, surrendering four runs in the second.

He hurt himself by issuing a pair of two-out walks to load the bases. Jack Wilson singled in two runs, and Ichiro Suzuki and Franklin Gutierrez singled in one apiece. The rest of Mortensen's night, no Mariner reached scoring position.

A's manager Bob Geren stacked his lineup with righties against lefty Ryan Rowland-Smith, and that included Bobby Crosby, who got his first start since coming off the disabled list Tuesday, and Nomar Garciaparra, who hit a two-run homer that bounced off Gutierrez's glove and over the center-field wall.

Garciaparra's seventh-inning homer, his first in 42 games dating to May 23 (the second longest drought of his career), narrowed Seattle's lead to 4-3. But reliever Michael Wuertz gave up a run in the eighth, and Jose Lopez homered off Jeff Gray in the ninth. Mariners closer David Aardsma had the night off after working three of the previous four days, so Mark Lowe earned the save with a scoreless ninth.

Ellis made the final out and finished 0-for-4, but he's hitting .333 with 25 RBIs in his last 36 games.

The A's payroll is \$46.4 million, according to Friday's USA Today (\$9 million below second-to-last Baltimore), and their average attendance is 17,816 (4,500 fewer than the next lowest team, Cleveland).

"You've got to win and play well to get the people in the seats. We haven't done that this year," Ellis said. "You can't really blame them for not coming out. No reason for us to complain about that. We've got to play better baseball."

**Briefly:** Mortensen replaced Mazzaro in the rotation and could get another start because Mazzaro's shoulder tendinitis could shelve him two starts. "I never felt this kind of pain," said Mazzaro, adding he'll try to throw again in five or six days. ... Today's starter, Anderson, leads big-league rookies with 119 strikeouts. ... Cliff Pennington's 35-game errorless streak ended in the ninth inning. He was tied for the fifth-longest streak for an Oakland shortstop.

## **A'S LEADING OFF**

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

**Rookie fever:** For the 97th time this year, the A's started a rookie pitcher, an Oakland record. That's the most by a big-league team since the 1998 Marlins used a rookie pitcher 124 times. The previous Oakland high was 93 in 1983.

## **A's can't overcome early deficit in loss**

### **Rookie Mortensen regroups to likely earn another start**

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Kurt Suzuki had seen this horror flick before, so he directed a better ending.

Having watched Clayton Mortensen slip into the same funk he'd fallen into while allowing eight runs in four innings during his A's debut in Kansas City about a month ago, Suzuki had a quick chat with the rookie right-hander Friday night after the Mariners mounted a two-out, four-run rally in the second inning.

"Keep the ball down," Suzuki said, "and you'll be fine."

Easier said than done for a 24-year-old making his third career appearance in the Majors, but Mortensen did keep the ball down thereafter, and he *was* fine, keeping Seattle scoreless for the next five frames.

Alas, it wasn't enough to beat the visitors, who got eight innings of four-hit work from starter Ryan Rowland-Smith on the way to a 6-3 victory in the second game of a four-game series.

But it was enough to earn Mortensen, who was called up from Triple-A Sacramento earlier in the day to fill in for injured rookie righty Vin Mazzaro, another start.

"It looks that way," Oakland manager Bob Geren said. "We'll have to see what happens with Vin, but for now, yeah."

Geren hadn't yet delivered that news to Mortensen, one of three prospects acquired in the July trade that sent Matt Holliday to the Cardinals, but even Mariners skipper Don Wakamatsu seemed to suggest another opportunity -- if it's available, as expected -- is in order.

"I thought [Mortensen] did a nice job," said Wakamatsu, who served as Geren's bench coach last year and is 11-3 against Oakland this season. "He ran into trouble there with two outs [in the second] but then shut us down. To get that length out of him, I know Bob must be pretty pleased with that outing, especially considering how young he is still."

Mortensen was fairly pleased, too, having posted a respectable line of four runs on six hits and three walks while throwing 100 pitches over seven innings. And he, like Suzuki, knew exactly what the problem was while he gave up four of those hits and two of the walks during the fateful frame.

"I just started leaving balls up," he said. "And with these guys, you leave balls up, they hit 'em hard."

Bill Hall got the rally going with a double, and a pair of walks loaded the bases for Jack Wilson, who hit a two-run single to center. Ichiro Suzuki then slapped a head-high pitch into left for an RBI single, and Franklin Gutierrez followed with an RBI single of his own.

"Two outs and all of a sudden they have four runs; you don't see that very often," Geren said. "But to his credit, he was one [baserunner] away from coming out of the game there, but he got out of it and took us through seven."

That Rowland-Smith, in his first season as a starter, took the Mariners through eight seemed vexing to Geren, who seemed disturbed by his club's quiet night against the Aussie southpaw.

"He must have been hitting the corners, because the velocity wasn't overly impressive, and [his fastball] was straight," Geren said. "That's the type of fastball we normally hit, but we didn't get on him."

Geren's counterpart had another perspective on it.

"He was outstanding," Wakamatsu said of Rowland-Smith. "I thought he kept his composure even when he ran into trouble, something he struggled with early in the year. That shows maturity, and I can't say enough about the job he did tonight."

The A's cut into the lead in the third when Ryan Sweeney led off with a double and scored on a double by Adam Kennedy, and Nomar Garciaparra's two-run homer off the glove of center fielder Gutierrez in the seventh made it a one-run game before Oakland's bullpen allowed the Mariners to pad the lead.

Righty Michael Wuertz, who'd allowed all of two runs in his previous 14 outings, took over for Mortensen to start the eighth and gave up a run on two hits and a sacrifice fly by Kenji Johjima. Righty Jeff Gray gave up a solo homer by Jose Lopez in the ninth.

## **Anderson not focused on run support**

### **Oakland (59-76) vs. Seattle (72-64), 6:05 p.m. PT**

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Knowing they'd be featuring a starting rotation loaded with youth, the A's brought in a slew of established hitters before the season, hoping the prospect of decent run support would take some pressure off the pups.

Suffice to say, the plan didn't quite work.

Matt Holliday, the marquee acquisition, was a flop before being traded for three prospects. Jason Giambi, whose homecoming was a nice story early on, was so bad he got released. Orlando Cabrera provided modest production at best before being traded to Minnesota, and Nomar Garciaparra has struggled with injuries all year.

The result? Another year of poor run support for the pitching staff. Through Thursday, the A's ranked last in the American League in homers, extra-base hits and slugging percentage, next-to-last in batting average, and had scored fewer runs than all but two AL teams.

Yet rookie left-hander Brett Anderson, who'll make his 26th start of the year Saturday in the third game of a four-game series against the visiting Mariners, never much bought into the notion that more offense would lead to less pressure on the pitchers.

"I'm not saying it doesn't make sense," he said. "I just don't think it's ever a good idea to go out there thinking it's OK to give up some runs just because your offense should be able to pick you up if you do. The goal is to put a zero up every inning you're out there."

Anderson, 21, has put up plenty of zeros, frequently flashing the form that created much buzz prior to his first Spring Training. His two-hit shutout at Fenway Park was a masterpiece, and he's drawn raves around the league for his poise and presence.

He's seen a lot of zeros put up by his counterparts, too, though. Anderson has gotten two runs of support or fewer in 13 of his 25 starts, including each of the past three.

But just as being backed with crooked numbers doesn't necessarily change the way he approaches any given game (with the exception of attacking the zone a bit more with a big lead), pitching without much support doesn't enhance his desire to be perfect.

"Everyone give up runs, everyone gets a bunch of runs once in a while, everyone loses and wins close games," he said. "If you're pitching in the big leagues, though -- if you're pitching anywhere, really -- the idea, no matter what the score is, is to pitch well. That's all a pitcher can control.

"Let all the other stuff into your head and it's only going to hurt your game."

### **Pitching matchup**

#### **OAK: LHP Brett Anderson (7-10, 4.42 ERA)**

Anderson pitched well early against the Angels on Sunday but had a rough fifth inning, when he allowed an RBI double to Chone Figgins and a three-run homer to Torii Hunter. In all, the rookie allowed four runs on seven hits over six innings in a loss to John Lackey. Anderson is 1-1 with a 3.32 ERA in three career starts against the Mariners.

#### **SEA: LHP Luke French (4-4, 4.62 ERA)**

Throwing strikes was a piece of cake for French in his last start. Of the 96 pitches he threw against the Angels, 66 of them were strikes. The downside of that is that too many of the strikes got too much of the strike zone; he was tagged for 10 hits and seven earned runs over five innings -- the most runs he has allowed since being acquired from the Tigers on July 31. French still needs to change speeds more to keep hitters guessing. This will be his second start against the Athletics, having beaten them at Safeco Field on Aug. 26.

### **Dribblers ...**

Rookie righty Vin Mazzaro, scratched from his Friday start with shoulder tendinitis, is likely to be skipped again the next time his turn in the rotation comes around, next Friday in Minnesota. "We'll get him throwing in Chicago [Tuesday or Thursday] and see where it goes," A's manager Bob Geren said. ... Lefty Dallas Braden (nerve damage in left foot) will not return to action as starter, but Geren is still holding out hope that Braden will make a relief appearance or two. Braden is not optimistic. ... Bobby Crosby, who came off the disabled list Tuesday, played Friday for the first time since being activated, starting at first base so the A's would have as many right-handed hitters in the lineup as possible against Mariners lefty Ryan Rowland-Smith. The Mariners are throwing lefty French on Saturday, but Geren wouldn't commit to another start for Crosby.

### **Up next**

- Sunday: Athletics (Gio Gonzalez, 4-5, 6.07) vs. Mariners (Doug Fister, 2-1, 2.94), 1:05 p.m. PT 
- Monday: Off
- Tuesday: Athletics (Brett Tomko, 3-3, 4.40) at White Sox (Carlos Torres, 1-0, 3.86), 5:11 p.m. PT 

## **Wakamatsu enjoys return to Bay Area**

### **Seattle (72-64) at Oakland (59-76), 6:05 p.m. PT**

By Jane Lee / Special to MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Don Wakamatsu never tires of coming to Oakland.

The skipper's 11-3 season record against the A's doesn't hurt. But the Mariners manager -- no matter how many times he is asked -- is also always more than happy to talk about his days as a resident of the Bay Area.

Wakamatsu, 46, became the first Asian-American to manage in the Major Leagues when he was called upon to take the reins in Seattle in November. But the former Oakland bench coach knows his time in an A's uniform last year enabled him to take such a leap.

"The good time I spent here last year with the Oakland A's allowed me to get this job," Wakamatsu said Friday. "The relationships I still have there and the respect I have for the organization is still off the charts."

So is his current team's performance against the A's -- which begs the question of whether his knowledge of the ballclub gives him an advantage.

"I don't know if it gives me an edge," he said, "but it gives me more of a comfort level that I know the players.

"I have a little insight to the ways they think and the styles of the manager. I think I have a comfort level, and the rest is to get the players to play as hard as they can, and play good baseball."

Wakamatsu's approach has seemingly worked thus far. The Mariners have a six-game winning streak against Oakland and have won 34 of 52 vs. the A's since the start of the 2007 season.

Seattle has the chance to extend that streak to seven Saturday when they take on the A's for the third of a four-game set at Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum.

### **Pitching matchup**

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#### **OAK: LHP Brett Anderson (7-10, 4.42 ERA)**

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### **Sea Scrolls**

Carlos Silva, on the disabled list since May 7 with right shoulder inflammation, pitched one inning for Triple-A Tacoma on Thursday and gave up one hit and struck out two. Wakamatsu said Silva will throw again on Sunday and will rejoin the team in Anaheim on Tuesday if the Rainiers are eliminated from the playoffs. If they make the playoffs, though, Silva will have a few more outings with the Triple-A club. ... With the Bay Bridge closed for construction for the Labor Day weekend, the Mariners have been forced to get accustomed to BART, which provides train transportation throughout the Bay Area, in order to travel from Oakland to their hotel in San Francisco.

## **Mortensen has one bad inning**

Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Very little seems to excite Seattle's Ichiro Suzuki, least of all his own accomplishments.

The Mariners right fielder moved one step closer to baseball history, picking up a pair of hits to move within four of 2,000 for his career during Seattle's 6-3 win over the Oakland Athletics on Friday night, then casually downplayed his impending milestone.

"We have a lot of games left to play, a lot of more baseball left in the season," Suzuki said. "If there were only four or five games then I would be naturally conscious about it, but as of now I'm not."

Suzuki is on pace to become the second-fastest player in major league history to reach the 2,000-hit plateau. Al Simmons did it in 1,390 games while Suzuki has played in 1,391. George Sisler is currently second on the list in 1,414 games.

The 35-year-old Suzuki also moved closer to becoming the first player to have 200 hits or more in nine straight seasons. With 191 hits this season, Suzuki needs only nine more to break the consecutive season mark he currently holds with Willie Keeler (1894-1901).

"It's amazing, the amount of weapons he has to get that," Seattle manager Don Wakamatsu said. "He has such a feel for the ball and what he can do with his body and motion never ceases to amaze us. I watched him for a number of years and I'm glad I'm going to be a part of that."

Jose Lopez homered, Ryan Rowland-Smith pitched eight innings for his first win since Aug. 9 and the Mariners moved eight games over .500 for the first time since 2007.

Nomar Garciaparra homered for the A's, who have lost six straight to the Mariners and dropped a season-high 17 games under .500.

Seattle scored four in the second against Oakland rookie Clayton Mortensen (0-2), who was called up from the minors earlier in the day to make only his second start in the majors.

"I started getting my balls up and they hit them hard," Mortensen said. "I fell behind in the count and I had to try to focus afterward on throwing my sinker down in the strike zone. I just lost my rhythm and had to take a step back and figure out how to make quality pitches."

Jack Wilson hit a bases-loaded single to make it 2-0 before Suzuki chased a pitch out of the strike zone and singled to left for another run. Franklin Gutierrez followed with an RBI single to make it 4-0.

Rowland-Smith (3-2), who had gone four straight starts without a win, made it hold up.

The lefty allowed four hits, striking out four and walking one while going eight innings for the second straight start. He gave up a RBI double to Ryan Sweeney in the third and a two-run home run to Garciparra in the seventh on a ball that glanced off center fielder Gutierrez's glove before going over the fence, but was otherwise solid.

"That's probably the funnest thing about the last couple outings is just getting deep into the game," Rowland-Smith said. "Tonight is just felt good to go out and go a full solid eight innings and just go full circle from where I was back in April."

Mark Lowe pitched the ninth for his second save in eight chances, completing the five-hitter.

Mortensen was strong after digging a four-run hole in the second inning.

Oakland's young right-hander, who was acquired from St. Louis as part of the Matt Holliday trade on July 24, allowed only six hits and struck out one but walked three, two of which scored. Mortensen settled down to retire 16 of the final 20 batters he faced.

Lopez hit his 21st home run of the season in the ninth off Oakland reliever Jeff Gray.

The Mariners played without designated hitter Ken Griffey Jr., who was a late scratch after originally being penciled in at the cleanup spot. Griffey, who missed six straight games before going hitless in four at-bats Thursday, was in the original lineup submitted by Wakamatsu but was pulled out after batting practice due to a sore knee.

Mike Sweeney replaced Griffey and went 1-for-5.

## **A'S NOTES**

Left fielder Scott Hairston returned to the lineup after missing two games because of his troublesome left quadriceps.

- The A's have started a rookie pitcher 97 times this season, an Oakland record and the most in the majors since Florida had 124 in 1998, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **Cats drop fourth in a row**

[rivercats.com](http://rivercats.com)

The Sacramento River Cats are going to the playoffs – that's been established for more than a week now.

But manager Tony DeFrancesco would like his team to return to championship-caliber form before heading to its first-round playoff opponent Wednesday.

Sacramento lost its fourth game in a row Friday night, falling to host Salt Lake 5-1. It's only the River Cats' third time losing four games or more in a row this season, and its first time since early July. With only three games remaining in the regular season (all in Salt Lake), time is running out on the PCL South Division champion River Cats to build momentum before playing either Colorado Springs or Tacoma in the first round of the playoffs.

The Sky Sox and Rainiers are currently battling for the North Division title. Tacoma trails by one game after beating

Colorado Springs on Friday night in the first game of a four-game series. If Tacoma were to win two of the final three games, it would win the division title by virtue of a tie-breaker (win-loss percentage against division opponents). Sacramento has a 7-8 season series record against Colorado Springs and is 9-7 against Tacoma.

Sacramento (85-55) still owns the best record in all of Triple-A baseball after being the first Triple-A to clinch its division crown this season (the River Cats clinched on August 27).

Chris Gissell, whom the River Cats acquired in free agency after he spent the first part of the season playing in Taiwan, got the start Friday night for Sacramento. The tall right-hander allowed only two runs over 4.2 innings in his second start for Sacramento this season, striking out three and walking none.

The River Cats remained in striking distance until Matthew Brown connected on a three-run homer off Scott Hodsdon in the seventh inning to put Salt Lake up 5-1.

Sacramento managed only five hits in the game, with Matt Carson driving in the only run on a second-inning triple to left-center. Brett Wallace went 2-for-3 for Sacramento, increasing his season batting average to .302.

Sacramento will continue its four-game series with Salt Lake with a 6:05 p.m. start on Saturday.

## **Hounds Have a Night to Forget**

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

When Toto pulled back the curtain, revealing "The Great and Powerful Oz" to be nothing more than a kindly, white-haired gentleman, the Wizard quickly closed the curtain, grabbed the microphone and bellowed the all-time comeback line "... pay no attention to that man behind the curtain."

We will borrow from the Wizard and simply tell you "... pay no attention to that score atop this e-mail."

San Antonio did, indeed, defeat the 'Hounds, 16-2, with 10 of the runs coming in the ninth inning. Devon Day "took one for the team," allowing eight runs on six hits in and-inning-and-two-thirds and back-up catcher Raul Padron actually came in to pitch, eventually recording the final out.

Why leave a reliever out to dry? The bullpen is set for a series with the Frisco RoughRiders; a 3-game showdown, during which the Texas League South second half pennant will be decided.

In a Friday afternoon e-mail Texas League president Tom Kayser cleared up some confusion, and clarified the tie-breaking procedure. Bottom line: The RockHounds own the tie-breaker over Frisco. So ...

Frisco comes to Citibank Ballpark Saturday for a 3-game series

Frisco needs three wins to win the South

The RockHounds need one win to capture the pennant

## **Big inning lifts Missions past RockHounds; lead falls to 1 game**

by Sports1, Midland Reporter-Telegram

The San Antonio Missions scored 10 runs in the ninth inning to defeat the Midland RockHounds, 16-2, in Friday night's series-ending game at Citibank Ballpark.

With the loss the division-leading RockHounds' lead closes to one game over Frisco. The RoughRiders defeated Corpus Christi, 4-1, to inch closer to Midland as the two teams are scheduled to start a three-game series tonight at Citibank Ballpark.

The Missions took a 6-2 lead into the top of the ninth inning when their bats took over.

The Missions' Craig Cooper went 3 for 5, with a home run, three runs scored and three RBI. Anthony Contreras and

Sawyer Carroll also had three RBI each for the Missions

Midland's Devon Day was charged with most of the damage as we was credited with giving up eight earned runs on six hits and three walks.

The RockHounds also used Raul Padron, a catcher, to finish the game in that inning. He was charged with two earned runs on four hits.

Midland's starting pitcher Arnold Leon (2-3) took the loss as he was the pitcher of record going into the final inning.

## **Ports Run Over Rawhide, 5-2**

### **Stockton steals a season-high seven bases in series opener**

**STOCKTON, Calif.**— The Stockton Ports (60-77) scored early and held onto their lead in Friday's game, defeating the Visalia Rawhide (62-75), 5-2, in the opener of the final series of the regular season.

LHP Ben Hornbeck made a spot start for Stockton as RHP Scott Hodsdon was called up after Thursday's game to Triple-A Sacramento. Hornbeck was lights-out on Friday, striking out seven batters in 4.0 innings including striking out the side twice. He allowed one hit and one walk in his outing. Daniel Sattler picked up his first win with Stockton, allowing two runs on three hits in 2.0 innings. Nick Walters also tossed two innings, and Leonardo Espinal picked up his seventh save by tossing a scoreless ninth.

Jermaine Mitchell and Gabriel Ortiz led the Ports offense with two hits apiece. The Ports stole a season-high seven bases in the contest. The only other teams to steal seven bases in a game this year were Lake Elsinore and Modesto. Ortiz, a catcher, stole three bases for the Ports, including two in the second inning.

The Ports went ahead, 1-0, in the first. Center fielder Jermaine Mitchell doubled to left field to jump start the Stockton offense. After Michael Richard struck out, first baseman Steve Kleen grounded out to shortstop David Cooper, and Mitchell scored on the play. Johnson singled, but was left on base.

Stockton added a run in the second. Designated hitter Grant Green singled to get the Ports started and scored on an RBI single by Gabriel Ortiz. Ortiz stole second and third in the inning, but was stranded at third as Mitchell struck out.

The Ports went up, 3-0, in the third. Richard singled and stole second. Right fielder Todd Johnson walked to put two on with one out. Second baseman Frank Martinez singled to score Richard. The Rawhide got the next two outs to get out of the inning.

Visalia plated their first two runs in the fifth inning as Sattler took the mound for the Ports. With two out, catcher Jorge Corniel knocked a double to left-center field. Sattler then walked Cooper. Center fielder Ollie Linton singled, bringing home Corniel and Cooper. Sattler issued a walk to second baseman James Skelton before striking out third baseman Kyle Green for the third out.

The Ports added two insurance runs in the seventh frame. With one out, Ortiz singled and stole second. Mitchell singled to put runners on the corners. Richard walked to load the bases. Kleen then was hit by a pitch in the shoulder, which brought home a run. Johnson then hit into a fielder's choice play, which put out Kleen at second and allowed Mitchell to score the fifth Stockton run. Martinez flew out to end the inning.

From there, the Ports shut down the Rawhide, allowing just two hits and only five batters to reach base. The Rawhide had runners on the corners with two out in the top of the ninth, and threatened to score. But Espinal fanned Cooper to end the game.

The Ports will take on the Rawhide in Game 2 of the series on Saturday at 7:05 p.m. LHP Julio Ramos (0-1, 5.40) will make his Banner Island Ballpark debut for Stockton, and LHP Wade Miley (1-1, 7.20) will start for Visalia.

## **FIRST BASEMAN IS HITLESS BUT BRINGS IN RUNS**

By The Record

Steve Kleen proved on Friday night that you don't have to get hits to drive in runs.

Kleen went 0 for 3 but had two RBI as the Ports beat the Visalia Rawhide 5-2 in front of 2,909 fans at Stockton Ballpark.

Jermaine Mitchell and Gabriel Ortiz went 2 for 4 for Stockton. Ortiz had three stolen bases, and the Ports had seven.

The Ports scored a run in each of the first three innings.

Kleen, who played first base, got his first RBI in the bottom of the first after Mitchell doubled and stole third.

Kleen second RBI came in the two-run seventh when he was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded, allowing Ortiz to score. Todd Johnson also drove in a run on a ground out in the inning.

Ortiz had an RBI single in the second and Frank Martinez's base hit drove in a run in the third.

The Ports received four strong innings from starting pitcher Ben Hornbeck, who allowed just one hit and struck out seven.

Daniel Sattler (1-1) gave up two runs in two innings but got the win.

## **Cougars Roll Past Chiefs to Win Set**

### **Kane County wins third straight series and ninth of last 12 overall**

**PEORIA, III.** – The Kane County Cougars wrapped up the road portion of their regular season Friday night and beat the Peoria Chiefs, 6-3, at O'Brien Field. Four players had multiple hits, Anivioris Ramirez won his fifth game and Paul Smyth posted his first save. The Cougars won two out of three in the set and finished the season 9-5 against Peoria, a club they could meet again in the post-season. The Cougars also finished 35-35 on the road this season, marking the eighth time in the 19-year history of the franchise they finished at .500 or better on the road.

Franklin Hernandez and Tyler Ladendorf collected first-inning RBIs against Austin Bibens-Dirkx (5-2) for a quick 2-0 lead, but the Chiefs tied it in the second and scored once in the fifth to pull ahead, 3-2. Then the Cougars rallied for three runs in the sixth and a lead they never gave away. Jeremy Barfield singled home Steve Parker, Petey Paramore brought in a run on a double play and Ladendorf homered. Parker's sacrifice fly in the ninth accounted for the final run of the game.

Ramirez (5-2) benefitted from the Cougars' sixth-inning outburst. The southpaw gave up three runs on six hits over five innings in the victory. Scott Deal pitched two scoreless relief frames before Smyth handled the final two. Smyth now has tossed 35 1/3 scoreless innings as a professional pitcher.

The Cougars (33-34, 73-63) are back at Elfstrom Stadium on Saturday night to open a three-game series at 6 CT against the Quad Cities River Bandits. Shawn Haviland (6-10, 4.43) will oppose Kevin Thomas (6-7, 4.21). It will be the final regular-season series for the Cougars, who open the playoffs next Wednesday night in Iowa with the start of a best-of-three series against the Burlington Bees.