

## A's News Clips, Thursday, July 1, 2010

### Oakland A's give up five home runs in loss to Baltimore Orioles

By Curtis Pashelka, Oakland Tribune

The A's believe their batting order one-through-nine right now is as good as it's been all season. But their pitching staff remains a work in progress on the road.

The A's allowed five home runs — two of which were preceded by walks — in a disheartening and slightly quirky 9-6 loss to the Baltimore Orioles on Wednesday night at Camden Yards.

Oakland, which also allowed five homers May 12 in Texas, has now given up an American League-worst 61 home runs in 39 road games as it finished June with a 10-17 overall record.

"It was a really frustrating loss," said second baseman Mark Ellis, who scored in the fourth inning as part of a six-run A's rally. "When we score runs, we usually win games. This was a tough one for us, but we have another one (today) and can still win the series, something we haven't done a whole lot of."

The Orioles scored four runs in the first four innings off A's starter Ben Sheets, including Adam Jones' two-run homer in the second and Corey Patterson's solo shot in the fourth. But Sheets settled down enough to pitch six innings and leave the game with the A's leading 6-4.

But Oakland's bullpen continued to struggle away from the Oakland Coliseum, as Brad Ziegler gave up a two-run homer to Ty Wigginton in the seventh, which was immediately followed by Luke Scott's solo shot off Cedrick Bowers (0-1) that gave the Orioles a 7-6 lead.

Tyson Ross then gave up a two-run shot to Miguel Tejada in the eighth to dampen any chance of a ninth-inning A's rally.

Before Wednesday, the A's bullpen had a 3-6 record with a 4.52 ERA for June and has now given up 35 homers this season.

"Walks will kill you," said Sheets, who walked Scott three times and still has just one win in his last 10 starts. "I couldn't find the plate with Scott. I don't know why. It was weird. I don't know if I threw a strike to him."

Baltimore's rally spoiled a memorable night for Coco Crisp, who made a trio of highlight-worthy catches and hit a three-run homer in the top of the fourth.

The topper was in the second with Cesar Izturis on first base. Crisp tracked down a long fly ball by Patterson and crashed into the center field wall. The play, though, didn't count because home plate umpire Marty Foster awarded Patterson first base on catcher's interference. If the ball dropped in, however, it would have counted.

Crisp, left a little dizzy from hitting the wall, is now 11 for 27 with 10 runs in seven games since coming off the disabled list June 22.

"Coco Crisp is amazing," Sheets said. "I heard he was good, but to watch him live ... he's unbelievable out there."

In another quirky play with Cliff Pennington at the plate, the A's attempted a double steal in the fourth. Gabe Gross took off for second, then Ellis broke for home when catcher Matt Wieters threw to get Gross. But the pitch by Orioles starter Kevin Millwood to Pennington was ball four, and instead of being credited with a steal of home, Ellis scored on what was ruled a fielder's choice.

"I thought it was a strike," Ellis said. "I'm not questioning the umpire. I thought I saw a strike, and (Wieters) threw the ball. That would have very embarrassing to get thrown out at home on a ball four."

TODAY:

A's (Trevor Cahill 7-2) at Orioles (Jake Arrieta 2-1), 4:05 p.m. TV: CSNCA. Radio: 860-AM; 1640-AM

## **Oakland A's update: Achy elbow has Dallas Braden weighing his options**

By Curtis Pashelka, Oakland Tribune

Achy elbow has Braden weighing his options

BALTIMORE — Dallas Braden's availability for Saturday's game at Cleveland hinges on how he feels after he plays catch and tentatively throws off flat ground today. But the left-handed pitcher also knows there's no sense in pushing things at this point in the season if his elbow isn't close to 100 percent.

Braden has been hampered by tendinitis in his left elbow for the better part of June and was scratched from his scheduled start Tuesday in Baltimore. He would like to pitch if his elbow is healthy. But if the A's bring up someone from Triple-A Sacramento for a spot start, that would give Braden until after the All-Star break to get his elbow in optimal condition.

"There's a lot of things that factor into those kind of decisions," Braden said when asked if temporarily shutting things down might be the best course of action. "Ultimately, if you feel like you're putting the team in jeopardy or putting your personal health in jeopardy, educated decisions have to be made at that point."

Braden said the elbow is OK after it massaged and stretched at the ballpark. But the most frustrating part is feeling like he's back at square one when he wakes up. He's done everything he can do away from the ballpark to keep his elbow loose, including using heating packs and anti-inflammatory creams.

"In my mind, I know ... I'll be able to throw a baseball (today). That's not a problem," he said. "It's just whether or not the comfort is there on extension. If I can throw a baseball with no pain at 70 or 80 percent, that's not what we're looking for. We're looking 95-100 percent with no pain."

A's manager Bob Geren said Brett Anderson (left elbow inflammation) felt good after he threw 40 pitches off a mound Monday in Phoenix with hitters standing in the box but not swinging. The next step for Anderson, who's been on the disabled list since June 4, will be to throw again Saturday with hitters possibly swinging.

After seeing his average fall to the Mendoza line on June 9, Cliff Pennington found a groove and hit .431 (22 for 51) in his past 16 games before Wednesday to raise his average 47 points to .247.

## **Chin Music: Braden still eyes Saturday; Anderson throws off mound**

By Curtis Pashelka, Oakland Tribune, 6/30/2010 3:27PM

Dallas Braden said he'll play catch tomorrow and tentatively throw off flat ground in an attempt to get ready for a possible start Saturday against Cleveland.

Braden said a major problem in his progression is that he feels like he's starting from square one every time he wakes up. He's tried heating pads and anti-inflammatories at night before he goes to bed to help feel better once he starts his day, but the elbow has almost always been a little stiff. Bob Geren said if things go well for Braden tomorrow, he'll be the likely starter on Saturday.

Brett Anderson threw 40 pitches off a mound on Monday in Phoenix with hitters standing in the box but not swinging. The next step for Anderson will be to pitch again on Friday or Saturday (there seems to some confusion) with hitters possibly swinging.

Ryan Sweeney is back in right field for the A's, with Coco Crisp in center and Conor Jackson in left. Gabe Gross is the DH tonight as Jack Cust sits for a second straight day. Geren said it's a matchup thing with Kevin Millwood. Gross is 5-for-6 with a homer against Millwood, and Cust is just 4-for-23 with 12 K's. Geren said Cust will be in there tomorrow against Jake Arrieta.

BTW, an absolutely gorgeous night for baseball here at Camden Yards. About 75 degrees, slight breeze, relatively low humidity. Is this Baltimore or Walnut Creek?

The lineups

A's – Crisp CF, Barton 1B, Jackson LF, Suzuki C, Kouzmanoff 3B, Sweeney RF, Ellis 2B, Gross DH, Pennington SS, Sheets P.

O's – Patterson LF, Tejada 3B, Markakis RF, Wigginton 1B, Scott DH, Jones CF, Wieters C, Moore 2B, Izturis SS, Millwood P.

## **A loss in which all is not what it seems**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

On a night in which a phenomenal catch was not a catch and a steal of home was not a stolen base, one thing was irrefutable: The A's four-game winning streak came to an emphatic end when the Orioles started going deep.

Maybe a disappearing lead was fitting for a now-you-see it, now-you-don't 9-6 A's loss at Camden Yards. Oakland was up 6-4 when Ben Sheets left after six innings, and then the bullpen gave up three homers, including back-to-back shots in the seventh by Ty Wigginton, off Brad Ziegler, and Luke Scott, off Cedric Bowers.

Even those were unusual: Wigginton's was the first by a Baltimore first baseman all year, and Scott pulled a hamstring decelerating around first to go into his home run trot. Miguel Tejada added a two-run homer off Tyson Ross in the eighth, the Orioles' fifth homer of the night.

"That's a lot of homers to give up - too many, obviously, to sustain a lead," A's manager Bob Geren said.

"It was real frustrating," A's second baseman Mark Ellis said. "Usually when we score some runs, we win games. That was a tough one for us."

Earlier in the night, Oakland's Coco Crisp smashed into the center-field wall chasing down a drive by Corey Patterson in the second, and Crisp remained hunched over for a few minutes to make sure he was OK.

As it turned out, catcher's interference had been called on Patterson's swing, putting him at first base. But though the catch technically didn't happen, it actually was a big play - had the ball eluded Crisp, it would have counted, and it would have gone for extra bases.

"That's a great play," Geren said. "It just doesn't go down in the books."

In the fourth, Ellis initially was ruled to have stolen home on another strange play. When Gabe Gross broke from first and the throw went to second, Ellis took off from third. Gross, smacked hard in the face on the play, would have been out at second, except that it was ball four to Cliff Pennington; Ellis was safely home by that point. The official scorer later changed the play to defensive indifference rather than a steal, because of the walk.

"I don't care, I'm probably not going to steal 50 bases, anyway," Ellis said.

Crisp had more to say in that inning. He stepped up after Pennington and smacked a three-run homer to right.

"Coco is amazing," Sheets said. "I'd heard he was good, but to watch him, he's unbelievable out there."

Sheets gave up seven hits and three walks, plus four runs, three earned. Sheets established one definite pattern: He walked Scott three times ("I couldn't find the plate for Scott, I don't know why," Sheets said), then gave up hits to Adam Jones each time: a homer in the second, an RBI double in the third and a single in the fifth.

## The RBIs that won't come

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

**Conor Jackson** was well aware that he'd left runner upon runner on base Tuesday night at Camden Yards.

Until his ninth-inning single sent in **Coco Crisp** from third, Jackson had left three runners stranded at third base, one at second base and one at first. *Three at third?*

"There was an armada of guys on base," said Jackson, who played at Cal.

Jackson hasn't been with the A's too long; might he be pressing a bit?

"Probably, especially coming from a team where I didn't hit too many times with runners on base," Jackson said. "I've been trying a little too hard to try to drive runners in early in the at-bat, and that probably hinders my approach a little bit. That last at-bat, I went back to my normal approach, I worked it to 3-1, and I got a hit."

Jackson was relieved to deliver, and he was even more relieved that some of the earlier opportunities weren't wasted. **Kurt Suzuki** drove in two of the men Jackson stranded.

"He picked me up," Jackson said. "It's definitely a change, but it's fun when you've got Coco Crisp and **Daric Barton** in front of you. Coco is locked in and Daric always has a great at-bat. Runners were scarce in Arizona."

Jackson was 18-for-26 with runners in scoring position in 42 games with Arizona and he's 5-for-20 in 14 games with Oakland. He hit into a double play Wednesday but also made a nifty plunging catch in the second.

**Braden, Anderson updates:** **Dallas Braden** said his left elbow felt a little looser Wednesday and he'll try to play catch today. Manager **Bob Geren** said he remains optimistic that Braden, who has tendinitis, will be able to start Saturday in Cleveland.

**Brett Anderson**, who is on the disabled list with left elbow tendinitis, threw 40 pitches off the mound Monday and he'll do more work Saturday, possibly in a simulated game. Geren has said that Anderson should return shortly after the All-Star break if all goes well.

## A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

**And it's barely July:** Daric Barton is the first first baseman to record 10 sacrifice bunts since Wally Joyner had 10 in 1986 for the Angels, according to stats expert David Feldman. Barton is tied for the AL lead in sacrifices.

## Drumbeat: Braden and Anderson updates

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Baltimore 6/30/2010 3:06PM

Bob Geren said again today that he's optimistic that Dallas Braden will be able to start on Saturday at Cleveland and Braden said his left elbow is feeling a bit better today. He'll try to play catch tomorrow, and that might give a more clear picture about what happens next. Braden noted that if he does go Saturday, he'd then be able to get a good chunk of rest, until after the All-Star break, if the A's skipped that spot the next time through.

I think he's leaning toward trying to go Saturday if that's the case, because Braden then still would get 16 days for that elbow tendinitis to clear up. Personally, I'd err on the side of caution....what's one start compared to the entire second half? Braden's elbow is so sore, he can't throw breaking pitches. That's a pretty loud warning bell. He is the guy who's said he'd pitch until they actually cut his left foot off while he was dealing with all his foot trouble last year, so we know he'll take the ball if allowed.

Why would Oakland, with all the injury issues over the years, let a less than healthy pitcher go out there, though? Well, the argument that you'd hear from any big-league team is that there is no such thing as an entirely healthy pitcher, and that is pretty much true. However, Braden can't even throw his slider. He's waking up with his elbow locked into a 90 degree angle. That seems like a reasonable dividing line for judging health.

If he tries to go Saturday and somehow really gets hurt worse - pitchers change their mechanics to compensate for injuries, which often leads to more trouble - then I'm not sure who'd be most at fault: Braden for trying to power through an existing injury, or the A's for letting him. As a reporter who generally tries to remain objective, this is one where I have to say: What the heck is everyone thinking? His elbow isn't improving much with the current plan. Am I missing something? Bring up a spot starter for Saturday and knock this thing out now, and if it's not better by the third week of July, there's a bigger issue going on anyway.

Sheesh.

And speaking of changed mechanics when injured, that very well could be the culprit with Braden's elbow. He's pitching with a foot that is permanently numb on one side, with no feeling in two toes. It's quite possible that's altered his delivery enough to hurt the elbow. The foot numbness is the result of nerves being severed during a biopsy for his foot problem last year. This is a guy I'd take extra good care of after all of that. Obviously, that was an accident, severing the foot nerves, but no more mistakes need to be made with this guy.

Brett Anderson, whose status we've asked about every day, has already thrown off the mound, apparently. He threw 40 pitches in a bullpen session in Phoenix on Monday. He'll throw again on Saturday and it might be a simulated game, according to Geren. The A's still hope to get him back shortly after the All-Star Game. Yes, Anderson has been out with left elbow tendinitis - and this is his second stint on the DL.

Here's the lineup: Crisp cf, Barton 1b, Jackson lf, Suzuki c, Kouzmanoff 3b, Sweeney rf, Ellis 2b, Gross dh, Pennington ss

I spoke to Conor Jackson about his struggles with runners in scoring position, and he had some interesting thoughts; look for that in tomorrow's Chronicle or here on SFGate.com.

## **A's can't hold their ground against Orioles**

### **Oakland's winning streak gets snapped at four with loss**

By Pete Kerzel / Special to MLB.com

BALTIMORE -- First, the A's lost the personal achievements. A catcher's interference call against Kurt Suzuki cost center fielder Coco Crisp a spectacular catch against the wall that briefly shook him up. Then it was Mark Ellis' steal of home which, thanks to an official scorer's interpretation an inning after the fact, became a routine run scored on a wacky, if not daring, fielder's choice.

But what Oakland squandered as a team amidst a flurry of Orioles home runs was far more costly. Starting pitcher Ben Sheets' elusive first road win was frittered away when the bullpen couldn't hold a two-run lead in the seventh and the resulting 9-6 loss cost the A's their four-game winning streak, in addition to a 2-0 start to a six-game road trip.

"When we score runs, we usually win games," Ellis said. "So this is a tough one for us."

Three of Baltimore's season-high five homers came off Oakland relievers, relegating a weird six-run fourth inning, featuring a three-run home run by Crisp and Ellis' unusual dash from third to home, as inconsequential. The five homers allowed matched the A's highwater mark of the season May 12 at Texas in a 10-1 drubbing.

"We gave up, obviously, too many home runs to sustain the lead," lamented A's manager Bob Geren.

With the A's clinging to a 6-4 lead in the seventh, Ty Wigginton hit a game-tying two-run shot to left, after Brad Ziegler had issued a one-out walk to Nick Markakis. Cedrick Bowers (0-1) relieved and Luke Scott crushed his 0-1 fastball into the

stands in left-center, hobbling around the bases after sustaining a strained left hamstring. In the ninth, Miguel Tejada added a two-run insurance homer off Tyson Ross.

"In this ballpark, there's nights when the ball will fly out of here," Ellis said. "It's a good place to hit. Sheeter [Sheets] kept us in the game. He wasn't at his best tonight, but he kept us in the game. We rallied, the bullpen struggled a little bit, but our bullpen's been good and that's going to happen."

For a while, it looked as if Sheets might finally win his first road start in nine tries -- even though the right-hander spotted the Orioles a 3-0 lead on a two-run homer by Adam Jones in the second and an RBI double by Jones in the third.

Then things turned strange.

Oakland took the lead in the fourth, when Baltimore's defense committed two errors and neglected to throw home as Ellis trotted in from third base, uncontested on Cliff Pennington's one-out walk. What was supposed to be a straight double steal was slow to develop -- and took even longer to get a correct ruling.

The inning began when Suzuki reached on an error by third baseman Tejada. After Kevin Kouzmanoff flied out, Ryan Sweeney looped a single to left that Corey Patterson overran, allowing Suzuki to score. Ellis singled before Gabe Gross' RBI hit to right put runners at the corners.

Gross ran on a 3-2 Kevin Millwood pitch, Pennington checked his swing and Ellis scored on what was first assumed to be a steal of home when catcher Matt Wieters threw to second. Wieters apparently didn't realize that third-base umpire Fieldin Culbreth had denied Millwood's appeal for a strikeout, resulting in a walk.

Official scorer Mark Jacobson later decided that Ellis, who had wandered off the base then trotted home once Wieters threw, scored on a fielder's choice because the catcher opted to throw to second -- even though Gross got the base because Pennington had walked.

"I don't care," said Ellis, adding that he thought Pennington had swung and acknowledging that it would have been embarrassing to have been nabbed on ball four. "It's fine. I'm probably not going to have 50 stolen bases this year, so it's fine. It scored a run for us. I don't care about stats anyways."

Geren was more succinct in his response to the scorer's ruling: "I know what it was. Whatever. He stole home on the throw."

At least the A's got a run, tying the game. And when Crisp followed by hammering Millwood's first pitch into the bleachers in right-center for his second homer, they had a 6-3 lead.

"Very sloppy," said Orioles interim manager Juan Samuel. "There were some plays we should have [made], and Millwood definitely deserved a better fate than that."

Sheets, who also allowed Patterson's solo shot in the fourth, left after yielding four runs, three earned, on seven hits over six innings. The right-hander walked three, struck out four.

"After the first home run, it seemed like [Sheets] got it going for a while there," Geren said. His velocity was up, his curveball was fairly sharp. He threw the ball pretty good."

But walks haunted Sheets. He passed Scott before Jones homered and before Jones' RBI double.

"Two of my four runs was on walks. ... Walks will kill you, they will," Sheets said. "Put it in play."

With the Orioles up 2-0 after Jones' 13th homer, Sheets got a spectacular defensive play from Crisp, who ran to the wall in right-center to snag Patterson's deep drive, crashing into the padding for what appeared to be an inning-ending out.

Crisp was slow to get up, and Geren and an A's trainer trotted out to the warning track to check on him. Imagine Crisp's surprise to find that Patterson had been awarded first base on Suzuki's interference, negating his catch. Sheets got Tejada to pop out to end the inning without further damage.

"Coco Crisp -- amazing," Sheets said. "I heard he was good, but to watch him, he's unbelievable out there."

Geren pointed out that Crisp's non-catch still may have saved the A's a run. Because of the interference, the Orioles had the choice of placing Patterson at first base or taking the result of the play.

"It probably doesn't go down in the books, but had [Crisp] not caught that ball, they take that portion of the play by the rulebook -- and that would have been a double if not a triple," Geren said.

## **A's, Orioles ready to square off in rubber game**

By Didier Morais / MLB.com

Although the Athletics haven't matched up to expectations in the American League West this season, starter Trevor Cahill has certainly exceeded them.

The 22-year-old has dazzled in his last eight starts, going 6-0 with a 2.24 ERA during that span. As a result of his successful stretch, the A's right-hander, who started off the season on the disabled list, is on pace to possibly capture a spot on the All-Star team.

"He is a young pitcher with a good sinker, and he has got some offspeed pitches," Cardinals outfielder Matt Holliday said. "You know, I got a chance to see him quite a bit last year, and he is a good young pitcher. He has a bright future."

Cahill's present is seemingly shining as well. In his outing against the Pirates last Saturday, he stymied hitters, fanning a career-high 10 batters, while tossing 7 2/3 shutout innings. Pittsburgh only managed to touch Cahill up for two hits.

"Trevor's throwing the ball real well," Oakland manager Bob Geren said. "All the things that we've been trying to have him do over the past year have come into fruition this past month. He's been very consistent, no lapses at all. He's been so steady. He's the guy we've been going to, and I'd say he's as good as anybody this past month."

For Orioles starter Jake Arrieta, though, this month is simply part of the learning curve. Arrieta is still adjusting to the tolls of pitching to Major League batters.

After winning his first two starts against the Yankees and Giants, the right-hander is finally starting to show signs of being a rookie, allowing five runs in each of his last two starts. But he said he's making recent strides this week to return to form.

"I did a lot of work in the 'pen with [pitching coach Rick] Kranitz on speeding up some things in my delivery, which keeps me on line a little more, keeps me direct to the plate," Arrieta said. "It's going to be easier for me to throw those pitches for strikes more often."

### **Orioles: Millwood reaches milestone**

With Wednesday's start against the Athletics, right-hander Kevin Millwood made his 400th Major League appearance, becoming the 52nd pitcher in history to reach the plateau. It was also Millwood's 391th career start, which ranks seventh among active pitchers.

Luke Scott is likely headed to the 15-day disabled list after leaving Wednesday's 9-6 win over the Athletics with a left hamstring strain. He suffered the injury while rounding first base after blasting the go-ahead solo homer with one out in the bottom of the seventh inning. He then shortened up his stride and limped around the basepaths, occasionally grabbing his left leg.

"Right now it doesn't look good," Scott said, adding that he will find out the treatment plan on Thursday morning and may have to get an MRI.

### **Athletics: Braden aiming for Saturday start**

Dallas Braden's status for his upcoming Saturday start remains uncertain. The left-hander, who is battling with tightness in his pitching elbow, is scheduled to play catch and toss off flat ground Thursday in an attempt to test the injury.

"In my mind, I know that catch is going to be fine. I'll be able to throw baseballs; that's not a problem," Braden said. "It's just whether the comfort is there on the extension. If I can throw a baseball with no pain, and it's 70 or 80 percent, that's not what we're looking for. We're looking for 95, 100 percent health with no pain."

While Geren appears optimistic that Braden can start against the Indians, there's still a possibility the perfect game pitcher may be headed to the disabled list.

### **Worth noting**

Brett Anderson tossed 40 pitches in a bullpen session on Monday. The A's lefty, who's been on the DL since June 4 with elbow inflammation, is continuing to work out at the team's Minor League facility in Phoenix.

## **Braden still struggling with elbow problem**

### **Left-hander is hoping to make his next start on Saturday**

By Pete Kerzel / Special to MLB.com

BALTIMORE -- He's got a wrap on his left elbow, a heat pack in his hotel room and anti-inflammatory medications and cream at the ready. Dallas Braden is so tired of dealing with a tight left elbow that he's ready to listen to just about any homespun remedy, no matter how far-fetched or off-the-wall.

But before Braden can cement his Saturday start in Cleveland, he needs to throw without any discomfort in a joint he still has trouble fully extending.

The left-hander, who was scratched on Tuesday from his scheduled start with tightness in his pitching elbow, is scheduled to play catch Thursday and then throw off flat ground, in hopes of making his next start on Saturday.

Realistically, Braden will only move onto flat ground if he can play catch pain-free. But he's so sure that playing catch won't present a problem that he's already preparing for flat ground work.

"In my mind, I know that catch is going to be fine. I'll be able to throw baseballs; that's not a problem," Braden said. "It's just whether the comfort is there on the extension. If I can throw a baseball with no pain, and it's 70 or 80 percent, that's not what we're looking for. We're looking for 95, 100 percent health with no pain."

For now, both Braden and A's manager Bob Geren remain hopeful that the pitcher can start Saturday at Progressive Field in the middle game of a three-game series with the Indians.

"Everything I've done this week is geared to Cleveland," Braden said.

Added Geren: "We're still optimistic about Saturday."

In the meantime, Braden will continue to be checked out by the A's training staff and do whatever he can to get his left elbow ready.

For now, Braden doesn't think a trip to the disabled list will be necessary -- because of the progress he's made and because of the A's schedule over the next few weeks.

"Fortunately, the All-Star break coming up [is] a blessing in disguise [because] our day off just before the All-Star break [on July 8], that allows us some rotational comfort," Braden said. "The All-Star Game being an additional four days, that's a lot of rest if manipulated correctly ... that I could have without being forced on the DL."

The disabled list only becomes a possibility, Braden said, when his health is jeopardized and he's not helping the team by trying to pitch.

"When you're putting yourself, your personal health in jeopardy, I think educated decisions have to be made at that point. ... When the team's best interest, and when my personal health and best interest come into question, that's when you evaluate," he said.

Braden admits he isn't the most patient patient when it comes to accepting slow and steady progress. He's dealt with shoulder problems before, but the elbow is a totally new injury to him.

"Every morning is kind of square one, then we get to the field and do the stretching routines and do the rubbing," Braden said. "Progress is always made. The main focus is being able to work up, maybe at square three and not at square one. I feel with the progression we made [Wednesday], and with the progression we'll hopefully make tomorrow after throwing, everything will work out."

### **Gross makes his return to Baltimore**

BALTIMORE -- Oakland's visit to Baltimore gives A's outfielder Gabe Gross a chance to reconnect with his adopted hometown.

"I was born here," said Gross, who entered the world at Greater Baltimore Medical Center in Towson on Oct. 21, 1979. "But I wasn't here long, only about six weeks."

Gross' father, Lee, was a center for the NFL's Baltimore Colts when his son was born. That was the final NFL season for Lee Gross, a product of Auburn who also played for the New Orleans Saints from 1975-77.

"His knees were pretty bad by then, and all he was doing was long snapping," said Gabe Gross. "After the season was over, we packed up and moved back to Dothan, Ala."

That's where Gross spent his childhood, though his Baltimore roots still create some occasional confusion.

"A couple of years ago, I got a letter from some woman who thought she might have had a connection to my family," he said. "She claimed that she was a babysitter of my mom's at one point. I was like, 'I don't think so.'"

### **Ellis' steal of home changed to fielder's choice**

BALTIMORE -- First, Mark Ellis stole home in Oakland's six-run fourth inning in Baltimore's eventual 9-6 win over the A's on Wednesday night.

Then an official scorer's ruling nullified the apparent theft. The play instead was deemed a fielder's choice and not the A's first steal of home in just over two years.

With runners on the corners and one out, Gabe Gross broke for second on Baltimore starter Kevin Millwood's 3-2 pitch to batter Cliff Pennington.

Pennington took a half-swing on Millwood's pitch and Orioles catcher Matt Wieters fired to second, trying to nab Gross. As Wieters threw the ball, Ellis wandered down the line from third base, breaking into a sprint and crossing home after Gross slid into second.

But what appeared to be a delayed double steal wound up further benefiting the A's.

Because he thought Pennington had committed, Millwood requested that home-plate umpire Marty Foster check with third-base umpire Fieldin Culbreth in hopes that Culbreth would rule Pennington had gone around on a swinging strike three. Foster complied, but Culbreth denied the appeal and Ellis' swipe of home stood at the time, giving the A's runners on first and second and a 3-3 tie.

However, in the top of the sixth, official scorer Mark Jacobson ruled that, because Wieters threw to second on ball four, the result had to be revised. The new ruling was that Ellis scored on a fielder's choice, because he was not trying to advance home until after the unnecessary throw to second.

Oakland's last steal of home came when Carlos Gonzalez turned the trick on June 22, 2008, against Florida.

"I don't care," said Ellis, adding that he thought Pennington had swung and acknowledging that it would have been embarrassing to have been nabbed on ball four. "It's fine. I'm probably not going to have 50 stolen bases this year, so it's fine. It scored a run for us. I don't care about stats anyways."

Ellis went 3-for-4 with a run scored in the loss.

### **Anderson has positive bullpen session**

BALTIMORE -- Injured A's left-hander Brett Anderson threw 40 pitches in a bullpen session on Monday at the team's Minor League facility in Phoenix.

"All reports are positive," Oakland manager Bob Geren said.

Anderson has been on the 15-day disabled list since June 4 with left elbow inflammation. He missed 30 games earlier in the season with left elbow inflammation and a left forearm strain.

Should Anderson show no ill effects from Monday's effort, his next step will be to throw again on Saturday. Geren hopes the southpaw might progress to a simulated game for his next activity.

## MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

### **Shuck bails out South All-Stars**

By Jonathan Hull / Special to MLB.com

MIDLAND, Texas -- In a contest featuring the circuit's most productive bats and dominant arms, Corpus Christi Hooks left fielder J.B. Shuck used his glove to steal the spotlight at the Texas League All-Star Game.

Shuck made two fantastic defensive plays Wednesday that helped the South Division secure a 5-4 victory over the North at the midsummer classic at Citibank Ballpark.

With two outs in the top of the ninth inning and the South clinging to a one-run lead, Midland RockHounds closer Jared Lansford gave up consecutive hits to the Wilin Rosario of the Tulsa Drillers and Northwest Arkansas Naturals teammates Clint Robinson and Tim Smith.

When Smith singled to shallow left field, Rosario was waved around third and headed for home. Shuck fielded the ball on one hop and fired a strike to Hooks catcher Lou Santangelo who easily applied the tag to end the late-inning drama.

"I didn't expect him to be headed home, actually," Shuck said. "I knew I was playing shallow and I knew I had a shot at him when I saw him take off. I just let it go."

That wasn't the first time Shuck preserved a slim lead. With a runner on first and none out in the sixth, Curt Smith of the Springfield Cardinals hit what appeared to be at least a sure double to the gap in left-center field. Just when the ball seemed unreachable, Shuck made a late burst, leaped and snared it on the warning track. He nearly got the relay back in time to double up Tim Smith, who'd rounded second and was halfway to third.

"I knew I had a good jump on it and when you're running after one, then you know if you have a chance at it," Shuck said. "It was within reach, so I just jumped and caught it."

Offensively, two representatives of the host Midland RockHounds got the scoring started in the first. Center fielder Archie Gilbert drew a leadoff walk and promptly stole second. After Midland teammate Alex Valdez was hit by a pitch with one out, Matt Clark of the San Antonio Missions came through with a two-out RBI single. Valdez raced home when Frisco's Matt Lawson reached on an infield hit.

The lead did not last long, however, as the North answered with three runs in the second. Robinson homered to lead off the inning, Curt Smith delivered an RBI double and scored on a sacrifice fly by Naturals outfielder Paulo Orlando.

The game's other hero stepped up for the South in the fourth. With two men in scoring position, Missions catcher Luis Martinez hit a sharp line drive to Naturals third baseman Mike Moustakas, who deflected it into left field for a two-run single. Martinez was named the game's MVP.

"It was a total team effort," said South manager Darren Bush of the RockHounds. "Everyone found a way to contribute."

That included Hooks right-hander Jordan Lyles, who tossed a scoreless fourth for the win.

Springfield's Blake King surrendered three runs on two hits and two walks in one inning and was saddled with the loss.

### **Blaze blank Ports, 6-0**

**STOCKTON, Calif.** - The Bakersfield Blaze (34-43) shutout the Stockton Ports (35-42) for the second time this series, blanking the Boys of Banner Island, 6-0 on Wednesday. Bakersfield struck out 14 in the contest, and kept the Ports to just four hits.

Tyler Ladendorf had two singles in the game, while David Thomas and Jeremy Barfield each had a hit as well. The Ports also walked four times in the game, and they stranded all eight base runners. Starter Paul Oseguera picked up the loss, allowing

four runs (three earned) on nine hits in 5.0 innings. Scott Hodsdon allowed two runs in 2.0 innings of relief. Andrew Carignan and Trey Barham combined for 2.0 scoreless innings in the contest. Bakersfield starter Wilmer Font picked up the win, his first, fanning eight in 6.0 innings.

The Blaze scored two runs in the second inning. Catcher Jose Felix led off with a double to right field. He advanced to third on a single by third baseman Tommy Mendonca. Felix came around to score on a sacrifice fly by first baseman Erik Morrison. Shortstop Andres James then singled to right, allowing Mendonca to score.

Bakersfield made it 4-0 in the fifth inning. With one out, center fielder Engel Beltre tripled to right field. An RBI single by right fielder Mike Bianucci made it 3-0. Pinch hitter Johnny Whittleman later hit a sacrifice fly to right fielder Jeremy Barfield to allow Bianucci to score.

The Blaze scored their final two runs in the sixth inning off Hodsdon. Hodsdon gave up a leadoff single to James, before retiring the next two batters. He then gave up an RBI single to Beltre. Beltre took second base on a throwing error by Hodsdon in a pickoff attempt while Bianucci was at bat. Bianucci slammed a triple to center field to bring home Beltre. Hodsdon allowed three batters to reach base in the seventh, but kept them from scoring. Carignan and Barham kept the Blaze from scoring in the eighth and ninth innings.

The Ports had their best chance to score in the seventh inning. With one out, reliever Yoon Hee Nam issued back-to-back walks to Todd Johnson and Ryan Ortiz before striking out Brandon Pinckney, who made his Stockton debut on Wednesday. With two out and two on, centerfielder Thomas singled to load the bases. Designated hitter Grant Green struck out to end the Ports threat. Green struck out four times in the contest.

The Ports will hit the road for three games, and take on the Visalia Rawhide at Recreation Park from July 1-3. LHP Fabian Williamson is slated to start for Stockton in his Ports debut on Thursday at 7:00 PM. Williams was traded to the Oakland A's from the Boston Red Sox organization on June 26 for outfielder Eric Patterson. Southpaw Taylor Sinclair (5-3, 4.13) will take the hill for Visalia on Thursday.

## **Cougars Drop Finale, Series in Clinton**

### **Kane County ends road trip with 2-4 mark after Wednesday defeat**

**CLINTON, Iowa** – A night after knocking out 12 hits and stranding 13 runners in a loss, the Kane County Cougars had only four hits and stranded just three Wednesday night in a 4-2 defeat against the Clinton LumberKings at Alliant Energy Field. The Cougars finished their six-game road trip with a 2-4 mark, dropping two of three in both Quad Cities and Clinton. They did end with a 12-11 mark in June, their first winning month of the season

The Cougars held two different leads Wednesday. They jumped ahead, 1-0, in the second on Mike Gilmartin's RBI double. Then they broke a 1-1 tie in the sixth when Anthony Aliotti singled home Tyreace House.

But starter Rob Gilliam suffered one rough inning during a quality start, and that became the difference in the game. The right-hander gave up three runs in the bottom of the sixth to account for the 4-2 final. Gilliam (5-6) gave up four runs -- three earned -- on eight hits, walked none and fanned eight, with six of the eight strikeout victims went down looking. Connor Hoehn posted two scoreless relief innings with three strikeouts in Gilliam's stead.

The Cougars (2-4, 34-41) return home to start a six-game homestand Thursday night at 6:30 CT with the opener of a three-game series against the Peoria Chiefs (2-4, 40-35). Dan Straily (5-4, 4.74) is scheduled to face Su-Min Jung (5-3, 3.75). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at [www.kccougars.com](http://www.kccougars.com) with pre-game coverage starting at 6:15 p.m.