

A's News Clips, Sunday, August 8, 2010

Crisp breaks out as A's beat first-place Rangers

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Coco Crisp enjoyed an active day from the leadoff spot Saturday and the A's walked away with a victory.

There's a strong connection between the two.

Crisp, who had hardly made a peep offensively of late, played a part in every A's scoring rally as they notched a 6-2 victory over the Texas Rangers on a sunny afternoon at the Oakland Coliseum.

He scratched out an infield single in the first inning to start a two-run rally. He bopped a homer over the elevated wall in right-center his next time up, then added sacrifice flies in his next two at-bats.

Crisp finished 2 for 2 with two runs and three RBIs, a nice breakout game from the switch-hitting center fielder, who was hitting just .205 (15 for 73) with one RBI in 18 games since the All-Star break.

"That's the type of player he is," manager Bob Geren said. "That's what he's capable of doing. You see his performance and see how much we missed him early (in the season because of injuries)." Crisp was a main reason the A's chased Rangers starter Rich Harden (4-4) after just 2 1/3 innings. The former Athletic walked five and hit a batter in his shortest outing of the season.

The A's moved back to within 8½ games of Texas for first place in the American League West, still just a speck in the Rangers' rear-view mirror. But a series-clinching victory today would at least provide a morale boost after Oakland was silenced by Cliff Lee in Friday's opener.

The A's are hardly built to outslug opponents, so they need the fleet-footed Crisp to produce atop the order.

And for that to happen, he needs to remain healthy after missing 70 games in the first half of the season because of a fractured pinkie and strained rib cage muscle.

It's no wonder Geren gulped hard after Crisp made a leaping effort at Taylor Teagarden's homer in the eighth. Crisp extended high over the wall and had the ball glance off his glove, then landed hard on his hip and was shaken for a few moments.

"When he falls like he did, there was about a 10-second silence in the dugout there, as you're hoping he'd get up," Geren said. "He got up and smiled, so you knew he was OK." Crisp also collided hard into the wall making a catch in a July 29 against Texas in Arlington -- his surgically repaired right shoulder seemed to take the brunt of that blow.

Though he appears to be preserving his arm at times with his throws, he said he's fine physically.

He also said he won't change his defensive style in an effort to save his body.

"For the most part, I go full force," Crisp said. "I'll bang into the wall, dive "... whatever."

A's left-hander Gio Gonzalez (10-7) enjoyed a 6-0 lead by the sixth inning, and he allowed just four hits over seven innings.

Harden wasn't nearly as sharp, walking three in the first and forcing in a run as the A's went up 2-0.

Crisp made it 3-0 in the second, jumping on the first pitch from Harden and smacking his fourth homer, a drive that barely cleared the wall in right-center.

"When I hit it I was thinking triple, and I just got the bonus bag," Crisp said. "I'm just a little guy. I don't really have that 'Hit-it-40-rows deep' power, so to squeak one over the fence, it feels good."

A's update: Stats aren't flashy, but Gonzalez earns 10th win

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Gio Gonzalez's stats weren't nearly as gaudy Saturday as in his previous start, but he delivered seven shutout innings to reach the 10-win mark in a 6-2 victory over the Texas Rangers.

The lefty racked up a career-high 11 strikeouts in a loss against the Chicago White Sox last Sunday. But it's a testament to his development that he can be effective even when he's not mowing hitters down.

Gonzalez (10-7, 3.51 ERA) held a potent Texas offense to four hits, walking three and striking out two. That was his lowest strikeout total since he had two June 27 against Pittsburgh, a span of seven starts.

Only one runner advanced as far as third base against Gonzalez. That came in the second, but with runners on the corners and two out, he got Cristian Guzman swinging on a sharp curveball to escape the jam.

"I just pounded the zone. I was really excited about that," Gonzalez said. "(Catcher Kurt Suzuki) kept saying, 'Challenge those guys.'"

He also received some fine defensive play, starting with the game's first batter.

Elvis Andrus lofted a foul pop-up down the right field line that first baseman Daric Barton caught on the sprint with his back toward the infield.

With two runners on in the fifth, third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff fielded Michael Young's grounder, stepped on his bag and threw across the diamond for an inning-ending double play.

Shortstop Cliff Pennington made a difficult stop of Nelson Cruz's sharp grounder in the sixth to start a 6-4-3 double play to end the inning.

Andrew Bailey said he was told by a doctor that his rib cage injury will take four to six weeks to heal. Given that he suffered the injury July 20 -- about 2½ weeks ago -- it stands to reason that the A's could be without their closer for roughly two more weeks, perhaps longer. "... Rajai Davis stole two bases and now has 100 as an Athletic, moving him past Dwayne Murphy for 10th place on Oakland's career list. "... Outfielder Conor Jackson (strained right hamstring) is scheduled to play in his first rehab game today for the A's Arizona Rookie League team. "... Recently acquired infielder Jeff Larish had a combined 10 RBIs on Friday for Triple-A Sacramento in a doubleheader against Albuquerque.

Chin Music: UFC star Randy Couture drops by batting practice; Andrew Bailey update and other A's bits

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 8/7/2010 12:31PM

There's a non-baseball celebrity watching batting practice here at the Oakland Coliseum, and we're not talking Brad or Angelina. Ultimate Fighting Championship star Randy Couture is throwing out today's first pitch, and he's down on the field chatting with Kevin Kouzmanoff and Daric Barton as I write this. Barton is a huge UFC fan and will catch Couture's pitch. There's a UFC card next door at Oracle Arena tonight, which brings Couture to town. I have to admit I don't follow UFC and wouldn't recognize Couture if I passed him on the street. But the dude's got a couple cauliflower ears that give away his profession. Seriously, I don't think he could fit a Q-Tip in either ear.

I suppose you came here looking for A's news, right? ...

--From talking to Andrew Bailey today, I'm thinking he could miss another couple of weeks. Back when he got his MRI, Bailey said he was told his strained rib-cage injury typically takes four to six weeks to heal. He suffered the injury July 20, so he's about 2 1/2 weeks into it. You can do the math ... "Trying to come back earlier is tough to do, but that's what I'm trying to do," Bailey said. He could try playing catch again Sunday, according to manager Bob Geren. Bailey says he's just coming in each day and taking cues from the training staff on when he's going to throw.

–Rich Harden takes the hill for the Rangers, trying to follow up on his May 3 outing at the Coliseum, when he threw seven shutout innings. But that A's lineup featured four starters who aren't even on the current active roster (Ryan Sweeney, Eric Chavez, Eric Patterson and Josh Donaldson). So we'll see if things shake out differently this time.

–Dallas Braden was pitching last night just a couple of days after having a wisdom tooth pulled, Geren said. That was part of the reason Braden came out when he did, though Geren said Braden's tank was nearly empty anyway. The manager doesn't expect Braden's next start — Wednesday at Seattle — to be affected.

–Outfielder Conor Jackson will actually play his first rehab game Sunday, not today, in the Arizona Rookie League ... Joey Devine and Josh Outman, both making the long road back from Tommy John surgery, are on a similar throwing program right now, Geren said. There's no word on when either pitcher will get on the mound.

Here's your lineups:

A's — Crisp CF, Barton 1B, Suzuki C, Cust DH, Kouzmanoff 3B, Ellis 2B, Davis RF, Watson LF, Pennington SS; Gonzalez LHP.

Rangers — Andrus SS, Young 3B, Hamilton CF, Guerrero DH, Cruz RF, Cantu 1B, Murphy LF, Guzman 2B, Teagarden C; Harden RHP.

A's defense makes a sharp Gonzalez even better

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Gio Gonzalez unvaryingly lavishes praise on his defense, no matter what the outcome of the game or how difficult the plays made behind him.

On Saturday, Gonzalez was well within his rights to credit his teammates, who turned in solid work behind him in a 6-2 victory over division-leading Texas. And deflect as he might, Gonzalez was pretty good himself, with seven scoreless innings to nail down his 10th win, an ongoing career high.

"We all wanted to win this game really badly," Gonzalez said after Oakland moved back over .500 and to within 8 1/2 games of Texas. "We all did our jobs."

First baseman Daric Barton set the tone with a superb running catch in foul ground to start the game, retiring leadoff man Elvis Andrus; manager Bob Geren emphasized that while Barton makes the play look easy, it is anything but.

In the fifth, with two on and one out, third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff turned a tricky double play, stepping on the bag and throwing to first base to get Michael Young.

"We've got to be the best defensive team in the league," Geren said. "We play hard, we play right."

The nicest defensive effort might have come on a play that wasn't actually made. Center fielder Coco Crisp leaped high at the wall in the eighth, slamming into it hard and stretching as far as he could, and he just missed Taylor Teagarden's solo homer off Jerry Blevins.

"I thought I was going to catch it," Crisp said. "If my thumb hadn't come out of my glove, I think I would have had it."

Crisp, who has an extensive injury history including surgery on both shoulders last year and two disabled list stays this season, fell heavily onto the track but bounced up smiling after giving the dugout a nervous few moments.

"For the most part, I'm going full force," Crisp said. "I'm not saving any part of my body - I'm going to give 100 percent."

Entering Saturday, Crisp was hitting .205 in 18 games since the break, but he had a productive day against Texas. He reached on an infield single in the first inning and scored Oakland's first run when Rich Harden walked Kouzmanoff with the bases loaded. Crisp homered to center off Harden in his second at-bat, racing nearly all the way to second before the ball cleared the fence. "I'm just a little guy," he said. "I don't have 40-row-deep power. I just squeak it over."

He hit a sacrifice fly his third time up, sending in Cliff Pennington, who'd led off the fourth with a triple. Crisp's next at-bat? Another sacrifice fly, and he walked in his final at-bat.

"Coco stole the show," Gonzalez said.

Crisp is 7-for-18 against Texas this season. The Rangers have dropped 15 of their past 23 against Oakland overall, and Harden, the former A's starter, worked a season-low 2 1/3 innings after walking five and hitting a batter.

Gonzalez has allowed no more than one run in six of his past nine starts, and he is 4-2 with a 2.50 ERA in that span.

Numbers keep mounting for 'baby-faced assassin'

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

On Saturday afternoon, A's general manager **Billy Beane** wandered into the clubhouse and spotted pitcher **Trevor Cahill**.

"It's the baby-faced assassin!" Beane said by way of greeting, and given Cahill's numbers, that's not a bad assessment.

Going into the series finale against Texas today, Cahill has an 18-inning scoreless streak, and he's also got the lowest opposing average (.192) and slugging percentage (.304) in the majors.

Plus, the All-Star is on a run of 18 consecutive starts in which he has worked a minimum of five innings and allowed no more than six hits, the second longest such streak since 1900. **Nolan Ryan** had 20 in a row in 1972-73.

Cahill, 22, is 5-1 with a 1.83 ERA in seven career starts against the Rangers.

Bailey update: **Andrew Bailey** could be looking at another week-plus on the disabled list, going on estimates doctors provided about his strained right intercostal (ribcage) muscle. Bailey said he was told such an injury typically costs a player 4-6 weeks, and he's at 2 1/2 weeks now. He said he'll probably at least need to throw live batting practice or in a simulated game before he returns; he hopes to play catch today.

Outman throwing: Left-hander **Josh Outman**, who had Tommy John surgery last summer, said in a text that he's throwing at a distance of 140 feet and will report to the minor-league complex in Phoenix on Monday. Like reliever **Joey Devine**, Outman hopes to be pitching in Oakland in September.

Briefly: **Cliff Pennington** became the second A's player in 21 years to hit at least seven triples in a season, joining **Eric Byrnes**, who had nine in 2003. ... The A's have won nine of their past 10 day games. ... **Jeff Larish**, acquired earlier in the week off waivers from Detroit, drove in 10 runs in Triple-A Sacramento's doubleheader Friday. He hit three homers, including a grand slam.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Perfect gift: When Dallas Braden heard Saturday on TV that Randy Johnson had given his perfect-game catcher a \$10,000 Rolex, Braden nearly fell over laughing. "Landon Powell said I won't even buy him a Gatorade when we're golfing," Braden said. "It's true!"

Drumbeat: Bailey's feeling better, but sounds a ways off

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 8/7/2010, 12:17PM

Andrew Bailey said he's feeling better today and he hopes to play catch tomorrow, but he told me that doctors estimated that his right intercostal strain is a 4-6 week injury. That means he's looking at another 10 days to two weeks before he comes off the DL, and the A's are unlikely to rush their two-time All-Star; pitching with a nagging injury such as an intercostal is just asking for another injury elsewhere because of altered mechanics.

Manager Bob Geren confirmed what Joey Devine told me the other day; he's throwing at a distance of 120 feet. Devine said Wednesday that he's reporting to Arizona this coming week. Conor Jackson had told me Wednesday he'd play today in Arizona; they don't have a game today, though, so he'll get in three innings tomorrow.

Talk about making a big splash with a new organization: Jeff Larish, acquired on waivers earlier in the week, drove in 10 runs in a doubleheader for Triple-A Sacramento yesterday. He hit three homers, including a grand slam. Geren joked that that would have been a good month for him; but in all seriousness, it's a third of some the A's regulars totals for the season.

I remain curious if we'll see Travis Buck before the 20-day mark after he was optioned. If he's at Sacramento for less than 20 days, he'd still have an option remaining for next year, which is not an ideal situation for Buck, but it would give the A's even more time to determine if he still has a future with the club. So it's a weird catch 22 for Buck - come back to the big leagues sooner this season, which normally would be great for a minor-leaguer, except it gives the A's another entire year of control over Buck. He's 12 for his past 26 at Sacramento. He was optioned out July 30.

Enough about Buck? I know you're all more interested in Chris Carter (he hit homer No. 26) and Michael Taylor; they'll be up in September, but maybe not until Sacramento's playoffs are over. (After a very slow start, the River Cats have turned into one of the PCL's better teams - as usual. As a scout mentioned to me the other day, "That Tony DeFrancesco does a great job, no matter what he has or doesn't have there.")

Here's the lineup: Crisp cf, Barton 1b, Suzuki c, Cust dh, Kouzmanoff 3b, Ellis 2b, Davis rf, Watson lf, Pennington ss

Manager endures by heeding own lesson

Bruce Jenkins, San Francisco Chronicle

The Texas Rangers are baseball's most compelling story, captured in Josh Hamilton's poetic swing, Cliff Lee's precision sliders or Vladimir Guerrero whacking a dirt-low pitch over the fence in left-center. These are things essentially taken for granted around the game, but switch now to a more pedestrian scene: Ron Washington heading out of the clubhouse with a bat slung over his shoulder and a glove dangling from the barrel. Now you're at the heart of things.

He's the workingman's manager, flawed and trustworthy, slowly chipping away at the burdens of history. The Rangers give you just one theme through their 38-year history, all about abject failure and wilting in the Texas heat. They give you 38 years without a single victorious postseason series. Now it's time to watch the manager, a product of management's faith and his own strong will, try to change all that.

A terrific thing happened Wednesday night.

Two things, actually.

Right about the time Rangers third baseman Michael Young hit a grand slam in Seattle, solidifying an 11-6 victory, Rangers President Nolan Ryan and his partner, Chuck Greenberg, were awarded control of the club after a 16-hour bankruptcy auction in Fort Worth, Texas.

Left in defeat was Mark Cuban, the billionaire owner of the Dallas Mavericks who found himself unable to match the \$590 million (including assumed liabilities) bid by the Ryan-Greenberg group. Nobody had a clue what Cuban ownership might

mean. It would have been splashy, unpredictable, perhaps even wildly successful. But this is a franchise looking past “maybe” or flights of fancy. That court ruling meant stability — and the end of Washington’s long road back to respectability.

As bench coach Jackie Moore put it, “The good guys prevailed.”

Sometime after the season, Washington will get an extension on his contract. Ryan made that pledge to the media on Friday, as the Rangers prepared to play in Oakland. You might call it a push-button decision, given that the team’s performance has improved in each of Washington’s four seasons and now looks worthy of a runaway title in the AL West. But that would ignore the firestorm surrounding Washington in spring training, when a lot of people wanted him fired on the spot.

Washington’s plight was well documented: his admission of an experiment with cocaine, his pleading guilty to management before any drug test could come in, then management’s dilemma on how to handle the residue. Washington had been hired by general manager Jon Daniels, but Ryan had grown to respect him not just as a manager, but as a man.

Ryan ignored the howling wolves, some of whom were writing newspaper columns, and decided to let Washington finish out his deal.

The players, to their credit, had Washington’s back from the beginning.

There wasn’t even a hint of divided opinion. “That clubhouse in there, they’re young, but they’re forgiving,” Washington said. “From the day that I told them what I did, it never changed their outlook. That’s why things have gone as smooth as they have gone, because my players are like me: be accountable, stand up, no excuses. You do wrong, we’re going to give you a chance to amend. It’s never come back because I’m the leader, and I lead, and they follow, and they know I have never led them down the wrong path. That’s what’s given me the strength to be able to stay in my job.”

Washington has undergone weekly, voluntary drug testing throughout the season.

He feels deserving of the inconvenience and never hesitates to talk about it.

“For every action, there’s a consequence,” he said.

“I have a reputation, and all I want to do is protect it. I did wrong, and I had to deal with the scrutiny. People in baseball who know me know that was an aberration. That’s not Ron Washington.”

To observe the Rangers, so loose and relaxed as they craft one of the most enviable clubhouse moods in the game, you’d think the cocaine incident never happened.

The story has completely disappeared in Texas, drifting toward more relevant topics, such as Washington’s candidacy for Manager of the Year.

Who else can match his credentials if the Rangers win the division?

“The real test will be to watch Washington as a strategist during a fiveor seven-game playoff series,” said a source close to the club. “He can pull some real headscratching moves. But they’re all about instinct, going against the book, trying to make things happen, and the players like that. These guys play their butts off for him, every night.”

Moore, the former A’s manager (1984-86) in his second year as Washington’s bench coach, said, “If you can’t play or coach for this guy, then you’ve got something missing. The players have taken on his personality, his energy and enthusiasm. They play the game hard, they play it right. If you do these things, he doesn’t bother you. If somebody veers off the road, he’ll be the first one to confront ‘em about it — and privately, not in the papers. He’s really starting to get the respect he deserves.”

“He’s just a stand-up guy,” Hamilton said. “He tells it like it is. You can go to him for any reason.

He’s not going to embarrass you or wear you out in front of the team. That says something about a man’s integrity.”

As a born-and-raised son of New Orleans, Washington says he’s looking forward to catching up with “Treme” (trehmay), a wonderful television show brought forth by the same men, David Simon and Eric Overmyer, who created “The Wire.” It’s all about the recovery process from Hurricane Katrina and the distinctive local music scene that helped preserve everyone’s sanity. Washington would fit seamlessly into the cast, for only his house (in New Orleans East) was destroyed; his spirit remains intact.

“I lost everything, but I’ve been building a new place on the same lot,” he said. “I’m still a couple of rooms from getting my house back in order, but this winter, we should be able to finish that off. It’s all coming together.”

More than anything, that’s the essence of Ron Washington. He’s a leader by nature, but he’s one of us. He gets knocked down. He rebuilds. He feels a little bit stronger each time, and he asks no pity.

THE BULL PEN

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

We know **Mike Lowell** came off the disabled list, replaced injured **Kevin Youkilis** and homered on the first pitch he saw. What we didn't know was that had the Red Sox traded Lowell before the trade deadline, their only option was to ship him to ... the Yankees, according to Boston general manager **Theo Epstein**.

Florida's **Josh Johnson** was baseball's hottest pitcher before facing the Giants and Padres in consecutive starts, but then he surrendered eight runs, seven coming with two outs. The Giants and Padres were 6-for-13 with runners in scoring position and two outs. Before that, teams were 7-for-56 (.125) against Johnson in those situations.

Rick Dempsey thought he should have been hired over

Buck Showalter to manage the Orioles. "I think it is probably the biggest mistake made here in a long time, and I'm not talking just today. I mean over the years," said Dempsey, who has interviewed for the job four times.

It's tough being bitter about it when you're an Orioles broadcaster, as is Dempsey, and the owner of the Orioles, **Peter Angelos**, also owns MASN, the network for which Dempsey works.

Cubs GM **Jim Hendry** acquired **Blake DeWitt** from the Dodgers after receiving a recommendation from **Greg Maddux**, who played with DeWitt in Los Angeles.

The Angels' pursuit of a freeagent hitter (**Carl Crawford** anyone?) could be stalled by the acquisition of **Dan Haren**, who'll get \$29 million through 2012.

They have nine players under contract for 2011 at \$81 million and 10 others who'll be eligible for arbitration. Plus, they must pay **Gary Matthews Jr.** \$11 million.

Ivan Rodriguez, hit his 300th home run as a catcher, the fifth to reach the milestone. Can he reach 3,000 hits?

Probably not. He's 38 and still 215 hits away. He's signed through next season, but the Nationals want to ease in young catcher **Wilson Ramos**.

Gonzalez, A's team to knock off Texas

Left-hander is 4-2 with a 2.50 ERA over last nine starts

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Sitting in the A's clubhouse before Saturday's matinee against the Rangers, Gio Gonzalez watched a replay of Dallas Braden's perfect game with his pregame meal. While Gonzalez wasn't perfect, he tossed seven innings of shutout ball to lead the A's to a 6-2 victory over the Rangers.

When asked what he thought about his performance, Gonzalez instantly deflected all praise to his defense and the A's lineup, who used small ball throughout the afternoon to manufacture runs.

"We had great defense, great offense all around," Gonzalez said. "We wanted to win the game really bad. We did all-in-all our job and made a great jump today swinging the bat and making great plays. The credit's all to the offense and the defense."

For Gonzalez, Saturday's game plan was simple: pound the zone. But given Texas' robust lineup, said task could often lead to hits and runs. Gonzalez never lost a grasp on the game, though, limiting Texas to four hits and three walks on the afternoon.

"[A's catcher Kurt] Suzuki was constantly telling me, 'Let's go, challenge these guys. Go out there and keep throwing strikes, let them swing the bat,'" Gonzalez said. "Texas is a good-hitting team and I just tried to make the adjustment and it worked. Suzuki did a great job."

Among his seven sharp innings, Gonzalez's only murky moment occurred in the fourth, when he surrendered a pair of walks after retiring Josh Hamilton and Vladimir Guerrero to start the frame. After Suzuki and pitching coach Curt Young came out to the mound to calm Gonzalez down, he induced groundout from David Murphy to end the inning.

With the win, Gonzalez (10-7) moved his record to 9-1 in games where the A's give him at least three runs of support. He is now 4-2 with a 2.50 ERA over his last nine starts.

"He was just throwing strikes," Rangers outfielder Nelson Cruz said. "He didn't give us many good pitches to hit, especially with men in scoring position. He threw his breaking ball and we have to be more patient in those situations. He threw well."

From the fifth inning on, Gonzalez faced one batter over the minimum to finish out his afternoon, picking up a pair of inning-ending double plays along the way.

The first came via Kevin Kouzmanoff, who fielded a Michael Young ground ball, stepped on third for a forceout and threw a strike across the diamond to nab Young. The second was a 6-4-3 double play on ground ball by Cruz.

"I think the defense has been fantastic all season, it really has," A's manager Bob Geren said. "We got to be the best defensive team in the league, I think. We play hard and we play right."

Daric Barton set the defensive tone for Oakland early, tracking down an Elvis Andrus fly ball in foul territory near the bullpen mound. Rajai Davis also got into the act, making a sliding catch in left field to record Gonzalez's final out in the seventh.

Offensively, it was all about the sacrifices on Saturday. Three of the A's six runs came via a sac fly, one of them set up by a Cliff Pennington sacrifice bunt.

"That's the style that we have to play," Geren said. "We have to execute. ... For the most part we've been very pleased with that, but today was an exceptional outing in the situational department."

In the middle of it all was Coco Crisp, who went 2-for-2 with a walk, two runs scored, a home run and three RBIs. Crisp delivered sac flies in the fourth and sixth innings, while blasting a solo shot to center field in the second off Texas starter Rich Harden.

"When I hit it I was thinking triple," Crisp said of his home run. "I just got the bonus bag when it went over. Out the box, I'm running -- I don't [hit a lot] of home runs anyway. I don't have that hit-it-40-rows-deep kind of power, I was able sneak one over the fence. It feels good, though."

Crisp said he planned on taking the first pitch from Harden, but that the fastball was simply too good to pass up. Crisp almost kept the shutout intact in the eighth inning, when he nearly robbed Taylor Teagarden of a home run, but he couldn't keep it from going out to make the score 6-1.

"It hit off my glove," Crisp said. "My thumb came out and I think if my thumb doesn't come out I might be able to bring it back. Without your thumb, you really don't have any power on the other side of the glove."

Harden, meanwhile, looked like a shell of the pitcher he was on May 3, when he struck out nine A's over seven scoreless innings. Harden needed 41 pitches to navigate through the first inning on Saturday, but not before walking three batters and ceding a 2-0 lead to Oakland. He left after 2 1/3 innings, allowing three earned runs on two hits, five walks and a hit batsman.

"You always get a lot of guys chasing at fastballs up and chasing his changeup down," Geren said. "If you do that, [Harden] can get on a roll and be virtually unhittable. But our guys did a super job on laying off both of those pitches and getting it to a point where they didn't get through three innings. That's probably what impressed me most."

Rangers hoping for pleasant day trip vs. A's

By John Schlegel / MLB.com

The American League West-leading Rangers have split the first eight games of their road trip through the rest of the division, and they have two things standing in their way as they try to make it a winning swing:

Trevor Cahill's on the mound for the A's, and the sun will be out.

The A's won their ninth day game in their last 10 tries on Saturday, raising their record to 26-11 under the sun, the best in the big leagues.

Perhaps even more imposing is Cahill, the right-hander who rose to All-Star status this summer and is coming off his first career complete game, a three-hit shutout over the Royals on Monday.

What's most impressive to the A's is how the 22-year-old is evolving quickly, becoming a better pitcher, adding a curveball to his repertoire -- all while putting together a very strong season through his first 19 starts.

"He's making adjustments," said A's catcher Kurt Suzuki. "He's keeping the ball down and out of the middle of the plate. That's been huge -- keeping the ball in the corner and keeping it down where it will be harder to lift the ball out of the park."

Cahill will be matched against Rangers right-hander Colby Lewis, who has dropped two of his last three starts -- although the Rangers scored two runs or fewer in each of those outings. That includes a 3-1 loss to the A's in which Cahill spun eight shutout innings, outdueling Lewis' seven innings and one run.

Rangers: Vlad to get a breather

Vladimir Guerrero is scheduled for a day off on Sunday, which will shift Josh Hamilton into the designated hitter role and allow Julio Borbon another start in center. Borbon had three consecutive starts in center before taking four days off. ... Bengie Molina will be back at catcher after Taylor Teagarden started -- and homered -- in Saturday's game.

A's: Bailey might throw on side Sunday

The A's hope closer Andrew Bailey takes another step toward his return Sunday with another side throwing session he and the club hope does not aggravate the ribcage strain that put him on the DL. He felt some discomfort there on Thursday in his last attempt to throw. "Andrew is feeling better [Saturday]," Geren said. "We'll see where he's at [Sunday]." ... Coco Crisp went 2-for-2 with a homer on Saturday and is 7-for-18 in five games against the Rangers this season.

Worth noting

The A's might be becoming the Rangers' AL West nemesis, having won 15 of the last 23 meetings between the clubs dating to last season. The Rangers actually lead this season's series, 6-5, heading into Sunday's finale, with three at Texas (Aug. 27-29) and four at Oakland (Sept. 23-26) remaining.

Braden earns veteran status on A's staff

Left-hander is elder statesman of young group at only 26

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- It's come faster than he could have ever imagined, but 26-year-old Dallas Braden is the old man on the A's pitching staff. When Ben Sheets went down with a season-ending elbow injury three weeks ago and Brett Anderson joined the rotation, baseball's youngest staff got even younger.

"Never do you think you are going to assume that veteran role at 26," Braden said. "It's not like I'm so weathered and grizzled that these guys look to me for advice or anything like that. We talk about stuff, but never did I put myself in this position this early in my career."

Braden said he feels a bit more responsibility to serve as a leader being the rotation's oldest member, but said it's more a case of leading by example, rather than words. Among the other members of the A's staff, Braden has clicked best with Saturday's starter Gio Gonzalez.

"Gio and I are very similar in our passion and our intensity for the game," Braden said. "When he got here early, he had some trouble trying to harness that emotion and channel it in a matter that wasn't showing anybody up -- that was still respectful of the game, respectful of himself, teammates. He's kind of leaned on me to help him through that."

With Braden, Gonzalez and Anderson, Oakland's rotation features three southpaws. In fact, Braden said he learns more about himself by watching the 24-year-old Gonzalez and 22-year-old Anderson pitch.

"All three of us are different pitchers and have different repertoires, but we're all looking to get outs," Braden said. "I think we can all sit back and watch each other and pick each other's brain on what worked against this guy, what worked against that guy."

While Braden said he enjoys the lefty companions, A's manager Bob Geren said he's more concerned with the quality of pitcher he gets to use, regardless of which way he throws. Oakland's rotation also has the benefit of working with Curt Young, one of eight left-handed pitching coaches in the Major Leagues.

"All that means is that there's another weirdo in the woodpile," Braden said of Young.

Watson gets thrown right into fire

OAKLAND -- After a five-year hiatus, Matt Watson's return to the big leagues is still going strong.

The 31-year-old outfielder was called up from Triple-A Sacramento on July 5 and has become a regular presence in the lineup this week. Watson hit eighth as the starting left fielder on Saturday and has started five of the last six contests.

"That's all you can ask for," Watson said. "Like I said when I got up, there's a lot of guys that can play and play at this level. There's a lot of guys in Triple-A and the Atlantic League that could be successful, it's just finding your niche and finding somebody that will play you. I owe a lot of that to [A's manager Bob Geren] for getting me in there the last couple of days."

Watson picked up a hit in three consecutive games earlier this week and has been hitting pitches with consistent authority lately. Entering play on Saturday, Watson was batting .188 (5-for-27) in 11 games this season.

"I feel fantastic defensively, knock on wood," Watson said. "In my career this is probably the most comfortable I've felt out there. I'm getting settled in the corner outfield positions."

Geren usually uses a defensive replacement for Watson in the late innings, but said he's been happy with the production from Watson and fellow outfielder Matt Carson, who was also promoted from Sacramento on July 5.

"They're both giving me some good at-bats, they really are," Geren said. "That's what you want, is to give you a quality at-bat and they both play pretty well defensively."

Bailey may throw on Sunday

OAKLAND -- A's closer Andrew Bailey, who is on the 15-day disabled list with a rib muscle strain, could resume throwing on Sunday.

Bailey played catch on Wednesday but felt a bit of discomfort on Thursday, as Oakland manager Bob Geren said the session didn't go quite as planned.

"Andrew is feeling better [Saturday]," Geren said. "We'll see where he's at [Sunday]."

Geren said Bailey could play catch on Sunday if his body feels up to the task, but said the team hasn't decided on whether Bailey will need a Minor League rehab stint. Bailey hasn't pitched in a game since July 20.

Geren also said reliever Joey Devine is on the eighth day of a throwing program and will be stretching it out to 120 feet on flat ground.

Lefty Josh Outman, who went 4-1 with a 3.48 ERA in 14 appearances -- 12 starts -- for Oakland last season, is in a similar spot as Devine in his rehab, according to Geren.

A's Even the Series Behind Gonzalez

Malaika Bobino, Oakland Post

Oakland, CA – The second day of the series and the Oakland A's got another opportunity to take advantage of poor pitching in the first inning. This time a team effort was given as the A's evened the series and beat the Texas Rangers 6-2.

Rangers pitcher Rich Harden struggled early with absolutely no command on the mound. Leadoff batter Coco Crisp singled center to short stop Elvis Andrus who dropped the ball allowing Crisp to advance to first. Harden then walked three batters loading the bases with one out giving Oakland a 2-0 lead.

"It's frustrating," Harden said. "I lost feeling out there and couldn't control it." "I was off today and tried to find it, no feel whatsoever out there, not good."

Definitely a different pitcher than Cliff Lee's performance last night. But Lee who also struggled in the first regained his control allowing the A's only one run. Harden was pulled after 2 1/3 innings, he gave up two hits, three runs (all earned), one home run, walked five and struck out two.

Crisp gave Oakland a 3-0 lead in the fourth frame when he hit a solo home run. He went 2 for 2 with a walk, two runs scored, a home run and three RBI's. Crisp hit a sacrifice fly in both the fourth and sixth innings. He also came close to robbing Taylor Teagarden of his home run when his glove caught the fly ball but lost it on his way down to the ground.

"It hit off my glove," Crisp said. "My thumb came out and I think if my thumb didn't come out I might've been able to bring it back." "Without your thumb you really don't have any power on the other side of the glove."

Oakland continued to dominate scoring two runs bottom of the sixth inning. Matt Watson doubled bringing in Davis and then Crisp hit a sacrifice fly to right bringing in Gabe Gross (pinch runner for Watson). Offensively, it was a sacrifice day, three of the A's six runs came via sacrifice fly's.

"We had great defense and offense," said Gonzalez. "We wanted this win really bad." "My team deserves this win and I was glad to be apart of it."

Gonzalez recorded his tenth win and tossed a shutout through seven innings. He gave up four hits, no runs, walked three and struck out two. Gonzalez explained how teammate Kurt Suzuki advised him to throw strikes and that's what he did.

"He was just throwing strikes," Nelson Cruz said. "He didn't give us many good pitches to hit, especially with men in scoring position." "He threw his breaking ball and we have to be more patient in those situations."

Top of the eighth frame Texas came alive when Teagarden hit a home run. There next and final run came in the ninth when David Murphy singled and scored Jorge Cantu. The Rangers managed just four hits over seven innings off Gonzalez.

"The game just ended," Rangers manager Ron Washington said. "We certainly don't have any thoughts about what's going to happen when that next start comes around."

Crisp, Gonzalez key A's win

By JANIE McCAULEY, ASSOCIATED PRESS

If only the Oakland Athletics had Coco Crisp contributing this way all season. They might be much closer to pushing the first-place Texas Rangers for a playoff spot.

Crisp homered, hit two sacrifice flies and scored twice to back 10-game winner Gio Gonzalez, and the A's beat the AL West-leading Rangers 6-2 on Saturday in Oakland.

Crisp missed 70 games early in the season during two separate stints on the disabled list in his first year with Oakland.

"Hopefully this day can lead to some positive stuff," Crisp said. "I've been feeling fine but you can't hit it right at people. It feels like I'm playing catch with them."

Mark Ellis also had a sacrifice fly as Oakland quickly jumped on former A's ace Rich Harden. The A's snapped Texas' three-game winning streak and pulled within 8½ games of the Rangers in the race for the division title.

Gonzalez (10-7) reached double digits in victories for the first time in parts of three major league seasons. The left-hander allowed four hits in seven shutout innings, struck out two and walked three.

"Everyone wants to win 10 games or more," Gonzalez said.

"This is a difficult milestone. The 10th win is special for me and for the team. I don't want to stop now."

Taylor Teagarden started the eighth with a drive off Jerry Blevins for the Rangers' first run. Crisp crashed into the center-field wall trying to make a leaping catch on Teagarden's shot and was briefly down, but stayed in the game.

The A's won for the ninth time in their last 10 day games and are a majors-best 26-11 in the afternoon. This was originally scheduled as a night game but was changed for TV.

"Even television's trying to give them a chance," Rangers manager Ron Washington quipped. "Son of a gun. They're out to get us."

Texas lost for only the eighth time in 22 games since the All-Star break. The Rangers couldn't get their offense going against Gonzalez after collecting 22 runs and 33 hits in their previous three games. David Murphy hit a ninth-inning RBI single.

Texas' 9½-game division lead to start the day was the second-largest in franchise history.

Matt Watson added an RBI double in the sixth for the A's, driving in speedy Rajai Davis from first. Crisp hit his second sacrifice fly two batters later.

Harden (4-4) was already long gone. Things didn't start well for the right-hander, who beat the Angels last Saturday in Anaheim in his first start back from the disabled list following a strained muscle in left buttocks.

He allowed an infield single to Crisp leading off the first and walked three of the next four A's hitters, with Kevin Kouzmanoff drawing a bases-loaded walk to bring home Oakland's first run.

Ellis followed with a sacrifice fly.

"I didn't give them opportunities to put the ball in play," Harden said. "I felt decent warming up on the mound, I just struggled to find it. The last time it was just getting ahead of hitters. This time I had no feel whatsoever. They made me throw a lot of pitches. They waited me out."

Harden threw 65 pitches over 2½ innings in his shortest outing of 2010, a tough one to analyze considering he pitched well his last time out.

"His pitch count just got out of control. He could have used his slider if he could place his fastball," Washington said. "He never got the chance to do that. He didn't have the feel of it. ... He just didn't have it and I can't put my finger on it."

Gonzalez quickly found his groove, getting a 1-2-3 first on seven pitches. He allowed a pair of two-out singles in the second to Jorge Cantu and Murphy, but got Christian Guzman on an inning-ending strikeout.

Gonzalez received a mound visit in the fourth from pitching coach Curt Young following consecutive two-out walks to Nelson Cruz and Cantu, then got Murphy to ground out.

Cliff Pennington hit his seventh triple of the season to start the fourth, then scored on Crisp's first sacrifice fly.

Crisp's fourth homer of the year in the second was just his second RBI since the All-Star break. It was Oakland's fourth homer in its last 12 games.

Teagarden earned another start at catcher for the Rangers a day after hitting a two-run homer. Washington talked to Bengie Molina about when he would play, and Molina will go Sunday.

NOTES

*Davis stole his 33rd and 34th bases.

*Injured Oakland closer and reigning AL Rookie of the Year Andrew Bailey reported feeling better but still wasn't ready to resume his throwing routine as he rehabs from a right rib cage strain. He didn't come out of his Wednesday catch session as well as he would have liked.

*Another former A's pitcher, Colby Lewis, starts Sunday's series finale for Texas.

*Mixed martial arts fighter Randy Couture, set to fight later Saturday at neighboring Oracle Arena, threw out the ceremonial first pitch. He stopped into Washington's office before the game.

Crash Course Pays Off for Trevor Cahill

By [Jeff Fletcher](#), fanhouse.com 8/7/2010

OAKLAND -- [Trevor Cahill](#) should not have been in the majors last season. He was just a month past his 21st birthday, having gone straight from Double-A to the A's rotation.

"We probably did rush him," general manager [Billy Beane](#) said, "but we didn't have much choice."

The decision to toss Cahill into the deep end might have been disastrous if it had set back or ruined the development of an otherwise promising pitcher. The sink-or-swim teaching method, unplanned as it may have been, is now paying big dividends for the A's.

"It would have been nice for him to go pitch a year at Triple-A and build up innings in not such a stressful environment," A's

pitching coach Curt Young said. "But to his advantage, he was here last year and got to feel what it was like to experience a full season, getting comfortable where he was pitching. I think that definitely sped his progress."

This year Cahill has quietly become one of the best pitchers in the American League. An All-Star at age 22, Cahill is now 11-4 with 2.72 ERA, which ranks third in the league. He takes a streak of 18 consecutive scoreless innings into Sunday afternoon's start against the first-place Rangers.

"It's about as quick a maturation as I've ever seen on a young pitcher," Beane said.

This is what the A's had hoped Cahill would become, but no one -- not even Cahill -- figured that he could be this good in 2010. Not after he had a 4.63 ERA last year. Not after Cahill, billed as a sinker-ball specialist, gave up homers at the second highest rate (1.4 per nine innings) of any starter in the league. He walked too many (3.6 per nine innings) and he struck out too few (4.5).

In short, Cahill did almost nothing that his profile indicated he should do.

Except Cahill still had one thing going for him: his makeup.

This was a kid who had been accepted to Dartmouth, with plans of becoming an engineer. That would have to wait, though. The A's, whose preference for polished college players is well-documented, thought Cahill was enough of a complete package that they used their second-round pick in 2006 to pluck him out of Vista High, near San Diego.

Cahill was a quick study in the minor leagues, skipping to Double-A by the middle of his second full season. Brett Anderson, acquired from the Diamondbacks in the Dan Haren trade before the 2008 season, became Cahill's close friend at Class-A Stockton, and the two went together to Double-A and then to Beijing as part of the Olympic team. Although neither had pitched a regular-season game at Triple-A, they both opened the 2009 season in the Oakland rotation.

Anderson turned the corner on his development in the second half last year, establishing himself as one of baseball's best young pitchers, while Cahill just kept getting whacked.

"Him taking his lumps and bouncing back after a handful of tough games, where he got beat up pretty good, that shows the type of character and ability he has," Young said.

Rather than sulking in his failure or doubting himself, Cahill learned from his mistakes. First, he shelved the knuckle-curve that had been such a weapon for him in the minors. In the big leagues, hitters didn't swing at it, and he couldn't get it over for a strike. Second, he realized he had to improve the command of his money pitch, a heavy sinker. Last year he couldn't throw the pitch when he was behind in the count because he couldn't put it where he wanted it. Instead, if he fell behind, he'd pour four-seam fastballs over the heart of the plate.

That's how you get a sore neck and tired outfielders.

This spring Cahill went into camp with a chance to compete for the No. 5 starter job. He ended up hurting his non-throwing shoulder and starting on the disabled list. When he was healthy, he was sent to Triple-A. He didn't get called to the big leagues until late April, when Justin Duchscherer went on the disabled list.

Since then, Cahill's performance has been eye-opening. He has allowed just 6.0 hits per nine innings, best in the league. The homers are down (0.8), as are the walks (2.9). The strikeouts are up (5.2). His ratio of 1.88 groundouts per flyout ranks fourth in the league.

The last AL pitcher as young as Cahill to qualify for the ERA title with a number lower than Cahill's current mark was Frank Tanana, who had a 2.43 ERA in 1976.

"It's pretty incredible how far he's come and how fast he's gotten comfortable," catcher Kurt Suzuki said.

The biggest change is that Cahill has added a traditional curveball that he can command. He's also had command to both sides of the plate of a four-seamer and a sinker, and a changeup.

Cahill's ability to hit numbers on the radar gun from the 70s to the 90s make him reminiscent of a right-hander Mark Mulder. Because of his sinker, Cahill also compares himself to Derek Lowe and Brandon Webb "from back in the day." (Sounds funny, but Webb has been on the disabled list for the entirety of Cahill's young career.)

Cahill is quiet around the clubhouse, known most for his preference for music that came out a decade before he was born. (His intro music is "White Rabbit," by Jefferson Airplane.) Anderson rides him for his musical taste, but admires him for having the perfect mindset to pitch.

"Nothing fazes him really," Anderson said. "He takes the mound, he's care-free. He doesn't get too high or too low. He made the All-Star team and you'd never know it. He's the same guy if he throws nine shutout innigs or throws two innings and gives up seven. The game rewards people like that."

Cahill said that he "wasn't really expecting" success to come so quickly after a rookie year in which he took so many hard knocks.

"I think it was a good experience," he said. "This is a game of adjustments and I made a lot of them. I think I made a lot of strides that I couldn't have made if I was in Triple-A. I think it made me pitch much better this year."

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Sacramento blows 11-run lead in Albuquerque

By Kevin Poveda / Sacramento River Cats

The Sacramento River Cats blew an 11-run lead Saturday night, falling 13-12 in 12 innings to the Albuquerque Isotopes. Not only did the River Cats blow the largest lead in franchise history, but they spoiled a chance to tie the Fresno Grizzlies (4-1 losers against Round Rock) in the Pacific Coast League South Division standings.

The River Cats wasted no time getting runs on the board, as they drove in eight during the second inning. Sacramento outfielder Michael Taylor reached base after being walked, which was then followed by Jeff Baisley's shot over the right-field fence, his third home run of the season. An Anthony Recker double put the River Cats in scoring position again, and Corey Wimberly didn't leave Recker on base for long, as his single brought Recker home making the score 3-0 with only one out.

The River Cats then strung together four consecutive singles by Eric Sogard, Chris Carter, Jeff Larish and designated hitter Dallas McPherson, which gave Sacramento a 6-0 lead with still one out. Steve Tolleson, who got two at-bats during the second inning, rounded things off with a triple after striking out his first at-bat. Tolleson's triple scored both Larish and McPherson, giving the River Cats another early and big lead over Albuquerque.

The River Cats have dominated the second inning during their series with the Isotopes. Sacramento scored eight and six runs during the second inning in two victories over the Isotopes in their doubleheader Friday For the third consecutive game, the Isotopes starting pitcher failed to make it through the second inning.

Emotions ran high for the Isotopes in the sixth with the River Cats leading 12-1. Both Anthony Recker and Corey Wimberly reached base on a single and an error. Albuquerque pitcher Scott Dohmann then hit Eric Sogard with a pitch and was ejected immediately. Albuquerque players and coaches stormed home plate to argue the call.

After leading 11-1 after Chris Carter's two-run homer in the fifth, Albuquerque made a late and ferocious comeback, scoring eleven runs in four innings, including a five-run ninth inning to erase the River Cats lead and send the game into extra innings. The River Cats and Isotopes continued to battle all the way into the 12th inning when Albuquerque designated hitter JD Closser ended the game and capped off a great comeback on a line drive to center field scoring Ivan De Jesus Jr.

Starting right-handed pitcher Clayton Mortensen pitched a solid 6.2 innings, allowing eight hits and four earned runs while striking out five and walking none.

The River Cats outscored Albuquerque 43-27 over the past four games, and look to take their run scoring ability to Round Rock for a four-game series.

Villar Handcuffs Hounds

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

Although he had not pitched above the "Low A" level in his pro career entering 2010, the Houston Astros thought enough of Henry Villar (vee-AR) to add the right-hander to their 40-main roster last November. The RockHounds would concur.

Villar went 7.0 strong innings, allowing one run on five hits with two walks and two K's, and the Hooks blew a 2-1 game open with a 3-run seventh inning as Corpus Christi defeated the RockHounds, 7-1, Saturday night at Citibank Ballpark.

The first half of the game was dominated by pitching and defense, with a succession of outstanding plays in the field. None was better than Corey Brown's diving catch in right-center in the top of the first, a play in which "Brownny" then threw behind a runner, doubling Freddy Parejo off first base.

The Hooks broke a scoreless tie with two runs in the fourth, but the 'Hounds answered in the home half of the inning with Shane Peterson's RBI double down the right field line scoring Brown from first.

The game stayed tight at 2-1 until the seventh, when six consecutive Corpus Christi batters reached base. Ironically, two would score on what started as yet another tremendous defensive play. With one run in, two out and the bases loaded, Alex Valdez made a diving stop on Albert Cartwright's shot down the third base line. Valdez then tried to get too much on the throw to first and "air mailed" it, with two runs scoring on the play. The Hooks added two more insurance runs in the ninth.

The pennant race & the wild card: The 'Hounds still lead Frisco by two games in the South, but the San Antonio Missions are now within three games after pounding the RoughRiders, 10-2, at San Antonio. Corpus Christi is seven games back of the first-place RockHounds with the win, In the wild card race (which takes effect if Frisco wins the second half), San Antonio again draws within three games of the 'Hounds and Corpus is now within six games.

Stockton Defeats High Desert, 9-4

Jermaine Mitchell extends hitting streak to 10 games

STOCKTON, Calif. – The Stockton Ports (53-59) continued to be successful against High Desert (60-52), as they charged to a 9-4 win against the Mavericks on Saturday night at Banner Island Ballpark.

Jermaine Mitchell finished the game 3x5 with a double and a solo home run to extend his hitting streak to 10 games. He is just the fourth Ports player this year to hit in 10 or more consecutive games. Stephen Parker and Joel Galarraga both added a pair of hits in the contest. Grant Green had two RBI for Stockton. The Ports totaled 10 hits in the contest, but went 2x15 with runners in scoring position. The Ports are 4x27 with runners in scoring position in this series.

Brett Tomko had a solid start for Stockton, striking out five in 3.1 innings. He allowed just two runs on two hits in his start. Mike Hart picked up the win, his first for Stockton. Andrew Carraway got the loss for High Desert. Justin Murray tossed 3.2 innings for the Ports for his first hold, as Scott Deal struck out Rich Poythress to end the game.

High Desert took a 2-0 lead in the first inning. With one out, second baseman Edilio Colina singled. Later in the inning, first baseman Eddy Martinez-Esteve hit a two-run blast over the center field wall to put the Mavericks ahead.

But the Ports tied the contest up in the bottom of the first. Jermaine Mitchell and Grant Green hit back-to-back solo shots to open up the first frame. Stephen Parker then tripled off the center field wall to keep things rolling, and Mike Spina walked to put runners on the corners with no out. But Carraway buckled down to get three outs to get out of the inning.

The Ports claimed the lead in the second inning as Green's sacrifice fly drove home left fielder Todd Johnson to make it 3-2. The Ports added their fourth run of the game on an RBI double by second baseman Tyler Ladendorf.

The Mavericks cut the lead to 4-3 in the fifth inning on an RBI single by Martinez-Esteve, who drove home all four High Desert runs on Saturday night.

Ladendorf scored in the sixth frame as Johnson grounded out into a double play, to put the Ports ahead 5-3.

Stockton added to their cushion in the seventh inning by scoring three runs. Mitchell led off the inning by doubling to center field. He moved to third as Green reached on an error. With runners on the corners and no out, Parker hit a double off the center field wall. Mitchell came around to score, and Ports manager Steve Scarsons waved Green around. Green made a charge toward home and Parker likewise ran toward third. But center fielder Denny Almonte threw the ball into shortstop Kyle Seager, who relayed it to catcher Trevor Coleman, and Coleman went running to get Green out. Green ran back to third, where Parker was already standing, and Coleman tagged both Green and Parker. The umpires ruled that third base belonged to Green and that Parker was out.

Spina then struck out, and designated hitter Yusuf Carter was walked to put two one with two out. Ladendorf stepped back up to the plate. While he was batting, Blake Nation threw a wild pitch, and Green scored. Carter took second and third on a throwing error by Coleman, who tried to catch him stealing, but no one was covering second base. Ladendorf hit the ball toward first baseman Martinez-Esteve, who misplayed the ball. Ladendorf reached on the error, and Carter scored on the play to make it a 8-3 ballgame. Right fielder Jeremy Barfield next walked, and later Johnson flew out to end the inning.

Stockton scored their ninth and final run in the eighth inning, as Galarraga scored as Green hit into a double play.

High Desert scored their fourth run in the ninth on an RBI double by Martinez-Esteve before Deal struck out Poythress to end the game.

The Ports will look to secure a sweep of the Mavericks on Sunday at 6:05 PM PST. LHP Fabian Williamson (2-0, 3.52) will start for Stockton while LHP Jimmy Gillheeney (1-0, 0.00) will take the hill for High Desert. Fans can listen to the game live on KWSX 1280 AM.

Cougars Pound Bees to Start Road Trip

Gilmartin leads Kane County as team continues its dominance over Burlington

BURLINGTON, Iowa – The Kane County Cougars opened a seven-game road trip Saturday night with a 10-3 thrashing of the Burlington Bees at Community Field. Mike Gilmartin went 4-for-5 and missed the cycle by a homer, and the Cougars knocked out 14 hits to improve to 9-1 against the Bees this season.

The Cougars used back-to-back five-run innings to account for their offense. In the third, Rashun Dixon and Mitch LeVier nailed RBI singles, Jason Christian launched a sacrifice fly and Gilmartin nailed a two-run trip to make it 5-0 against Dusty Odenbach (6-9). Then in the fourth, Anthony Aliotti smashed an RBI triple, Christian recorded a run-producing fielder's choice, Dixon scored on an error, Leonardo Gil doubled home a teammate and Gilmartin grounded out for a 10-0 rout. Gilmartin also doubled in the sixth and seventh.

On the mound Chris Mederos (4-4) pitched five innings of one-run ball for the win, Max Peterson got touched for two runs in two innings and Ryan Doolittle retired all six batters he faced to wrap it up. The Cougars have won seven of their last 10 games and maintain a 1.5-game lead for the top playoff spot in the Western Division.

The Cougars (24-17, 56-54) and Bees (15-24, 37-71) continue the four-game set Sunday afternoon at 2 CT. Ian Krol (8-4, 2.65) is set to face Tyler Sample (5-8, 4.15). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at www.kccougars.com with pre-game coverage starting at 1:45 p.m.