

**Josh Outman gives Oakland A's big relief with a strong start**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Josh Outman took the mound to start Wednesday night's game.

To the A's benefit, he was in no hurry to leave.

Outman provided stability for Oakland's reeling rotation with seven shutout innings in a 2-1 victory over the visiting Kansas City Royals before 16,392 fans.

It marked just the A's second victory in their past 15 games and their first at home under new manager Bob Melvin.

"I needed to go after hitters," Outman said. "If I get knocked out of the game, I want to get knocked out because they're hitting, not because I just ran my pitch count up."

A's starters came in 0-11 with a 7.30 ERA over the past 14 games. The 11-decision losing streak was the second-longest in Oakland history to a 13-decision skid in 1977, and the 14 consecutive games without a victory by an A's starter was the longest such streak since 1997.

Outman (2-1) allowed just four hits, establishing his curveball early in the count to keep the Royals off his fastball.

It was just the fifth time in 14 games an Oakland starter worked as deep as six innings.

"You could tell when he was out there that he wanted to be the guy to give us a chance to win the game," Melvin said.

The A's, held hitless through five innings by Royals right-hander Luke Hochevar (4-7), broke a scoreless tie in the sixth using a small-ball approach and the speed of rookie second baseman Jemile Weeks.

Landon Powell led off the sixth with a clean single to break up the no-hitter. Weeks laid a bunt down the first-base line and beat it out. Actually, replays showed that first baseman Eric Hosmer appeared to get a tag on Weeks before he reached the base.

The umpires conferred, but the call stood.

Powell was forced out at third on David DeJesus' sacrifice attempt. But Weeks stole third with one out -- his first major league stolen base -- and scored the game's first run on Cliff Pennington's single.

Weeks is now 9 for 28 (.321) in eight games since being called up from Triple-A Sacramento and continues to provide a spark as the No. 9 hitter.

"That's pretty much my game, use my legs the best way I can," Weeks said. "(The O.co Coliseum) plays real big, so that's the good route to take right now."

Daric Barton scored Ryan Sweeney with a single in the seventh to provide an important run and make it 2-0.

Oakland mustered just five hits, but they were timely.

"It's tough to go out and know if you give up two runs, you may lose," Outman said. "The difference between tonight and other nights is we got some big hits when we needed them."

The Royals scored a run off Brian Fuentes in the eighth on Alex Gordon's infield single to first. Barton stayed back on the slow bouncer, and Gordon beat him to the bag, as Fuentes failed to cover in time.

But Fuentes escaped further damage by getting Hosmer, the No. 3 hitter, to pop out with runners on the corners. Andrew Bailey delivered a 1-2-3 ninth for his second save.

Outman found his only trouble in the seventh, when his errant pickoff throw allowed Hosmer to go from first to third. After a walk to Billy Butler, Outman retired Mike Moustakas on a pop-out to end the inning.

## **A's update: Struggling Kurt Suzuki still gets in his work despite not being in lineup vs. Kansas City Royals**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Catcher Kurt Suzuki was out of the lineup for the second time in three games, but he still got some work in Wednesday afternoon.

Suzuki stood out at second base taking throws from first baseman Conor Jackson before batting practice.

No, Suzuki isn't making any surprise position changes. He was getting footwork instruction from manager Bob Melvin and bench coach Joel Skinner, two former catchers.

Suzuki would take the throw from Jackson -- allowing Jackson to get some infield work -- then bounce into his throwing stance.

"It's a good way to work on my footwork and try to get some rhythm going into the throw," Suzuki said.

With A's starting pitchers stumbling of late and the team's inconsistent hitting, Suzuki's individual struggles have flown under the radar.

He entered Wednesday's game against the Kansas City Royals hitting just .184 over his past 23 games with 15 strikeouts. Coupled with that, opposing base runners have been successful on 30 of their past 34 stolen base attempts against him.

Some of those can be credited to runners getting good jumps, but many of Suzuki's throws have been off the mark as well.

Melvin was surprised to see Suzuki on the field for early drills before batting practice, and Melvin took the opportunity to work on fundamentals. The two worked on Suzuki keeping his front shoulder closed when throwing.

"I think at times he tries to be too quick," Melvin said. "Sometimes you can get a little out of sync. Some catchers are plodders. Kurt's so quick. He bounces out of there so quickly, (it can be tough) to keep his shoulder closed."

Rich Harden threw the equivalent of two innings in a simulated game, giving up one hit and one walk with three strikeouts. Melvin said it was undecided if Harden would throw another simulated game or head out on a minor league rehab assignment.

"He looked like Rich Harden -- good fastball, good changeup," said catcher Landon Powell, one of four hitters to face Harden.

Center fielder Coco Crisp was out of the lineup with a bruised right heel. It's not believed to be serious, and his status for Thursday's matinee was unknown.

## **Chin Music: Back to basics for Kurt Suzuki; Coco Crisp sits with bruised heel**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 6/15/2011 5:35pm

Covering the A's feels a little like spring training to me right now. With manager Bob Melvin still new on the job, everything he says or does seems newsworthy simply because it's fresh. ... The drills taking place on the infield before batting practice today were certainly unique. Kurt Suzuki was out at second base, taking throws from first baseman Conor Jackson with his catcher's mitt and appearing to work on popping out of a crouch and getting ready to throw. Infield coach Mike Gallego was throwing soft toss to Landon Powell, who was swinging away at home plate and hitting sharp grounders to Jackson. It all looked like one coordinated multi-tasking drill. Suzuki was getting some catcher's work in (Melvin and Joel Skinner, another ex-catcher, were working with him); Jackson was fielding grounders and making throws to second; and Powell was getting some hacks in. ...

—More on Suzuki: With the starting pitching struggles and inconsistent hitting, it's easy to lose sight that Suzuki is really struggling. He's hitting just .184 over his last 23 games and he's thrown out just four of his last 34 base stealers. He's out of the lineup for the second time in three games, and Melvin said the pre-game work was geared toward throwing fundamentals and footwork behind the plate. "It's footwork stuff, keeping himself closed. ... I think at times he tries to be too quick. Sometimes you can get a little out of sync. We wanted to get back to basics, keeping his shoulder closed."

–Rich Harden threw the equivalent of two innings in a simulated game. He faced Ryan Sweeney, Mark Ellis, Landon Powell and Adam Rosales and gave up (by the unofficial press box count) one single with three strikeouts. I haven't talked to Harden yet, but Melvin said he looked good. Melvin wasn't sure if another simulated game or a rehab assignment would be next.

–Coco Crisp is sitting tonight with a bruised heel, but Melvin didn't believe it to be serious.

The lineups:

A's – DeJesus RF, Pennington SS, Matsui DH, Willingham LF, Sweeney CF, Sizemore 3B, Barton 1B, Powell C, Weeks 2B; Outman LHP.

Royals – Gordon LF, Cabrera CF, Hosmer 1B, Francoeur RF, Butler DH, Moustakas 3B, Treanor C, Getz 2B, Escobar SS; Hochevar RHP.

### **Monte Poole: Does A's Bob Melvin represent a change in Billy Beane's managerial philosophy?**

By Monte Poole, Bay Area News Group

Concluding his first postgame news conference at the O.co Coliseum, Bob Melvin ambles into his new office, where two employees with a combined 17 years with the A's sit on leather sofas facing his desk, quietly eating off paper plates.

Melvin reports to neither, but both can influence his job performance and, moreover, both report to his boss.

Melvin plops into his chair, leans back and casually wades into conversation. It's his sixth day as A's manager and he's talking about the challenges he faces. There are many.

His offense is dreadful.

His ace right-hander, Trevor Cahill, has submitted one of the worst performances of the year, a loss Tuesday to Kansas City in which he walked seven batters and struck out none.

One of three ace left-handers, Brett Anderson, is on the disabled list, receiving treatment on his pitching arm. He will miss at least another month.

Another ace lefty, Dallas Braden, already was declared out for the year.

Melvin's team lost four of its first five since he took the job, including his home debut. This came after a nine-game losing streak prior to his getting the job last week and meeting the club in Chicago as an interim replacement for Bob Geren, who was dismissed after four-plus seasons.

In the first of 16 weeks on trial, the signals pointing to Melvin's failure are imposing.

"I can't look at it that way," he says. "It's important that you win games, ultimately. At the end of the day, it's about winning ballgames. We have to get back to being confident. At this point, it's a process. We have had some injuries, starting pitchers in particular, and that goes a long way (in determining) the psyche of a team. Confidence-wise, your starter goes a long way in how good you feel when you go out there. Not that we don't feel that way with the guys we have right now, but there's a little more pressure on some younger guys.

"We've got to fight, which we're doing. We've got to get better with our defense. And we have to do the little things right, get the intangibles right."

Despite the presence of assistant general manager David Forst and director of baseball operations Farhad Zaidi -- both lieutenants of general manager Billy Beane -- Melvin is speaking comfortably with someone he'd met seconds earlier. No stammering, no furtive glances toward Forst and Zaidi to check for visual cues or approval.

It was enough to lead me to believe Melvin has the latitude to be his own man, for the most part, in a position where the concept of autonomy had been philosophically excised.

For more than a decade, through three managers -- Art Howe, Ken Macha and Geren -- the A's have operated as dictated by Beane. He has been at the center of the success and failures. If Billy's efficient early years as a G.M. depicted him as bold and innovative, unsuccessful recent years find him rebooting and perhaps drifting back toward convention.

He seems to have developed a renewed appreciation for the brains and instincts of the manager, in which case the organization is destined to fall in line with the notion of loosening the collar of the man in the dugout.

"Billy's been great about that -- and helpful if I have some lineup questions," Melvin says. "He doesn't come to me with the lineups. I go to him at times and say, 'What do you think about this?'"

"Dave and Billy have been very supportive and there for me regarding any questions I may have. They obviously have a little bit more background with these guys. So I'm going to lean on not only the coaches but everybody who has been here."

The Beane-Melvin relationship and the apparent mutual respect would seem to provide Melvin an opening to parlay this 99-game interim period into a contract beyond Sept. 28. He's winning friends in the clubhouse.

Melvin has managed two teams, Seattle and Arizona, leading both to one 90-win season apiece. He was voted N.L. Manager of the Year in 2007 with the Diamondbacks.

Asked to describe his preferred style of play, he responds with a thoughtful answer: "Are you talking about this particular team, or any team?"

Before I could recast, he adds: "I have to acclimate to the style the team can play -- and I don't think we're going to sit around and play for three-run homers. We're going to have to be aggressive on the bases. We're going to have to play better defense, obviously. We're going to have to do situational things right, getting (runners) over and getting them in; we've done that OK to an extent. We're going to have to battle and put pressure on (opponents) over the course of the game."

The odds are long indeed, certainly improbable, perhaps impossible. But there is no sign Melvin will throw up his hands and surrender to the circumstances or to the boss.

### **Newhouse: Daughter seeks recognition for the unknown Finley**

By Dave Newhouse, Oakland Tribune Columnist

Nancy Finley keeps anticipating some form of recognition for her father -- from the Oakland A's, from Major League Baseball, from Cooperstown -- somewhere!

Nancy is a second cousin to Charles Finley, who brought the A's to Oakland.

Nancy is the only child of Carl Finley, who oversaw the A's undermanned operations in Oakland, while his controversial cousin, Charles, remained in LaPorte, Ind., after reneging on his initial promise to buy a home here.

Carl and Charles are first cousins, the offspring of brothers. Nancy realizes that Charles -- don't call him Charlie, which sounds so jolly, which he wasn't -- is more famous than her father, the publicity-avoiding Carl.

But she believes her father was an unsung hero, a behind-the-scenes adhesive to the A's winning three consecutive World Series from 1972-74. And that's why she desires some belated appreciation extended to Carl, who died in 2002.

She's just not sure what.

"I wish the A's would have an honor for him," she said. "Of, if the A's can't do this, then suggest a nomination to the Hall of Fame, which includes executives. Honor him some way. Charlie was from afar. Dad was here at every game."

Nancy wonders why the A's -- her dad's employer from 1962 to 1985, in Kansas City and Oakland -- haven't named something after him. A clubhouse? A dining club? An interview room?

And, furthermore, if the name "Haas" is painted, justifiably, on the outfield wall at the Coliseum, why not "Finley," because there can't be the former without the latter? And painting "Finley" on the wall would honor two men.

Following a divorce, Carl raised Nancy since she was 12.

"He was loving, sweet, had integrity," said Nancy, now 50. "He took me to museums, paid my way through college. I could talk to him about anything, except finances."

Carl was an educated man with a master's degree and a law school certificate, though he didn't take the bar exam. His cousin wanted him in Kansas City, and so Carl resigned as a Dallas high school principal.

Carl smoothed the ownership transition from Finley to the Haases, who kept him on the payroll until he was asked to retire in 1985.

"Dad was the mentor to everyone," Nancy said. "He was second-in-command to Charlie. Dad wore a lot of hats, but he quit in '71. I remember a big blowup. Then Charlie asked him to come back after realizing that no one else could hold things together."

She's convinced the relationship between Carl and Charles was amicable.

"Charlie trusted him; they were friends," she said. "Charlie called him every morning; he bounced everything off Dad. He'd tell Charlie if he didn't think something would work. Charlie would listen to him. And Dad was really good at predicting what Charlie would say."

Nancy is married, has three children, and lives in Dublin. She has a mini-museum of A's memorabilia at her home, including her father's three World Series rings.

She approached the Schott-owned A's about honoring her dad while he was alive, and was told they only did that when someone was deceased.

After Carl died, she approached the A's again, this time with more vigor, and Nancy's daughter, Taylor, threw out the first pitch before a game.

But Nancy noted that the Wolff-Fisher-owned A's honored longtime public address announcer Roy Steele after he retired because of illness.

"And the Schott ownership rescinded my dad's lifetime tickets to A's games," she added. "They said it was financial."

Would Carl Finley, if he were alive, wish to be honored?

"I know he would," Nancy said. "He was from the school where you don't ask to be honored, but he felt people should be acknowledged if they're good."

C'mon, A's, play fair.

### **Struggling A's eke out home win for Bob Melvin**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

-- Even though it looked for a time as if the A's slow-starting offense might not make it possible Wednesday night, Bob Melvin earned his first home victory as Oakland's manager.

The A's didn't record a hit against Kansas City starter Luke Hochevar for the first five innings, and even though Oakland starter Josh Outman was pitching nearly as well, the team appeared in danger of falling for the 14th time in 15 games. But Oakland clawed for small-ball single runs in the sixth and seventh innings and beat the Royals 2-1.

"A win is good," Melvin said simply when asked for his introductory comments the game.

Outman worked seven scoreless innings to earn the first victory by an A's starter since May 29. The 11-game losing streak by the starters was the second longest in Oakland history after a 13-game streak in 1977.

"He was aggressive, really aggressive," Melvin said. "You could tell he wanted to be the guy to give us a chance to win the game."

Outman said he relished being in a pitchers' duel with Hochevar, and he wanted to make sure he got deep, knowing that the bullpen was taxed Tuesday night, when Trevor Cahill went 4 1/3 innings.

In the sixth inning, catcher Landon Powell, getting his second start in three games, picked up the first hit off Hochevar. After Jemile Weeks' bunt single, David DeJesus tried another bunt to advance the runners but instead got Powell thrown out at third. Weeks stole third, and Cliff Pennington followed with a base hit to right center.

The following inning, Ryan Sweeney singled to left, went to second on a sacrifice by Scott Sizemore and came home on a base hit to left-center by Daric Barton.

Melvin has mentioned that he's in favor of small ball, particularly with the A's personnel and with the big ballpark. Weeks said he's all for that approach, saying he already has seen some teammates hit the ball far - but not quite enough.

"It doesn't go out real easy here," he said. "So that's a good route to take right now."

The A's got some fine defense, - left fielder Josh Willingham's jump at the wall to catch Matt Treanor's fifth-inning drive and Sweeney's sprinting, over-the-shoulder catch at the track in center on a shot by Jeff Francoeur in the seventh.

The Royals' one run, off Brian Fuentes in the eighth, came courtesy of less-than-perfect defense. With two outs and a man at third, Alex Gordon hit a bouncer to first. Barton fielded it and considered tossing it to Fuentes, but the pitcher was a step or two behind Gordon. Barton took it himself and was late getting to the bag; Alcides Escobar scored on the play.

Melvin said both Fuentes and Barton were "a little bit" at fault on what was ruled a single.

Outman had a throwing error in the third, an errant pickoff attempt that gave Oakland a league-high 53 errors.

Center fielder Coco Crisp sat out with a bruised right heel, but shouldn't miss more than a day or two, according to Melvin.

Hideki Matsui got the 500th walk of his big-league career.

### **A's catcher Kurt Suzuki given more rest**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

**Kurt Suzuki** did not start for the second time in three games Wednesday as manager **Bob Melvin** tries to get the A's catcher more rest, but Suzuki showed up for early work, so Melvin had him take throws and make throws - at second base.

"He wants me to be ready to play there," Suzuki joked.

Suzuki had his catcher's mitt on the whole time, and Melvin said the drills were about footwork. He believes because Suzuki is so quick and athletic behind the plate, he's coming out a bit fast when throwing to second, which means he opens up too much on his throws. Melvin wants his front shoulder more closed.

Two starts off in three games generally would be unimaginable for Suzuki, who leads AL catchers with 55 starts, but he's hitting .184 with 15 strikeouts in his past 23 games and opposing runners have been successful in 30 of their past 34 stolen base attempts.

Melvin said that Wednesday's decision was a mix of things, including wanting to keep Suzuki fresh with an afternoon game today, plus an opposing starter, **Luke Hochevar**, who doesn't fare as well against left-handed hitters (.299) as right (.219). Backup catcher **Landon Powell** is a switch hitter.

Suzuki said Melvin texted him in the morning to let him know he wasn't starting, and as much as Suzuki wants to play every day, he understands the logic.

"He told me I'd started 27 of the past 29 games - and that's kind of a lot," Suzuki said. "This is definitely a good time to get fresh again with a few days off. It made sense."

**Rehab stints: Rich Harden** threw 42 pitches in a two-inning simulated game, allowing one hit and a walk and striking out three.

Melvin said, "He looks terrific to me," and pitching coach **Ron Romanick** said that Harden's most important pitch, his changeup, was especially good.

Harden is likely to make the first of two or three rehab starts at Triple-A Sacramento on Monday.

Second baseman **Mark Ellis** (hamstring) will go on a rehab assignment to Sacramento this weekend and is eligible to come off the disabled list Wednesday.

### Leading off

**Power drought:** Daric Barton is homerless in his first 62 games this season as a first baseman, the second longest homerless streak by a first baseman since 1987. Detroit's Sean Casey went 63 games without a homer to start the 2007.

### Drumbeat: Rich Harden looks good in simulated game, and other A's info

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 6/15/2011 5:03pm

Rich Harden threw 40-plus pitches in a rehab game, and depending how you were scoring, he gave up either one or two singles (I'd argue one of those probably would have been a lineout were there fielders behind Harden). Ryan Sweeney had the one clean single, and Adam Rosales walked, but Harden struck out three and got three flyouts in two innings of work.

"He looks terrific to me," manager Bob Melvin said, raving about Harden's explosive fastball.

As I mentioned in this morning's paper, Harden is likely to start on Monday in a rehab assignment at Triple-A Sacramento. He is being brought back as a starter, general manager Billy Beane told me on Monday. That only makes sense: The A's have only two members of the Opening Day rotation still in operation.

It was an usual sight here right before Harden's simulated game: Melvin was working with Kurt Suzuki at second base, with Suzuki taking throws with his catcher's mitt - at second. It was footwork drills, but Suzuki did look as if he can turn a mean double play even with his big ole catcher's mitt.

Melvin was surprised that Suzuki, who has the day off, was out for early work. (Suzuki is always the first player at the park, though, even on days off.) So he didn't want him donning full gear, and he decided maybe just some light work. Melvin, a former catcher, said that he believes Suzuki is trying to be a little too quick on his throws to second. That's in part, Melvin said, because Suzuki is so athletic and moves so well in general - he's quicker than most catchers from the get go. But that can make him open up too fast, and Melvin wants to see his front shoulder more closed.

This is the second start off in three games for Suzuki, which would have been unthinkable under former manager Bob Geren. Melvin said he wants to keep Suzuki fresh and he wants to involve Landon Powell more, and find Powell opportunities to shine. This move was a little of all of that, Melvin said - he doesn't want Suzuki to wear down, and tomorrow's a day game, plus Kansas City starter Luke Hochevar doesn't fare as well against left-handed hitters and Powell is a switch hitter.

Coco Crisp is out with a heel injury that is not expected to keep him out of more than one or two games, Melvin said. It's a bruise, nothing of major significance, but he had it last night and it didn't improve, so Ryan Sweeney is in center tonight.

Here's the lineup behind Josh Outman: DeJesus rf, Pennington ss, Matsui dh, Willingham lf, Sweeney cf, Sizemore 3b, Barton 1b, Powell c, Weeks 2b

## **You can't spell it, but they can feel it**

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

Back in the day, before we were well-versed on oblique strains, patella contusions and bilateral leg weaknesses, ballplayers simply pulled muscles, rubbed on a little Bengay and got back on the field.

While trying to avoid a limp.

It used to be that a sprained ankle or pulled hammy was a real bummer.

Now you've got to beware of an intercostal strain, shoulder subluxation and strained flexor pronator.

Which begs the question: If you don't know you have a flexor pronator, can you strain it?

Disabled lists throughout baseball are filled with injuries far more complex than your basic ouchie. Oakland's Brandon McCarthy has a right scapula stress reaction, and pitchers Tyson Ross of the A's and Brian Wilson of the Giants have dealt with oblique strains, baseball's most trendy injury.

It involves muscles on either side of the abdomen used to help rotate the hips, and strains can happen on a funny swing or pitch. Luckily for Ross, he was diagnosed with a Grade 2 oblique strain, which is moderate. A Grade 3 is more severe and would have shelved him far longer.

Derek Jeter was placed on the DL on Tuesday with a Grade 1 (mild) right calf strain. Another shortstop, Jimmy Rollins, suggested Jeter is "going to get healed in the offseason." Rollins was speaking from experience, having missed a big chunk of 2010 with a strained calf.

Then again, Rollins' strain was a Grade 2.

Through it all, Dodgers general manager Ned Colletti had to get something off his chest, and it wasn't a bruise.

In a radio interview, Colletti questioned the "thought process" of some DL assignments, saying, "The disabled list used to be some place a player never wanted to go.

And now it might be a safe haven, it might be a couple of weeks' vacation."

Colletti later clarified his comments, saying he wasn't denying players were trying to return to health, adding his vacation line was "in jest." But injuries are no joking matter even if they're tougher to pronounce and spell than injuries from yesteryear.

## **Outman, A's come up big against Royals**

By Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Royals pitcher Luke Hochevar had a no-hitter through five innings, but it was the A's Josh Outman who came out on top Wednesday night.

Outman pitched seven scoreless innings and held the Royals to four hits as the A's came away with a 2-1 victory in the Coliseum to even the series and give interim manager Bob Melvin his first win at home.

"He was really aggressive," Melvin said of Outman. "You could tell when he went out there that he wanted to be the guy that gave us a chance to win the game."

Outman (2-1) did just that as he became the first A's starter to win since Guillermo Moscoso topped the Orioles on May 29.

The lefty kept the Royals lineup off-balance all night, but also benefitted from some timely defense and aggressive offense from his club. Left fielder Josh Willingham robbed Matt Treanor of a home run in the fifth, and the A's used small-ball to solve Hochevar (4-7) on a night that featured a classic pitching duel.

"You start thinking about [Hochevar throwing a no-hitter], you start putting pressure on yourself," Outman said. "It's exciting to be in a pitchers' duel. Anyone on this staff is capable of going with anyone on another staff in that scenario. To me it's exciting. It's just a matter of time before we broke it open."

The A's did just that in the sixth, led mostly by rookie Jemile Weeks. Brandon Powell, who started at catcher while Kurt Suzuki was given the day off, broke up Hochevar's no-hitter with a leadoff single before Weeks reached on a bunt down the first-base line that stirred some discussion after he beat out the throw.

"It looked like there were 90 guys over there," Royals manager Ned Yost said. "The first-base coach, [Chris Getz], Hosmer, the runner and I lost track of the ball. I thought the ball was gonna go to Getz and then Hoz cut it off. I never saw Hoz tag him, but I think the replay showed that he did. Hoz said, 'I tagged him,' and the umpires got together but they didn't see it either. There was a bunch of people over there."

Weeks and the A's took advantage of the call in their favor. The speedy second baseman, who has aptly filled in for an injured Mark Ellis, advanced to second on David DeJesus' fielder's choice that got lead runner Powell. Weeks, playing in just his eighth Major League game, then swiped his first career stolen base before coming around to score on Cliff Pennington's single to center field.

"That's pretty much my game," Weeks said. "I'm not a power guy or anything like that. I use my legs the best way I can and that's the way it's been happening for me so far. I realize this field plays real good. I think that's the route we're taking and I think that's a good route to take right now."

The A's tagged Hochevar for another run in the seventh on Daric Barton's RBI single that proved to be the difference on a night when both pitchers were dealing. Outman came back out for the seventh and got into a self-induced jam after a throwing error put a runner on third. Even after walking the potential tying run, Outman evaded trouble when he got Mike Moustakas to pop out to end the threat.

Brian Fuentes gave up a run in eighth, but Andrew Bailey came in in the ninth and earned his second save of the season for the A's, who found themselves coming up with the big hit for once -- something they struggled with during a recent slump.

"With the losing streak we were on, we couldn't quite get the big hit when we needed it," Outman said. "It's tough to know that if you go out and give up two runs, you may lose. The difference between tonight and other nights is we got some big hits when we needed them. I think that's going to be a trend now."

"One big hit here or there changes the outcome of the game. That's what we got tonight and I think we're going to start seeing more of that and we can get new momentum rolling in our direction."

### **Gonzalez, Francis set to battle in series finale**

By Quinn Roberts / Special to MLB.com

With a laundry list of injuries to the A's starting rotation, Gio Gonzalez remains one of the most experienced pitchers on the staff.

It will be his job in Thursday's rubber game against the Royals to continue the A's winning streak after a 2-1 win on Wednesday.

The win marked only the A's second victory in 15 games.

"It's just a little bit of a down period, but success breeds confidence. When we get a couple of wins under our belt, I think the confidence will grow," A's interim manager Bob Melvin said. "It's not for a lack of effort, it's not for a lack of fight, because we do continue to come back every game and put pressure on the team. I do like that attribute.

"You can't worry about what's happened in the past. We're trying to simplify it and get some wins under our belt and move forward."

Battling his command throughout Saturday's start against the White Sox in Chicago, Gonzalez issued a career high seven walks in just 5 1/3 innings, along with throwing two wild pitches and hitting a batter.

The loss made it three in a row for the left-hander, who is 5-5 on the season with a 2.67 ERA.

"It's almost to a point where you can't even explain it," Gonzalez said after the game. "I felt like it was a lot better than what the numbers showed. I felt like I gave it all I got. I felt like I was in the game. Not mechanics, just more about composure."

Meanwhile, Royals lefty Jeff Francis has begun to hit his stride, winning three of his last four decisions and throwing six or more innings in his last seven starts.

On Friday against the Angels, the veteran went 6 1/3 innings, giving up two runs on eight hits for the win. Improving to 3-6 on the season with a 4.40 ERA, Francis also walked one and struck out three.

#### **Royals: Gordon doing well in leadoff role**

- Finding success after being placed in the leadoff spot 26 games ago, Alex Gordon has been happy with his production.

"It's been good, definitely different than the three-hole," Gordon said. "I feel myself taking more pitches and trying to work counts more, trying to get on for the guys behind me. Bunting, even though I've had only one base-hit bunt, and basically doing whatever I can to get on base."

Gordon has reached base safely in 24 of the 26 games on a hit or a walk after being placed in the role.

#### **Athletics: Harden pitches in simulated game**

- Right-hander Rich Harden threw his first simulated game prior to Wednesday's matchup between the Royals and A's.

Sidelined this season with a strained lat muscle, the righty signed a one-year, \$1.5 million contract with the A's in the offseason.

"He looks terrific to me," Melvin said. "I've seen him many times over the years. One thing about Rich is he has that exploding fastball that's very difficult to track. That's a unique attribute.

"He's very difficult to hit, and when he throws the ball over the plate he's really good. We're encouraged. This is just another step forward toward getting him back here."

#### **Worth noting**

- Mark Ellis, who has been out of the A's lineup with a strained right hamstring, ran the bases before Wednesday's game and took part in fielding drills.

- Before Josh Outman's win on Wednesday against the Royals, no A's starter had won since May 29, when Guillermo Moscoso beat the Orioles.
- Kansas City starters Bruce Chen and Kyle Davies, both on the 15-day disabled list, will each get at least one more minor league rehab start on Saturday. Chen will start for Triple-A Omaha, while Davies will make a rehab start for the Double-A Northwest Arkansas Naturals.

### **Melvin's arrival might be a summer spark for A's**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- One glance at the American League West standings suggests a dim outlook for the A's, who have lost 13 of their last 14 contests and sit eight games back of first place with 68 already played.

But what could easily be mounting frustration is anything but, thanks to a manager that has restored a positive mindset into Oakland's core.

Newly named skipper Bob Melvin, hired to replace Bob Geren on Thursday, has taken over a crowded disabled list and a promising offense that has mostly underperformed, but he hasn't shied away from such duties. Rather, he's infused a newfound momentum with which the club hopes to carry into the grind of summer.

"It was a tough situation before, but we have a fresh start so we're going to try to build on it moving forward," Cliff Pennington said. "It's still early getting to know him, but he's behind us and getting us fired up and ready to play."

That very sentiment was on display from the get-go in Chicago, where Melvin took over last week and proceeded to manage a 1-3 series against the White Sox. The results that read on the scoreboard weren't desirable, but the loquacious Melvin refused to call the set a failure.

"I wasn't at the beginning of the trip, but the effort for me in the four games was great," Melvin said after the series. "It's not like I feel like I have to flush these four games out, because these guys played hard, and I think they're building on something. I think these four games actually ended up being a good thing."

Whether that holds true remains to be seen, but Melvin's presence is significant to a ballclub that was very much viewed as a division title contender in Spring Training. A's players have embraced his leadership style and his focus on winning with the basics.

"He's definitely a good players' coach," hurler Gio Gonzalez said. "He communicates with us a lot, and he's interactive. I think he's going to bring a new high energy to our group of guys."

"He proved it a couple times in Chicago when the eighth inning came along. We were losing, but he was making positive remarks, and it was exciting. He had the whole bench rallying. We were excited to go out there and perform for him."

Gonzalez received his vote of confidence early from Melvin, who elected to send the left-hander out for the sixth inning in Saturday's loss despite command struggles and a 107-pitch count.

"It's a motivational thing for me, when your coach is supporting you and behind you no matter what," Gonzalez said. "That lets me know that he's there to help you and help the team win."

The A's know that no amount of positive vibes is going to write a victory without the help of consistent performance, but at the very least Melvin has assured his club that support will keep coming. Sooner, rather than later, they'd like to reward him with the wins.

"I think Bob Melvin is -- not just to me but to the rest of the players, the rest of the team -- giving us a lot of positive beliefs and attitude," Hideki Matsui said through translator Roger Kahlon.

Since Melvin's arrival, Matsui is 6-for-18 with two home runs and six RBIs, including one in each of the six games following a disappointing 4-for-40 stretch over his previous 12 contests.

"I think Bob's going to do something new for us this season," Gonzalez said, "and hopefully a change comes once we get going."

"The past is behind us," Andrew Bailey said. "We know where we stand in the standings. All we can do is kind of come together and make strides to get where we need to be."

### **Crisp's injured heel gives outfielders a shot**

By Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's interim manager Bob Melvin said the toughest aspect of his new job has been juggling the platoon of right fielders -- David DeJesus, Conor Jackson and Ryan Sweeney -- he has at his disposal. Center fielder Coco Crisp helped make Melvin's task a little easier on Wednesday.

Crisp was out of the starting lineup with a bruised right heel that Melvin said was bothering the outfielder on Tuesday as well. While Crisp played through the injury, the A's skipper decided to give him a day off on Wednesday and hopes it will only be a one-day thing, but didn't rule out keeping Crisp on the bench an extra day.

"He's a pretty important guy for us," Melvin said. "So hopefully, with the day game [Thursday], he'll play."

Because Melvin has reintroduced Hideki Matsui to the everyday lineup as the designated hitter, it has limited the chance to get the extra outfielders into the lineup, but that changed on Wednesday with Crisp sidelined.

Sweeney started in center in place of Crisp, while DeJesus played right field and assumed the leadoff role.

Sweeney has cooled off this month, batting .148 in 29 at-bats after hitting .365 in May. He has also gone 149 straight games without an error, which is the fourth-longest in A's history for an outfielder.

Meanwhile, DeJesus, who is riding a Major League outfielder-leading 294-game errorless streak, was happy to again get the chance to take the field against his former team.

"I've been trying to get David in games here," Melvin said. "The DH situation affects him a little bit in that you can rotate somebody through there. ... That's affected him a little bit. He not only wants to play, but he wants to play against his former teammates, too."

### **Harden, Melvin pleased with simulated session**

OAKLAND -- Rich Harden is starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel.

The righty, who signed a one-year, \$1.5 million contract with Oakland in the offseason, has been sidelined all season with a strained lat muscle, but threw his first simulated game prior to Wednesday's matchup between the A's and the Royals.

Oakland interim manager Bob Melvin liked what he saw from Harden.

"He looks terrific to me," Melvin said. "I've seen him many times over the years. One thing about Rich is he has that exploding fastball that's very difficult to track. That's a unique attribute.

"He's very difficult to hit, and when he throws the ball over the plate he's really good. We're encouraged. This is just another step forward toward getting him back here."

Harden worked on that menacing fastball during the simulated game and was pleased with his progress to this point. He tossed two innings and threw more than 40 pitches, mixing up his fastball and his off-speed pitches against live hitters.

"They're coming along," Harden said. "I still got to fine-tune some things, but I think that will come. I'm a little better with my command on my fastball, but off-speed pitches were coming along. I'm pleased with the way it went, definitely."

As for Harden's next step, that remains to be determined. The righty feels he doesn't need another simulated game and is ready for a rehab stint with Triple-A Sacramento, but still needs to discuss it with Melvin on Thursday before a decision is reached.

While it's unclear whether Harden, who has been a starter for most of his career, will join the A's rotation, his imminent return -- barring any unforeseen setbacks -- could be a huge boost for a pitching staff that has seen four of its starters go down with injuries. Along with Dallas Braden, who is out for the season following shoulder surgery last month, righties Brandon McCarthy and Tyson Ross are currently on the 15-day disabled list and lefty Brett Anderson recently received a platelet rich plasma injection in his throwing elbow that will sideline him at least six weeks.

"First thing first is to get [Harden] healthy," Melvin said. "Any time you can get a talent like him back in whatever role, I think everybody will feel good about that."

### **Worth noting**

- Catcher Kurt Suzuki was given Wednesday off and Landon Powell started at backstop for the A's against the Royals. Melvin has said he wants to get Powell more playing time, and with right-hander Luke Hochevar on the mound, Melvin thought Powell was the better matchup.

"You try to find a pitcher that profiles to his swing path, and like I said earlier, I don't want to run [Powell] out against Roger Clemens every time he has to play because that's not a great feeling. I actually knew that feeling," said Melvin, a former catcher. "I want him to feel good about being able to prepare for a game."

- Second baseman Mark Ellis, who has been out of the lineup with a strained right hamstring, ran the bases before the game and took part in fielding drills. Ellis is on the 15-day disabled list and rookie Jemile Weeks has filled in for him. Weeks is hitting .320 and hasn't committed an error in seven games entering Wednesday.

### **Outman leads A's past Royals, 2-1**

Associated Press

OAKLAND — Josh Outman allowed four hits over seven innings and the A's gave new manager Bob Melvin his first home victory by beating the Kansas City Royals, 2-1, on Wednesday night.

Cliff Pennington and Daric Barton had RBI singles off starter Luke Hochevar (4-7), who took a no-hitter into the sixth inning before it all fell apart.

The scuffling A's had lost three straight and 13 of 14 in a streak that began under Bob Geren. Melvin improved to 2-4 since taking over for the fired Geren.

Outman (2-1) struck out two and walked two in the deepest outing of his major league career without allowing a run. Andrew Bailey pitched a perfect ninth for his second save in three chances.

The only noise the Royals made all game came far too late.

Alcides Escobar had three hits, including a double off reliever Brian Fuentes in the eighth, to tie his career high with an eight-game hitting streak. He scored a batter later when Alex Gordon singled to trim Oakland's lead to 2-1.

Melvin came out for a brief conference with Fuentes, who then allowed Melky Cabrera's single to put runners on first and third with two outs. Fuentes rallied by getting Eric Hosmer to foul out along the spacious third-base line.

Neither team had many chances in this one.

David DeJesus sent Hochevar's third pitch of the game off the pitcher's right elbow, redirecting the ball to second baseman Chris Getz for an easy groundout. Hochevar was inspected by a team trainer and threw a few light tosses before staying in the game.

The hard-throwing right-hander showed no effects from the bruising shot. Hideki Matsui's two walks were the only time an A's player reached base until Landon Powell's line-drive single to center leading off the sixth.

Then it all came unraveled.

Jemile Weeks followed with a bunt up the first-base line, Hochevar fielded the ball and tossed it to first baseman Eric Hosmer hustling back to the bag. TV replays appeared to show Hosmer tagging Weeks just before he reached the base, but he was called safe by first base umpire Jeff Nelson.

After DeJesus bunted into a fielder's choice, Weeks stole third base without a throw. Then Pennington drove him in with a single to give Oakland a 1-0 lead.

As bad as the Royals were offensively, Oakland was even better defensively.

Matt Treanor sent a shot off Outman deep to left field in the fourth that seemed headed for the seats. Josh Willingham backpedaled to the wall and leaped up to catch the ball near the top of the wall, robbing Treanor of extra bases and possibly a home run.

Ryan Sweeney provided another big defensive play for the A's, running down Jeff Francoeur's soaring shot to deep center in the seventh with a runner on first. Sweeney followed with a leadoff single in the bottom of the inning, and Barton drove him in two batters later to put Oakland ahead 2-0.

NOTES: Oakland RHP Rich Harden, on the DL since straining a muscle behind his right shoulder early in spring training, threw about 40 pitches in a simulated game before batting practice. He hopes to begin a rehab assignment in the minors as early as next week. ... Athletics CF Coco Crisp sat out the game with a sore right heel. He expects to be back in the lineup Thursday. ... Royals LHP Bruce Chen (left lat strain) will make a rehab start for Triple-A Omaha on Saturday, and RHP Kyle Davies (right shoulder inflammation) will make a rehab start Saturday for Double-A Northwest Arkansas.

### **Gutierrez: A's find winning formula vs. Royals**

Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com

OAKLAND - So you want to know how the A's are going to get back in this American League West race?

Pop the videocassette of the A's 2-1 victory over Kansas City into the VCR and take notes. And yes, I realize I used "videocassette" and "VCR." This game was a throwback, and the way the A's won it was most definitely old school.

*This* was how the A's were supposed to play this season - quality starting pitching, strong defense and timely hitting. On the day a trailer of the upcoming "Moneyball" movie hit the Web, the A's went small ball.

"We'll start rolling here," said A's starter Josh Outman, who tossed seven innings of shutout ball at the Royals while scattering four hits in becoming the first A's starting pitcher to get a win since Guillermo Moscoso beat Baltimore on May 29. The 11-game losing skid by A's starters was the second-longest such streak in Oakland history.

"We were in a little lull with our starting pitching," Outman added. "We were all putting too much pressure on ourselves. This team's all right. We're going to start winning some ballgames."

Easy there, champ. Isn't this the same outfit that had lost 13 of its previous 14 games to fall a season-high 12 games under .500?

Indeed. But check this out - despite going just 2-5 since June 8, the last-place A's have actually picked up one game on the first-place Texas Rangers. And still, the A's have to keep from scoreboard watching from here on out. At least for the next few weeks.

They have to concentrate on the task at hand. Winning the little battles, pitch by pitch, at-bat by at-bat, inning by inning, game by game, series by series. The deficit will then take care of itself. Besides, the A's have pitching help on the horizon with the healing Tyson Ross, Brandon McCarthy and gulp, Rich Harden, who might be on a rehab assignment at triple-A Sacramento next Monday.

"My opening statement is: a win is good," cracked interim manager Bob Melvin. "Questions?"

OK, then, is this the formula you have to use to get back in this thing, I asked him.

"And be aggressive," Melvin said. "We played some small ball. We were getting no-hit. We had some bunts, (Jemile) Weeks steals third. We have to have an aggressive mindset.

"That's the way we have to play."

Oh yeah, did I mention the A's were getting no-hit by Luke Hochevar entering the sixth inning?

You could question Melvin for bunting with the slowest position player on the team in Landon Powell at second base. But you can't have any qualms over his giving his blessings to the speedy Weeks on the basepaths.

Weeks dropped a bunt down the first-base line and benefitted from a blown call by umpire Jeff Nelson when replays showed Eric Hosmer tagging Weeks before he hit the bag.

Two batters later, Weeks swiped third base.

"That's pretty much my game," Weeks said. "I use my legs the best way I can."

So about that small-ball, manufacturing runs-style of play?

"That's the route we're taking," he said. "That's a good route to take right now."

Actually, it's the only route the A's should take right now.

### **A's Harden 'felt fine' after simulated game**

**Paul Gutierrez**, CSNCalifornia.com

OAKLAND - Oft-injured Rich Harden looked comfortable on the mound Wednesday in his first simulated game since going on the disabled list in spring training.

The right-hander threw 40-plus pitches over two innings and faced four batters - Ryan Sweeney, Mark Ellis, Landon Powell and Adam Rosales - two times each, giving up a single to Sweeney.

"He looked good," Powell said. "He looked normal, like Rich Harden. Good fastball. Good change-up."

Harden also said he felt fine after striking out three and walking one.

The next step for Harden, who's been shelved with a right shoulder strain? Potentially another simulated game or a rehab start with Triple-A Sacramento. Harden said Tuesday he hoped to begin a rehab stint with the River Cats by Monday. With the A's rotation ravaged by injury - Dallas Braden is lost for the season while Brett Anderson, Brandon McCarthy and Brett Anderson are all on the D.L. - it's evident Harden is being stretched out to be a starter.

"He's been a starter for the most part," of his career, said A's interim manager Bob Melvin. "We've got to get him healthy first."

## **MINOR LEAGUE NEWS**

### **No Joshin' around: Donaldson smacks 2 homers**

By Kyle Tucker / Sacramento River Cats

Sacramento continued its hot hitting on the road Wednesday night by putting up 11 runs and winning their third consecutive game at Salt Lake. Led by Josh Donaldson's pair of home runs and solid pitching by Travis Banwart, the River Cats were victorious 11-5 over the Bees.

For the second time in as many nights, the Sacramento offense jumped all over Salt Lake starting pitching and got out to an early lead.

In the month of June, Sacramento has scored 63 runs in seven road games (9.0 runs per game) versus 34 runs in seven home games (4.8 runs per game).

The River Cats got the scoring started in the second inning on a Matt Carson sacrifice fly that scored Kevin Kouzmanoff. Chris Carter then walked and advanced on a wild pitch by Salt Lake starter Matt Palmer. Michael Taylor drove in Carter with a line drive to right field for his 19th RBI of the season.

With those two runs, the River Cats have now scored 74 runs in the second inning of games this season. That's 27 more runs than they have scored in any other inning.

Sacramento tacked on two more runs in the third on a two-run double by catcher Josh Donaldson, scoring Wes Timmons and Eric Sogard. In Donaldson's next at-bat in the fifth, he homered on a high fly ball to center field for his eighth of the year. His solo shot gave the River Cats a 5-0 advantage.

The Bees answered with one of their own in the bottom half of the inning. Salt Lake designated hitter Paul McNulty hit a three-run shot off Banwart, shrinking the lead to just two.

Banwart pitched 6.1 innings and gave up four runs on seven hits while striking out five and earning his third win.

Sacramento added three more runs for insurance in the eighth with Donaldson's second homer of the night, a three-run shot and one more run in the ninth on a solo blast by Michael Taylor.

Donaldson is the seventh River Cats player with a multi-home run game and second with six RBIs in a game this season. His nine home runs are good for fourth on the team.

River Cats reliever Justin Souza made his first 2010 appearance out of the bullpen. Souza threw 1.2 innings, allowing no runs on one hit and struck out one.

Sacramento looks for the four-game sweep Thursday night before coming home to Raley Field on Friday for a series against rival Fresno. The River Cats will send right-hander Yadel Marti (4-1, 4.92) to the mound against righty Ryan Ketchner (3-2, 4.00).

### **RockHounds allows 18 hits, 5 errors against Frisco**

Oscar LeRoy, Midland Reporter-Telegram Midland Reporter-Telegram |

Tommy Mendonca had such a great four-game series at Citibank Ballpark, it was probably sad for him to say goodbye to Midland -- at least for the first half of the Texas League season -- after Wednesday night's game against the Midland RockHounds.

The Frisco third baseman capped off a great series against the RockHounds by going 3-for-4 with a triple, three RBI, two runs scored and two walks to lead the RoughRiders to a 14-7 victory at on a hot and breezy night at Citibank Ballpark.

Mendonca finished the series going 13 for 18 at the plate with four walks, and he helped the RoughRiders take three of four games in this series and send the RockHounds to their sixth loss in the eight-game homestand.

"It's a different ballpark than our ballpark, and this ballpark plays faster," said Mendonca, who's hitting .329 this season. "We know if we put good wood on a ball and if it's on the ground, it could get through. It's just about being comfortable right now."

While Mendonca enjoyed a big series, the rest of the RoughRiders joined in on the hit party, hitting .387 in the series, including 18 hits on Wednesday night.

"We're just having great at-bats," Mendonca said. "We're laying off a lot of pitches we used to swing at early in the season. We're becoming a little more disciplined, which is helping out a lot."

It didn't help the RockHounds that they booted around the baseball. The RockHounds committed five errors, four by shortstop Grant Green.

"We work hard on our defense," Midland manager Steve Scarsone said. "Our fielders take pride in their defense, and it's frustrating. It's part of the game, and errors happen. But when it happens multiple times like that, it stands out more and it seems to hurts us. It hurts any club."

After pitching a perfect first inning, RockHounds starter Shawn Haviland (2-6) got into trouble in the second inning, and it didn't help that his defense collapsed behind him. First baseman Michael Spina dropped a pop up to leadoff hitter Mike Bianucci and that opened the doors for the RoughRiders. Frisco had five hits and also took advantage of an error by shortstop Grant Green for a 5-0 early lead.

Unfortunately for the RockHounds, the woes for Haviland and his defense continued in the fourth inning. Frisco had four consecutive hits and Green committed two of his errors in that frame as the RoughRiders built a 10-3 lead.

Scarsone said while the errors extend an inning, Haviland still needs to make pitches to get outs.

"Every pitch that (Haviland) got up in the zone, they put part of the bat on it, no matter if it was changeups, fastballs, breaking balls. He put it up in the zone too much and they took advantage of it," Scarsone said. "We didn't help him out with some of the defensive plays. You give a club that many extra outs, you're going to get hurt."

Frisco starter Robbie Erlin (3-0), the No. 4-ranked prospect in the Rangers organization, wasn't as sharp as he would have liked either as he gave up six runs on 10 hits through five innings of work.

Three of the runs Erlin gave up came in the fifth when the RockHounds cut it to 10-6 on a two-run home run by Matt Sulentic and a solo homer by Tyler Ladendorf on the very next at-bat.

But that's as close as the RockHounds got with Frisco scoring a run in the seventh and three more in the ninth, thanks in part to a two-run triple by Mendonca.

"(Mendonca) obviously jumped on every good pitch for him to hit, and the mistakes that we made he jumped on them," Scarsone said. "He also got some good swings and some hits off a good pitcher's pitches. When a guy gets hot, it's fun to watch when they're on your team. But when they're on the other team, it's frustrating."

'HOUND BITES: Infielder Josh Horton sat out Wednesday's game with a hamstring injury. He aggravated the injury during Tuesday's game against Frisco in his first game since being reassigned from Triple-A Sacramento. With Horton unavailable, the 'Hounds were down to only one position player (Mitch Canham) on the bench. Midland manager Steve Scarsone said Horton will be placed on seven-day disabled list. ...In a recent move for the RockHounds, pitcher Justin Souza was promoted to Triple-A Sacramento. Souza was stellar in 20 1/3 innings out of the bullpen, going 1-0 with 1.33 ERA, 17 strikeouts and two walks. ...The first half of the Texas League season will end in the middle of the RockHounds' 12-game road trip on June 21 in Frisco.

TODAY'S PROBABLES: The RockHounds head to San Antonio to begin a four-game series at 7 p.m. today. Midland is expected to send LHP Polin Trinidad (1-2, 9.42 ERA) against Missions LHP Rob Musgrave (3-2, 4.35).

### **Stockton Earns Sweep**

The Stockton Ports got their first series sweep since April tonight, defeating the High Desert Mavericks by a score of 5-1. A strong outing by Ports starter Dan Straily with Stockton's offense to back him up would get the win at home tonight, his first win since April 29 and fourth of the season.

After a solid first inning, the Mavericks reached base in the second on a fielding error by second baseman Conner Crumbliss. With third baseman Mario Martinez on first, right fielder Matt Cerione doubled to center field. Straily got center fielder Denny Almonte to pop out before walking catcher Trevor Coleman. With the bases loaded, second baseman Gabriel Noriega was hit by a pitch, which brought in Martinez. But no further damage would be done, as Straily struck out the next two batters to end the inning.

In the home half of the inning, the Ports would get the run back and then some. With one out, first baseman Anthony Aliotti hit a solo homer to left field to get things started. Right fielder Rashun Dixon singled to center field, then reached second on a throwing error by left fielder Daniel Carroll. Left fielder Mitch LeVier popped out, bringing shortstop Dusty Coleman to the plate. With two outs, Coleman hit a two-run shot over the right field wall to give the Ports a 3-1 lead. Crumbliss would follow up with a double and reached third on a wild pitch, but would be left on base.

Despite the big offensive second inning for the Ports, Mavericks starter Forrest Snow pitched well in his California League debut. Snow held Stockton to just the three runs until the bottom of the fifth. Designated hitter Myrio Richard singled, and with third baseman Michael Gilmartin at the plate, stole second, and reached third on a wild pitch. Richard came in to score on a sacrifice fly by Gilmartin to extend the Ports lead to 4-1.

In the top of the sixth, after 5.2 innings of work, Straily exited the game, striking out his ninth batter of the night on the way out and matching his season high. A.J. Huttenlocker came in to finish the inning, getting Coleman to pop out for out number three.

Stephen Pryor would come in to pitch for High Desert in place of Snow in the bottom of the sixth. Dixon opened up with a single to right field, and reached second on a wild pitch to LeVier. LeVier walked, and was caught stealing, but Dixon advanced safely to third. With two outs, Crumbliss reached on a fielding error by shortstop Nick Franklin, which allowed Dixon to score.

The Ports would face Austin Hudson on the mound for the Mavericks in the seventh. Center fielder Michael Choice and catcher Ryan Ortiz would both manage singles off of Hudson, but Aliotti would ground into an inning ending double play.

Pitching for the Ports in the eighth was Chris Mederos, who drew two ground outs and struck out right fielder Matt Cerione, but Cerione would reach on a throwing error by Ortiz. Mederos struck out Almonte to end the inning.

Brett Hunter came in to pitch for the Ports in the ninth, closing out the game with three strike outs and a walk mixed in. Stockton took the 5-1 win on nine hits and two errors, High Desert the loss with six hits and two errors.

### **Bees Score Eight Unanswered in 8-4 Win**

By Matthew Wheaton

BURLINGTON, IA- The Burlington Bees (43-23) beat the Kane County Cougars (27-38) by a score of 8-4 in front of 843 fans at Community Field Wednesday night. RF Royce Consigli (4-5) finished a double short of the cycle with two singles, three runs scored and a two-run home run as part of four-run fifth inning that gave Burlington the lead.

Kane County 1B Ryan Stovall (3-5) hit a two-run home run to left field and RF Geulin Beltre (2-4) hit a two-RBI double to give the Cougars a 4-0 lead after a half inning of play.

In the Burlington first inning Consigli hit a single, advanced to second on a single from LF Douglas Landaeta (2-5), stole third and scored on a wild pitch to make the score 4-1.

After a triple by Consigli to lead off the third inning, 2B Ryan Pineda (0-3) notched his ninth RBI of the season on a ground out to Kane County 2B Angel Franco. Landaeta hit a two-run home run to left field to tie the game at 4-4 after three frames.

Bees 1B A.J. Kirby-Jones (4-4) and Consigli both hit two-run homers to right field in the fifth inning to give Burlington an 8-4 lead.

RHP Jose Macias pitched five innings and allowed four runs on nine hits to get the win. RHP Nate Long pitched four scoreless innings to get the save. The Bees did not issue a walk on Wednesday.

The Bees and Kane County Cougars will wrap-up the series on Thursday at 6:30 p.m. Its "Thirsty Thursday" at Community Field. Fans can enjoy 2-for-\$3 deals on Pepsi Products and 2-for-\$4.50 deals on select beer sponsored by the Mark Warth Agency and The New Mix 107.3. RHP Leondy Perez (1-6, 3.14) gets the start for the Cougars against RHP Blake Hassebrock (3-2, 1.60) for the Bees.