

Cleveland Indians beat Oakland A's, Trevor Cahill 6-2

By Branson Wright, Oakland Tribune

It's becoming increasingly evident that Hurricane Irene did more than knock out power along the East Coast. She zapped the A's scoring punch along the way.

After a scoring surge Friday in a rout of the Red Sox in Boston, the A's can't find any wins or many runs.

A familiar result transpired Tuesday night in the A's latest defeat, a 6-2 loss to the Cleveland Indians at Progressive Field.

The A's (60-75) lost their fourth straight and fifth of their past six. Things have changed since their 15-5 victory over the Red Sox. A day later, a doubleheader loss to Boston that included four hours worth of rain delays began Oakland's slide.

"We started the road trip off really well," third baseman Scott Sizemore said. "We scored a lot of runs, but we haven't been able to get the hits here when we've needed them. We've hit the ball hard but right at guys. That's baseball. We have to keep at it."

The A's also have to limit their blown opportunities, such as in the third inning after Jemile Weeks' leadoff single. Moments later, Weeks was picked off by pitcher Jeanmar Gomez, who threw to first to start a rundown for a quick out. Hideki Matsui singled to left with two outs but was left stranded.

Weeks' mistake was one the A's could little afford, especially since they've totaled only six runs over their past four games.

"It's a little puzzling because we were swinging the bats so well," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "Since the two nights in Boston, we've come here and basically have done nothing. We'll search for those answers. There's room for a change."

The A's have two games left in Cleveland to close out the 10-game trip.

The Indians broke a scoreless tie in the bottom of the third on Kosuke Fukudome's two-run double off starter Trevor Cahill (9-13).

Coco Crisp singled home Weeks in the fifth to make it 2-1, but the Indians extinguished any A's momentum by scoring four runs in the sixth. Cahill was charged with five earned runs and seven hits in 5 1/3 innings. It was his fourth straight loss.

"Even in the innings when I didn't give up runs, I felt like I was fighting myself," Cahill said. "I just felt like I didn't know where (my control) was."

Unfortunately for Oakland, Indians rookie pitcher Gomez (1-2) had the A's under control. Presented an opportunity to jump on a pitcher just called up from Triple-A, they A's blew the chance.

"Right now it's all about a positive mindset," Sizemore said. "We have to keep plugging away. Things are going to turn around, and we're going to start scoring some runs."

Right-handed pitcher Neil Wagner joined the A's from Triple-A Sacramento before the game. It was a dream come true for Wagner not only to get promoted to the big leagues but also to make his major league debut at a ballpark he dreamed about playing in while he was in the Indians minor league system.

Wagner pitched the eighth inning Tuesday, allowing no runs and one hit with one strikeout.

"It's hard not to be pretty excited," Wagner said before the game. "I'm pretty pumped about it, especially since spending six years in the minor leagues. You get to a certain point and you wonder if it's going to happen or not. I'm happy to be here."

Wagner was picked by the Indians in the 21st round of the 2005 draft. He was traded to the A's for cash considerations five years later.

"I would've loved to have made it to the majors with the Indians, but it's worked out for the best for me," Wagner said.

The A's cleared a spot for Wagner on the 40-man roster by outrighting reliever Bruce Billings to Sacramento. Melvin said he will use Wagner in long relief.

What's in a name? Wagner shares one with a few rather famous former major leaguers. He was teased about that fact on several occasions in the minors.

"I get Honus quite a bit, which is surprising for a guy who's been dead for half a century," said Wagner about the Hall of Famer. "We had a home game a couple of weeks ago (while playing in Sacramento), and some fans thought I might even be Billy Wagner, even while I was warming up right-handed."

The A's didn't commit an error Tuesday, but they lead the American League with 106. ... A's first baseman Conor Jackson's 0-for-21 hitless streak is the longest of his career. ... A's catcher Kurt Suzuki threw out Asdrubal Cabrera attempting to steal second in the first inning. It was only the 19th runner in 102 attempts that Suzuki has thrown out.

A's struggles continue in 6-2 loss to Indians

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

In the first half of the season, the A's did not hit. In the second half, the pitching is off. On Tuesday at Cleveland, Oakland didn't get good results in either area.

The Indians hammered a pair of two-run homers in the sixth - one by light-hitting former A's infielder Jack Hannahan - and they beat Oakland for the second night in a row, this time 6-2. The A's have scored three runs in the two games, and six runs over their past four games, all losses.

"It's a little bit puzzling given the way we were swinging so well before," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said. "The last two in Boston and then here, basically nothing. I'm searching for answers but I don't have one for you now."

Trevor Cahill started for Oakland, and he continued to show inconsistency even inning to inning, and, he said, "Today I didn't ever feel like I knew where it was going."

Asked which pitches in particular, Cahill responded, "All of them."

The Indians scored twice in the third on Kosuke Fukudome's double to right-center, then Cahill allowed the first of Cleveland's homers in the sixth: after Jim Thome walked (No. 1,000 in his Cleveland career), Carlos Santana connected to right.

Cahill then hit Shelley Duncan, and Fautino De Los Santos replaced Cahill. Hannahan stepped to the plate hitting .241 with five homers. Hannahan also homered to right.

He said he hadn't seen De Los Santos pitch while with the A's organization, but he'd watched some video and after getting two fastballs, Hannahan got a breaking pitch up. "I put a good swing on it," he said.

Oakland's ERA in the first eight games of the 10-game trip is 7.15, but the A's pitching issues don't matter much when the team does little on the offensive end. On Tuesday, Oakland got an RBI single from Coco Crisp in the fifth and a sacrifice fly by Kurt Suzuki in the ninth.

Before the game, Melvin said that outfielder Ryan Sweeney is likely to start tonight or Thursday or both, and after the game, he said he does plan at least one lineup change tonight. Brandon Allen, in an 0-for-14 slide, is a likely candidate to get a start off.

Despite going 1 for his past 19, including a pinch-hit strikeout Tuesday, Sweeney is still among the A's better overall hitters for average, at .274. His playing time, already sporadic, has dipped since Allen's arrival turned Conor Jackson back into an outfielder.

"You sit for five days and think about it," Sweeney said of his recent slump. "More than anything, it's mentally draining for me. My wife is ready to punch me in the face because I've started to question myself, like, 'Can I do this?'"

"I'm not a player who sits on the bench a long time and does well. But what am I going to do? I'll just hang in there."

A's Reliever Neil Wagner enjoys big-league debut

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Neil Wagner was close to giving up his baseball career at the start of this season when he learned he'd be going back to Double-A Midland at the age of 27. He considered going back to finish his degree in biology at North Dakota State.

"My friends and family and I had kind of a pow-wow, and we decided if I was going to Double-A again, I'd probably hang it up," Wagner said.

A's director of player development **Keith Lieppman** gave Wagner a pep talk, and he decided to give it one more shot.

On Tuesday, after he spent six years in the minors, Oakland called up Wagner. And the call-up came in the right place - the reliever was drafted by the Indians and spent four-plus years in their system.

"I was with one of the Indians' lower affiliates right near here and we'd always drive by this ballpark," Wagner said. "So close, and so far away. ... So of all the places to be today!"

Wagner pitched the eighth inning, throwing as hard as 98 mph, and he allowed one single and struck out one. He'd played with many of the Indians, and he once lived with Tuesday night's starter, **Jeanmar Gomez**. Wagner struck out his former teammate **Carlos Santana** to start the inning.

"It was cool being out there, especially after going 3-1 to Santana; I've seen him deposit many of them, so I was lucky enough to come back and get him," Wagner said. "Nice, but a little nerve-racking."

The A's outrighted right-hander **Bruce Billings** to Triple-A Sacramento to get Wagner on the 40-man roster.

Briefly: Conor Jackson is in an 0-for-21 funk, the longest hitless streak of his career. "He just hasn't had consistent at-bats since he got hurt," manager **Bob Melvin** said, referring to Jackson's neck stiffness earlier in the month. "Before that was probably his best stretch of production, and then he hurt his back, **(Brandon) Allen** came up and it was difficult to get him back in there. I don't think Conor has got a hit since." ... Prospects going to the Arizona Fall League include outfielders **Michael Choice** and **Grant Green**, infielder **Dusty Coleman**, catcher **Ryan Ortiz**, and pitchers **Ethan Hollingsworth** and **Tyson Ross**.

Leading off

Reliever back soon: Michael Wuertz, out for the past month with right thumb soreness, will make another rehab appearance tonight, this time with Triple-A Sacramento, and then he is likely to rejoin the A's on Friday.

Drumbeat: After long wait, Neil Wagner gets called up to majors

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Cleveland 2:37pm 8/30/2011

Neil Wagner was close to giving up his baseball career at the start of this season when he found out he'd be going back to Double-A Midland, at the age of 27. He considered going back to finish his degree at North Dakota State. But A's director of player development Keith Lieppman gave Wagner a pep talk, and the right-hander decided to give it one more shot.

Today, after six years in the minors, Wagner is in the big leagues, called up by Oakland to be a middle-innings reliever. For Wagner, the best part of a great day is that it comes at Cleveland - he was drafted by the Indians and spent four-plus years in the organization.

"I was with one of the Indians lower affiliates a few years ago right near here and we'd always drive by this ballpark," Wagner said. "So close, and so far away. ... So of all the places to be today!"

Wagner played with many of the current Indians, and he once lived with tonight's starter, Jeanmar Gomez.

A's manager Bob Melvin said that he's heard about Wagner's plus fastball, and he'll probably try to work him in in a low-pressure situation (though that seldom seems possible given all the close games Oakland plays) and he'll use him as the right-handed long reliever, with Josh Outman the left-handed long man.

Here's the A's lineup tonight behind Trevor Cahill: Weeks 2b, Crisp cf, Matsui lf, Willingham dh, Allen 1b, DeJesus rf, Pennington ss, Suzuki c, Sizemore 3b.

Conor Jackson is 0 for his past 21, the longest hitless streak of his career.

"He just hasn't had consistent at-bats since he got hurt," Melvin said of Jackson's neck stiffness earlier in the month. "Before that was probably his best stretch of production, and then he hurt his back, (Brandon) Allen came up and it was difficult to get him back in there. I don't think Conor has got a hit since."

Cahill looks for answers after scuffling in loss

Right-hander allows five runs, bringing rough August to close

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

CLEVELAND -- Bob Melvin's goal for the rest of the season remains unchanged. It's the same one he had when he arrived in Oakland, the same one every manager lays out, whether playoff-bound or not.

"We're trying to win as many games as we can," Melvin said Tuesday afternoon. "We're focused on winning games, winning series."

The A's have obviously struggled to meet that objective more times than not this year, and on Tuesday, they lost, 6-2, to the host Indians.

The offense, it seems, has gone missing. And for as much as that group has faced its inconsistencies this season, the pitching staff is suddenly dealing with the same problem, having combined for a 7.15 ERA through eight contests of a 10-game road swing.

Right-hander Trevor Cahill, who showcased glimpses of his old self while allowing two runs over six innings in a confidence-boosting outing against the Yankees last week, reverted to his increasingly familiar struggles.

The A's hurler allowed five runs in 5 1/3 innings, surrendering seven hits with two walks and two strikeouts along the way in his last start of the month, which concluded without a win. His last victory came on July 27, and he finished August with a 7.15 ERA and an 0-4 record in six starts.

Cahill has not just been inconsistent from start to start but from inning to inning.

"There's just a short period where he gets out of whack a little bit," Melvin said. "I thought his mix of pitches was good. There were times he wasn't as sharp as others, but at times, he was. He has to try to find a consistent period where he's locked in and has a good arm slot and is getting consistent outs."

Cahill didn't agree with his manager's assessment.

"Even in the innings I didn't give up runs, I just felt like I was fighting myself," he said. "When you're doing that the whole game, it's tough to get big league hitters out. I feel like recently, I could command the ball even if I got hit, and today, I just felt like I didn't know where it was going."

Perhaps just on certain pitches?

"All of them," he replied.

Two, in particular, proved damaging.

Kosuke Fukudome's two-run double in the third handed Cleveland a 2-0 lead, and a four-run Indians sixth -- guided by two-run homers off the bats of Carlos Santana and Jack Hannahan -- pushed the Tribe ahead for good.

Cahill was responsible for Santana's blast, which followed Jim Thome's 1,000th walk as a member of the Tribe, while Fautino De Los Santos offered up Hannahan's.

"It was a fastball," Cahill said of Santana's blast. "A guy on first, I got ahead and was trying to throw it low and to the ground, so he would hopefully hit it for a double play to get out of the inning, and I just left it up."

The blast against De Los Santos, who has surrendered six runs in his last 9 2/3 innings, came on a slider.

"Usually, he doesn't hang a slider like that," Melvin said. "He just threw that one down the middle. With his fastball, usually his slider is a chase slider, not a strike slider, and when you're throwing that hard and throwing it for a strike, that's what happens."

And for a fourth straight game -- all of which have resulted in losses -- the A's couldn't get anything going against the opposing starter. This time, it was Tribe righty Jeanmar Gomez who gave up just one unearned run in six innings.

"He gave us a very good outing," Cleveland manager Manny Acta said. "He gave us an opportunity to put together a couple of runs there. Santana's homer after Thome's walk was huge. Then we tacked on a couple more. That was the story."

Overall, the A's have managed just 24 hits and six runs over their past four contests after combining for 36 runs in their previous 37 innings.

"I don't know," Melvin said. "It's a little bit puzzling because we were swinging so well. Here, we've basically done nothing. We'll search for those answers, but I don't have an answer in particular right now."

Oakland's first run came in the fifth, when Jemile Weeks reached second on a ground-ball forceout that went past Gomez at first base, and Weeks scored on Coco Crisp's single. The A's mounted a stand in the ninth, when David DeJesus walked, moved to third on Cliff Pennington's double and scored on Kurt Suzuki's sacrifice fly. But Pennington became the last of nine men whom the A's left on base, as the club went just 1-for-9 with runners in scoring position.

In the midst of an all-too-familiar scene, A's righty Neil Wagner -- once a member of the Indians organization -- provided a highlight, compiling a scoreless eighth inning in his Major League debut, allowing just one hit and striking out one.

"It was pretty cool," Wagner said. "Once I settled down and got into the flow of things a little bit, it was all right. I was overthrowing a little bit, with all the emotions, but I settled in and ended up OK. It's almost a relief to have it over with."

Cahill is likely feeling the same way about the month of August.

"Five more starts," he said. "I'll just try to take them one at a time."

Wagner paid his dues before first callup

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

CLEVELAND -- Perhaps the wait, all six years in the Minors along with a lengthy travel day Monday, was worth it for right-hander Neil Wagner.

The newest A's bullpen member officially joined the team on Tuesday at Progressive Field in Cleveland, through which he used to ride on a bus as a Class A ballplayer.

Manager Bob Melvin wasted little time getting Wagner into a game, sending him out to pitch the eighth inning of a 6-2 loss to the Indians. Wagner struck out Carlos Santana, the first batter he faced, with a 96-mph fastball. After inducing a groundout by Jerad Head, Wagner allowed the first hit of his career, a single by Jack Hannahan. He righted himself, though, and forced Jason Donald to ground out to end the inning.

"It was pretty cool," Wagner said. "Once I settled down and got into the flow of things a little bit, it was all right. I was overthrowing a little bit, with all the emotions, but I settled in and ended up OK. It's almost a relief to have it over with."

Prior to the game, Wagner, 27, said it was fitting that he was called up to face the Indians, who drafted him in the 21st round of the 2005 First-Year Player Draft. He was traded to the A's last season for cash considerations.

"This ballpark, it always seemed so close but so far," said Wagner. "It's a little strange to be here, a little surreal. Of all the places, this is kind of a full-circle type of situation."

Wagner took the 40-man roster spot of Bruce Billings, who was outrighted to Triple-A Sacramento. Wagner will be utilized in the middle innings, Melvin said, and provide the club with a right-handed long relief option.

"I know he's got a plus-fastball and touches 100," Melvin said. "He's working on his changeup and breaking ball, but his fastball is his best pitch from what I understand, and they like what they've seen so far down there this year."

"My bread and butter is my fastball," Wagner said. "That's my best attribute, I'd say, and the difference between last year and this year has been being more consistent throwing strikes and getting ahead of hitters, so I don't have to throw it 2-0, because in that count, no matter how hard you throw, sitting on that, they're going to crush it. That's been big for me."

Wagner began the year at Double-A Midland before he was promoted to Sacramento on June 25, combining for a 3.26 ERA and .232 opponents' average with 87 strikeouts in 66 1/3 innings, an average of 11.80 strikeouts per nine innings.

He's not only familiar with recent catcher callup Anthony Recker and bench coach Joel Skinner, who served as his Double-A manager in Akron last year. He also knows Cleveland's Tuesday starter, Jeanmar Gomez, who was his roommate in 2009.

"The familiar faces, the familiar setting, it helps," Wagner said.

Clock ticking for Jackson to prove worth

CLEVELAND -- Conor Jackson has become a victim of bad timing.

Absent for four games because of neck stiffness, Jackson quickly lost his starting job at first base to Brandon Allen. Now back in a utility role he served at the start of the year for the A's, he's hitless in his last 21 at-bats and knows he has a limited number of days left to prove his worth as a soon-to-be free agent.

"Obviously, going into free agency, you want to play every day," Jackson said. "That was the biggest thing for me. Now, I'm kind of at a point where I think being versatile is going to help me going into it. But on the flip side, you want at-bats, and the only way to get your numbers up is to get those. I've been through these types of stretches, but I was playing every day, so I had the opportunity to hit my way out of it, and this is a little different situation.

"I knew coming into the year, I was going to have to earn my time, and when I did get the opportunity, I would have to do something. Obviously, the past two weeks, I haven't. I haven't done anything to deserve playing time, so it's frustrating, especially this late in the year."

Jackson, who began Tuesday batting .249 with four homers and 38 RBIs in 102 games, has reentered a right-field shuffle that also includes David DeJesus and Ryan Sweeney. Allen -- batting .305 since his promotion -- is expected to assume everyday first-base duties the rest of the way.

"Conor hasn't got consistent at-bats since his injury," Melvin said. "Up to that point, it was probably his best stretch. He'd been playing every day at first and the production was going, and then he hurt his neck, and Allen came, and it's been difficult for him to get back in there regularly. I don't think he's gotten a hit since. It was a tough period for him, and it continues to be a tough period without the consistent at-bats."

It's one Jackson, having already been through multiple ups and downs in his career, takes in stride.

"The writing's kind of on the wall, and I understand the situation. You've gotta play Brandon Allen every day," the 29-year-old Jackson said. "He's a special talent, and he didn't get the opportunity in Arizona he deserves, but this is going to be a good fit for him. As much as I didn't like it, I understand that side of the game."

Allen could be one of several youngsters taking to the field in September, with callups expected to arrive by the end of the week as rosters expand. That could further limit playing time for Jackson, who is also unsure of where he fits into Oakland's bigger picture. DeJesus, Josh Willingham and Coco Crisp are all free agents at season's end, as well.

Needless to say, Jackson is very open to the idea of exploring the market.

"You have to," he said. "I would be doing a disservice to myself if I don't. There hasn't been any conversation here, but I'm a realist, and I'm looking at my numbers here and the next 28 days. Whether I'm in their plans, I don't know. I love Bob Melvin, I'm a big fan, and I think that's a big drawing point for me and for anybody."

Worth noting

- Michael Wuertz (thumb) will make his second Minor League rehab appearance on Wednesday and, if all goes well, is expected to return to the big leagues soon after the start of Oakland's next homestand on Friday.
- The A's are sending six players to the Arizona Fall League: right-handers Tyson Ross and Ethan Hollingsworth, catcher Ryan Ortiz, infielder Dusty Coleman and outfielders Michael Choice and Grant Green.
- Scott Sizemore finished Tuesday with 11 doubles this month, which is one short of the Oakland record for doubles in August. Jason Giambi collected 12 in 1999.

Ubaldo hoping new home remains friendly vs. A's

By Cash Kruth / MLB.com

Ubaldo Jimenez hasn't been with the Indians long, but he sure has taken kindly to his new home park.

Jimenez has allowed only 12 hits, has struck out 16 and holds an 0.60 ERA in two home starts with Cleveland, compared to 25 hits and an 11.77 ERA in three road starts. While the road woes might be a bit of a concern in the future, they won't matter Wednesday as the Indians and A's continue a four-game series at Progressive Field.

A big issue for Jimenez has been confidence -- or lack thereof -- in his fastball. In his first home start with the Indians on Aug. 10, against the American League Central-leading Tigers, the right-hander showed plenty of confidence in his go-to pitch, allowing just three unearned runs in eight innings.

"I had really good command of my fastball," Jimenez said. "Then, after that, I was able to throw my breaking ball for strikes."

It's that confidence Jimenez is hoping to have in his sixth start for Cleveland on Wednesday.

Taking the mound for the A's -- losers of four straight and five of their last six -- is right-hander Rich Harden. Harden struggled in his last outing, giving up six runs on 10 hits in 4 1/3 innings against the Yankees.

Harden has alternated between great and poor outings in five starts this month. He sandwiched seven innings of one-run ball between two four-run outings to begin August, then threw seven shutout innings before his rough start against New York.

A's: Woes continue

- With only one more game remaining this month and a 11-16 mark in August, the A's are assured of their the seventh consecutive losing month. The last time the A's posted a winning month was last July, when they went 14-10.
- Scott Sizemore has 11 doubles this month, one short of the Oakland record for doubles in August. Jason Giambi had 12 in 1999.

Indians: Good pick-up

- Outfielder Kosuke Fukudome has proven to be a solid acquisition for the Indians, batting .283 with 12 runs, 10 doubles and 12 RBIs in 30 games since coming over from the Cubs on July 27. He's been especially hot as of late, hitting .379 with five doubles and five RBIs in his last eight games.
- Jack Hannahan has hit safely in 11 of his last 13 games, batting .429 in that span.

Worth noting

- A's closer Andrew Bailey has converted each of his last 10 save opportunities and is a perfect 33-for-33 after the All-Star break in his career.
- Indians reliever Vinnie Pestano has not allowed a run in his last 12 games, spanning 12 1/3 innings.
- Wednesday will be Harden's first start against an American League Central team this season.

Cahill's woes continue; A's lose to Indians, 6-2

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CLEVELAND — Trevor Cahill is still searching for answers.

The Oakland right-hander has a month to find them.

Cahill, who won 18 games and made the All-Star team last season, continued to struggle Tuesday night as the Athletics dropped a 6-2 decision to the Cleveland Indians.

Cahill (9-13) fell to 1-6 in nine starts since the All-Star break. He opened the season 6-0 with a 1.72 ERA through May 14, but is 3-13 since. His struggles reflect those of the entire Athletics team. Oakland has lost four straight and five of six.

Carlos Santana and Jack Hannahan hit two-run homers for Cleveland. Jeanmar Gomez (1-2) allowed one unearned run over six innings after being recalled from Triple-A Columbus.

The main topic of conversation in Oakland's clubhouse was Cahill and what can be done to get him pitching like he did in 2010. He allowed five runs and seven hits in 5 1/3 innings. Cahill struck out two and walked two while throwing 101 pitches.

"Even in innings I didn't give up runs, I was fighting myself," he said. "When you're doing that the whole game, it's tough to get big league hitters out."

Cahill hasn't won since July 31, a span of six starts. His most recent loss might have been the most frustrating.

"I feel like I've been commanding the ball even though I got hit," Cahill said. "Tonight I didn't know where it was going."

Oakland manager Bob Melvin is also trying to pinpoint why Cahill has been so ineffective.

"His stuff was good again," Melvin said. "He'll go through periods where he's painting on all his pitches and everything's sharp, and then he'll have gaps where he gets out of whack a little bit."

Cahill gave up a two-run double to Kosuke Fukudome in the third. Coco Crisp's RBI single cut the lead in half in the fifth, but Cahill faltered again in the sixth. He issued a one-out walk to Jim Thome and Santana connected for his 21st homer to put the Indians ahead 4-1.

"I was trying to throw it low," Cahill said. "Hopefully he would chase it and hit it into the ground for a double play, but I left it up and he yanked it."

"I think the homer shocked him a little bit," Melvin said.

After Cahill hit Shelley Duncan with a pitch, Fautino De Los Santos came on and yielded Hannahan's sixth homer to make it 6-1.

Cahill will attempt to put something positive together in the season's final month.

"I have five starts left," he said. "I'll try to take them one at a time and pitch better."

Oakland's offense continues to struggle. The Athletics were held to one run and five hits in Monday's 2-1 loss and managed eight hits Tuesday.

"We've basically done nothing," Melvin said of the series' first two games. "We'll search for those answers, but I don't have one right now."

Oakland pulled to 2-1 in the fifth, helped by an error by Gomez covering first base.

With one out and Kurt Suzuki on first with a single, Jemile Weeks tapped a grounder to first baseman Santana, who had trouble getting the ball out of his glove before throwing to second base. Shortstop Asdrubal Cabrera took the throw to force out Suzuki and his relay to first was right over the bag — but Gomez had run past the base and was out of position.

The error sent Weeks to second. He scored on Crisp's two-out single to right.

Neil Wagner's major league debut provided one bright spot for Oakland. The hard-throwing right-hander retired the side in order in the eighth and struck out Santana, the first batter he faced. Wagner, called up from Triple-A Sacramento, was Cleveland's 21st-round pick in 2005 and sold to Oakland a year ago.

"Getting behind 3-1 to Santana, I've seen him deposit plenty of those in my days with him," Wagner said. "I was lucky enough to come back and get him out. It was cool being out there. I ended up OK, I guess."

Notes: A's RHP Michael Wuertz (thumb) is scheduled for a rehab outing Wednesday and could rejoin Oakland this weekend. He's been out since July 30. ... Oakland has scored nine runs in five games against Cleveland this year. ... RHP Rich Harden (4-2) will face Indians RHP Ubaldo Jimenez (2-2) on Wednesday. Harden's 10.4 strikeouts per nine innings are sixth-best among AL pitchers with at least 50 innings. Jimenez is 2-0 at home since being acquired by Cleveland from Colorado for four prospects at the trade deadline July 31. ... Melvin said OF Ryan Sweeney, batting .200 (9 for 45) in August, may play the last two games of the series. ... Weeks is 12 for 29 (.414) in a seven-game hitting streak. ... A's OF Brandon Allen went 0 for 4 and is in an 0 for 14 slump.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Mitchell blazes Cats' path to 5th win in row

By Alex Sadorf / Sacramento River Cats

The River Cats kept the post-division-clinching winning streak going Tuesday night with a 5-1 victory over the Las Vegas 51s.

Jermaine Mitchell's bunt single got the River Cats offense started in the fourth inning. The center fielder then took second on a Chad Gaudin wild pitch and scored with two outs on Chris Carter's line-drive single to right field.

"I used to swing on pitcher's pitches but now I'm trying to swing on batter's pitches," said Mitchell of the change that led to his current 16-game hitting streak. "I'm really focusing on the strikes and watching the ball."

Mitchell was also on point on defense, making an incredible catch in the fourth inning at the warning track that kept Ricardo Nanita from extra bases.

The River Cats took their momentum from the fourth into the fifth. Landon Powell singled with a line drive to right field to get started. Josh Donaldson was then hit by a pitch to put two runners on for Adam Rosales. Rosales hit the ball hard to center field to load the bases. Mitchell delivered a line drive double down the left-field line, scoring Powell and Donaldson.

The Cats weren't done. Wes Timmons kept it going with a single to score Rosales and put Mitchell on third. Timmons then went for the steal with Carter up to bat and two outs. The catcher, Ryan Budde, threw the ball over second base to advance Timmons to third and score Mitchell for a 5-0 lead.

Timmons is another Cat on a hitting streak. The infielder is up to 10 games after his RBI single Tuesday night.

River Cats starter Tyson Ross allowed one run over 6.0 innings, striking out three and allowing five hits to earn the victory.

Join the River Cats and the 51s as they battle again Wednesday afternoon at 12:05 p.m.

Playoff tickets are available at www.rivercats.com/playoffs or 916-371-HITS (4487).

Missions Officially Eliminate Hounds

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

The San Antonio Missions completed their run to a sweep of both half-season titles in Texas League South, and did it with their 90th win of the season. The last time a Texas League team won 90 games in a season, the year was 1961 ... 50 years ago ... and the club was the Beaumont (TX) Golden Gators.

With San Antonio leading, 1-0, in the fourth, Jedd Gyorko reached base on a bad-hop single to third. On the next pitch, Cody Decker ripped a 2-run home run, and the Missions led, 3-0.

The 'Hounds loaded the bases on three singles in the fifth, and scored on Stephen Parker's walk, but Juan Oramas got Michael Spina to bounce out to third to end the threat.

Decker added a 2-run single and Jaff Decker (no relation) belted a 2-run home run to right as the Missions built the lead to 8-1.

San Antonio's win, combined with Frisco's loss at Corpus Christi, gave the Missions a sweep of both half-season titles. San Antonio will face the RoughRiders in the playoffs, and will host games 1, 2 and 5 (if needed) at Nelson Wolff Stadium, where the Missions are now 51-13 on the season.

The RockHounds collected 11 hits in the loss, two each from Grant Green, Spina, Jason Christian and Tyler Ladendorf.

ROCKY TOWN - Thanks, Permian Basin ... 2011 was a record-breaking season at Citibank Ballpark! An all-time attendance record of 308,810. Keep an eye on "all things RockHounds" at www.midlandrockhounds.org.

Crumbliss triples to complete cycle

By Ashley Marshall / Special to MLB.com

Conner Crumbliss was in uncharted territory when he stepped into the batter's box in the seventh inning on Tuesday. But that did not stop him from writing his name in the California League record book.

Crumbliss' triple down the right-field line completed the first cycle of his career as the Class A Advanced Stockton Ports clobbered the Modesto Nuts, 17-4.

"I've been a home run away a few times, but I've never got the homer and needed the triple," he said. "I've got the first three a couple times, but I've never hit for the cycle. It was the first time I had done it in my life.

"I couldn't believe it happened. I don't hit many home runs, so to have [a homer and triple] on the same night is rare. It was pretty cool."

The 24-year-old second baseman singled and scored in the first inning, then popped out to third base to end the second. He pulled a two-out double to right field in the third and smacked a two-run homer -- his seventh of the season and fifth this month -- an inning later.

"It was a first-pitch fastball down and in and I got it out to dead right [field]," Crumbliss said. "I was lucky, I couldn't believe it went out. I was just looking for a first-pitch fastball over the plate somewhere. [Reliever Sheng-An Kuo] came in and I wanted it in, so you could say I was sitting on it."

The 2009 28th-round Draft pick completed his cycle bid in seventh, legging out a leadoff triple to right.

"I knew I was a triple short, but I didn't think there was any way of getting it because their center fielder [Delta Cleary Jr.] is pretty fast," Crumbliss said. "[Chad Rose] went 3-0 and then threw me a fastball for a strike. I got another fastball on 3-1 and I got it off the end of the bat, but it went down the line.

"It landed fair, just barely, and went off the fence. I was trying not to watch it and I just kept my head down. I guess I was just hoping it didn't bounce out, because usually when it hits the warning track it goes for a ground-rule double."

The ball took a big hop off the wall and got away from right fielder Orlando Sandoval long enough for Crumbliss to cruise into third base without a play.

"It was pretty cool," he said. "When the ball landed, I was halfway to second, so I knew I had a chance. I went in standing up, so it must have taken a funny hop off the fence. I couldn't believe it."

Crumbliss is batting .302 since the All-Star break, but he entered Tuesday's game with just one extra-base hit in his last 38 at-bats. The Emporia State product put his big night down to small changes in his timing at the plate.

"I've slowed down a little bit and I haven't been seeing the ball too well," he said. "I was a bit jerky in the box, but I've been working on getting my front foot down and getting better pitches to hit.

"This year has had its ups and downs, just like any season. The first half, I got off to a good start, but in the second half I've been a lot better and I've been making better contact."

The cycle was the the fourth in the California League and second for the Ports this season. Kent Walton **achieved the feat** on April 21 against Lancaster.

Crumbliss is wrapping up his third pro season. He made his debut in 2009, hitting .290 between short-season Vancouver and Class A Kane County. Last year, he batted .271 with five homers, 56 RBIs and 24 stolen bases back in the Midwest League.

Crumbliss Hits For Cycle in Ports 17-4 Win

Stockton Ports

The Stockton Ports bats exploded as they combined for nine extra-base hits that included a Conner Crumbliss hit-for-cycle as the Boys of Banner Island pummeled the Modesto Nuts 17-4 on Tuesday.

The night was all about the Ports offense, who hit three doubles, three triples and three home runs. The night did not begin in such an explosive fashion however, as the Nuts struck first, putting up a run in the first inning on Ports starter Jacob Brown. Brown began the outing by hitting Nuts leadoff hitter, Delta Cleary, who advanced to third on two productive outs from Eliezer Mesa and Josh Rutledge. Cleary scored on an error, as Noan Arenado hit a ball to Dusty Coleman, who was unable to field it cleanly.

The Ports took their first lead of the evening in the bottom of the first. Myrio Richard led off the inning with a walk, before advancing to third on Crumbliss' single of the cycle. Then Nuts starter Alan DeRatt was called on a balk to score the Ports first run of the game. Two productive outs from Michael Choice and Anthony Aliotti, and the Ports were up 2-1.

The Ports tacked on a run in the second, as Mitch LeVier led off with a triple to center field. Levier scored on a Richard groundout before the final out of the inning was recorded one batter later.

The Nuts tied it up in the third, the only time in the game that the contest appeared that it might be a close one. A walk, two singles, a sacrifice fly and a double was all it took for the Nuts to score the two runs, marking the last time in the contest the Nuts would get close to the Ports score.

The Ports bats exploded in the third. Choice led off the inning with a ground rule double. Aliotti singles to advance Choice to third. Michael Gilmartin hits a three-run bomb to right field. Dusty Coleman singles. Mitch LeVier singles. Rashun Dixon grounds into a force out that allows Coleman to score; Dixon advances to second on a throwing error as the Nuts attempt to turn a double play. Richard hits a two-run homer on the first pitch of his at bat. Crumbliss hits the double of his cycle, a ground rule double to center field. The Nuts finally get the third out of the inning. The Ports head to the fourth with a six run inning and a 9-3 lead.

Things don't get any better for DeRatt in the fourth, as the Ports tag him for four more runs before he is pulled from the game. Gilmartin leads off with a walk. Ryan Lipkin reaches on a force attempt, advancing Gilmartin to third. Coleman hits what might have been a home run had Cleary not pulled it back from over the center field wall, only to drop the ball, resulting in a bases clearing triple. At this point, Sheng-An Kuo replaces DeRatt and retires the next two batters. Then Crumbliss steps up and drills the first pitch Kuo throws him for his home run of the cycle.

The Ports tack on a run in the sixth, Coleman scoring on a Richard single. They add another in the seventh, as Crumbliss completes the cycle with a triple to lead off the inning, scoring on a Choice groundout.

"I've been a home run away a few times, but I've never got the homer and needed the triple," he said. "I've got the first three a couple times, but I've never hit for the cycle. It was the first time I had done it in my life.

"I couldn't believe it happened. I don't hit many home runs, so to have [a homer and triple] on the same night is rare. It was pretty cool."

Crumbliss is the second Port this season to hit for the cycle, joining Kent Walton, who hit for the cycle on April 21 in Lancaster. Before Walton, the last Port to hit for the cycle was Archie Gilbert in 2008.

The Ports extended their lead over the Nuts in the wild card race to 2.0 games with the win. The Ports attempt to close the gap on the second half standing further tomorrow as Rob Gilliam will face off against Dan Perkins at 7:05 p.m.

Bees Game Cancelled Due To Rain

By Jon Versteeg, Burlington Bees

DAVENPORT, IA - The Burlington Bees and Quad Cities River Bandits contest was rained out at Modern Woodman Park. Because the two clubs do not have any remaining games scheduled against one another in the 2011 season, the game will not be made up.

The Bees start their final home stand of the regular season on Wednesday night against the Wisconsin Timber Rattlers at 6:30 p.m. It's the final "Kids Eat Free Wednesday" of the 2011 season with all kids 12 and under getting a hot dog and drink voucher at the game. RHP Brooks Hall (7-4, 3.88) toes the rubber for Wisconsin while Jose Macias (7-3, 3.82) takes the mound as the starting pitcher for Burlington. Radio play-by-play coverage starts at 6:40 p.m. on AM 1490 KBUR and online at www.gobees.com.

2011 Bees tickets are on sale now! To get single game tickets, or playoff tickets for game two of the first round of the Midwest League playoffs on September 8, please give the Bees a call at (319) 754-5705 (319) 754-5705, go online to www.gobees.com, or stop by the box office at Community Field during normal business hours.

Vermont Falls 6-4 At Yankees Tuesday

By Paul Stanfield / Vermont Lake Monsters

STATEN ISLAND, NY --- Casey Stevenson snapped a 4-4 tie with an RBI double in the bottom of the eighth inning as the Staten Island Yankees defeated the Vermont Lake Monsters 6-4 in New York-Penn League action Tuesday night at Richmond County Bank Ballpark.

The loss dropped Vermont (35-34) one-half game behind Connecticut (35-33), a 5-0 winner over Hudson Valley on Tuesday, for first-place in the Stedler Division with just five days left in the New York-Penn League season. The Lake Monsters (five game remaining) need to finish at least tied with the Tigers (six games left) to win the division based on winning the season-series between the teams.

Vermont trailed 4-1 after Staten Island had scored three runs in the bottom of the fourth inning on a leadoff homer from Tyler Austin, two walks, two infield singles and a sacrifice fly off Lake Monsters starter Tyler Vail. The Lake Monsters got two unearned runs in the seventh on a two-out, two-run single from Nick Rickles and then tied the game 4-4 on a Bobby Crocker (3-for-4) leadoff homer in the eighth.

Lake Monster reliever Omar Duran (0-1) hit the first batter he faced in the eighth and then gave up the one-out RBI double to Stevenson for a 5-4 Yankee lead. Staten Island added an insurance run when Stevenson scored on a throwing error by shortstop Sean Jamieson on a Zach Wilson infield single. Philip Wetherereil (4-2), who had given up Crocker's third home run in the eighth, set down the side 1-2-3 in the ninth to earn the win for McNamara-Division leading Staten Island (44-24).

Rickles, who started for the first time this season at first base, went 2-for-5 with two RBI and Chad Oberacker was 1-for-3 with a squeeze bunt to tie the game 1-1 in the fourth. Despite going 0-for-4 at the plate, Jamieson stole three bases (now has 24 on season) as the Lake Monsters had a season-high six stolen bases for the game.

Vermont continues the series at Staten Island with the second of three games on Wednesday night. The Lake Monsters will return to historic Centennial Field to close out the regular-season with a three game-series with Tri-City starting on Friday.