

## A's News Clips, Wednesday, November 2, 2011

### Rafters' Arenado caps big day with big win

#### Named to Rising Stars Game, Rockies prospect plates three runs

By Robert Emrich / Special to MLB.com

Despite all of his accomplishments this season, Nolan Arenado still has one more he'd like to cross off his list.

The Rockies' **No. 4 prospect** smacked a pair of doubles and drove in three more runs Tuesday afternoon, helping the first-place Salt River Rafters rally for a 10-7 triumph over the last-place Phoenix Desert Dogs.

Arenado opened the scoring in the first inning with a ground-rule double that plated Adam Eaton (D-backs). With the Rafters trailing, 7-3, he doubled down the left-field line to drive in a pair of runs in the sixth. That sparked Salt River (16-9) to its seventh win when trailing after six innings.

"I got behind in the count and he [Andrew Carignan] threw me a fastball low and I got a little out in front," Arenado said. "I saw the ball good. It was a good at-bat, it was good stuff."

Arenado's latest big game put an exclamation point on an exciting day for the former second-round pick. After playing in the All-Star Futures Game and earning California League postseason All-Star honors, he will play in Saturday's Rising Stars Game. The 20-year-old third baseman has followed a breakout regular season with a scorching fall campaign, leading the AFL with seven doubles and 27 RBIs.

"This is pretty awesome," Arenado said. "The only thing better than this is playing in the bigs, but this is pretty sweet. It's all blessings; right now, things are going good. We're playing good ball and if we keep playing the way we are we might have a shot at the championship. All in all, I'm pretty happy with what's going on."

The Rafters moved four games in front of second-place Mesa in the Eastern Division. And with only 13 games remaining, Arenado has begun to think about getting a chance to play on the big stage in the nationally televised Championship Game on Nov. 19.

"It's cool. To get to play on television, it's pretty exciting," the California native said. "All it is is more baseball. I've been having a good time out here, it would be cool to win this thing. I'm having a fun time, and winning with these guys would be real cool."

Tigers prospect Hernan Perez also doubled twice and drove in three runs and Eaton went 2-for-4 with a double and two runs scored for the Rafters, who collected a season-high seven doubles.

Tigers right-hander Rob Waite (1-0) was credited with the win, despite allowing a run on four hits over 1 1/3 innings. He struck out three and did not walk a batter.

Michael Choice, the A's **No. 2 prospect**, doubled home three runs and Kevin Ahrens (Blue Jays) had three hits for the Desert Dogs (8-17).

Reds left-hander Travis Wood gave up a run on three hits and fanned three over three innings for Mesa, but Carignan (0-2) was charged with three runs on three hits and a walk in one inning and took the loss.

### Phelps' best start not enough for Phoenix

#### Yankees prospect tosses five one-hit frames in Dogs' loss to Sox

By John Parker / Special to MLB.com

Yankees prospect David Phelps had his strongest outing of the AFL campaign Monday afternoon, but it wasn't enough to get the Phoenix Desert Dogs a victory.

The 25-year-old right-hander yielded one hit and one walk over five scoreless innings in the Dogs' 3-1 loss to the visiting Mesa Solar Sox. Phelps fanned three.

A Notre Dame product who went 6-6 with a 3.19 ERA in 18 starts for Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre during the regular season, Phelps was 0-2 with a 7.43 mark while allowing a .339 average against in his first four Fall League outings. He was much more effective against the Solar Sox on Monday.

"I was mixing my pitches up really well and keeping hitters off balance today," Phelps said. "I was able to get ahead and put hitters away in good counts."

Phelps delivered first-pitch strikes to 12 of the 17 batters he faced, with 41 of his 67 pitches overall going for strikes.

"It's been enjoyable playing out here and I've been learning a lot. [In Triple-A,] a lot of hitters have big league experience and are a little more patient in their at-bats. A lot of the younger prospects [in the AFL] are more aggressive at the plate," he said.

"I've been trying to attack hitters and it worked out well."

Fellow Yankees prospect Ronnier Mustelier gave Phoenix a 1-0 lead with a leadoff blast in the second inning, but that was all the run support the Desert Dogs gave Phelps.

After his exit, Mesa tied the game in the seventh when Junior Lake (Cubs) tripled and scored on a sacrifice fly by Joe Mahoney (Orioles). The Solar Sox went ahead in the eighth inning on a two-RBI double off the bat of Brian Dozier (Twins).

The Solar Sox and Desert Dogs mustered just five hits apiece, although seven of the 10 combined hits went for extra bases. Together, the teams went 1-for-15 with runners in scoring position. Mahoney was the only batter to collect two hits.

Solar Sox starter Gerrit Cole, the top overall pick by the Pirates in the 2011 Draft, allowed one run on three hits while striking out three over three frames. The Mesa bullpen was masterful, as five pitchers combined to hold Phoenix to just two hits over six innings.

Twins prospect Brett Jacobson (1-2) notched his first victory with a scoreless seventh before Minnesota teammate Dakota Watts fired a pair of perfect frames to notch his second save.

Yankees bullpen prospect Dan Burawa fell to 1-4 after allowing two runs on two hits and a walk in the eighth.

## **2011 Year In Review: Stockton Pitchers**

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Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Nov 1, 2011

Our "2011 Year In Review" series continues with a look at the pitchers for the Oakland A's High-A affiliate.

### **Stockton Ports Pitching At A Glance**

**Team ERA:** 4.29 (2nd best out of 10 teams)

**Strike-outs/Walks:** 1134/356 (sixth-most out of 10 teams/least out of 10 teams)

**Team WHIP:** 1.29 (best in the league)

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*Note: this article covers all pitchers who threw at least 30 innings for the Stockton Ports in 2011.*

The Stockton Ports in 2011 put together their most successful season as a franchise since they won the Cal League title in 2008. The Ports won 75 games and finished 10 games over the .500 mark. Stockton earned a playoff spot during the second half of the season and went on to upset first-half division winner San Jose in the Cal League semi-finals before losing in the final round. Stockton had an 18-game winning streak during the season and featured several standout individual performances.

The Ports had offensive firepower, but it was their pitching that quietly led the way for the team. Stockton finished second in the league in ERA to their rivals in San Jose. The team had three starting pitchers make at least 24 starts and toss at least 135 innings and their closer finished second in the league in saves. Although the Stockton staff featured several hard throwers, they weren't a power-pitching club. Instead, they relied on pitching to contact. They walked the fewest batters in the league and led all Cal League staffs in WHIP.

Starters [Daniel Straily](#), [Robert Gilliam](#) and [Murphy Smith](#) set the tone for the Ports' staff at the top of the rotation for the entire season. Gilliam led the team with 164.1 innings pitched and won a team-best 12 games. His ERA was a misleadingly high 5.04. He struck-out 156 and walked only 48. Gilliam's biggest pratfall was his homeruns allowed total, which sat at 24.

Straily had an 11-9 record and a 3.87 ERA in 160.2 innings. He finished second on the team to Gilliam in strike-outs with 154 and he walked only 40 while allowing only 10 homeruns. Straily was the team's most consistent starter. With the exception of the month of May and one start in September, Straily maintained an ERA of 3.35 or lower in every month of the season. He also never walked more than 10 batters in any given month and never struck-out fewer than 27. In July, Straily struck-out 41 and walked only seven in 40.1 innings.

Smith missed a few starts with a minor injury, but was otherwise a reliable arm in the Stockton rotation. He had a 3.94 ERA in 137 innings with a 100:33 K:BB ratio. Smith allowed 10 homeruns and induced 1.72 groundouts for every flyout. It was a solid recovery season for Smith after he struggled with Stockton in 2010, posting a 6.19 ERA in 48 innings. He is currently pitching for the Phoenix Desert Dogs in the Arizona Fall League.

[A.J. Griffin](#) was only with the team for half of the season, but he made his presence felt. The 6'5" right-hander posted a 3.57 ERA in 12 starts (70.2 innings) during the regular season and then made three outstanding starts during the post-season. In 21 post-season innings, he allowed three earned runs (1.29 ERA) and struck-out 28 while walking two. The Ports won all three of his starts. During the regular season with Stockton, Griffin also racked up impressive strike-out totals. In 70.2 innings, he struck-out 82 and walked only 14. On the year (he pitched for all four of the A's full-season affiliates), Griffin struck-out 156 and walked only 32. Griffin's 1.10 WHIP was the lowest for any Stockton starter.

Left-hander [Jake Brown](#) started the season alongside Griffin in the Low-A Burlington Bees' rotation. Both were promoted to Stockton in late May. While Griffin made a smooth transition, Brown ran into some difficulties with the Ports. In 99 innings, he posted a 5.55 ERA. He allowed 16 homeruns and struck-out only 53 batters. On the plus side, Brown walked only 19 and posted a 4.75 ERA after the All-Star break, a nearly 2.5 run improvement over his first half Cal League ERA. Brown did make two relief appearances for the Ports and dominated in those outings, scattering four hits over 6.1 scoreless innings. The soft-tossing Brown's future may lie in the bullpen.

[Fabian Williamson](#) was the only other pitcher to make at least 10 starts for the Ports this season. The left-hander was on the Ports' Opening Day roster, but he struggled from the get-go. He posted a 7.53 ERA in 49 innings. Williamson did strike-out 40, but he walked 29 and allowed eight homers. Williamson also made 10 appearances for the Double-A Midland Rockhounds, but found the sledding equally tough in the Texas League. Williamson has good stuff, but his command will need to improve significantly to find success in offensive-friendly leagues such as the Cal League.

Former first-round pick (2007) [James Simmons](#) spent the second half of the season with the Ports, splitting his time between the rotation and the bullpen. Simmons was sent to Double-A Midland after signing in 2007, so he was making his High-A debut in 2011 despite his five years in professional baseball. Simmons missed the entire 2010 season with a shoulder injury that wound-up requiring surgery. He wasn't 100 percent in terms of his arm strength this season and it showed in his 5.48 ERA. Simmons was a strike-throwing machine (only six walks in 42.2 innings), but his 86-88 MPH fastball was too hittable at times and he allowed 56 hits and five homeruns. Simmons' secondary pitches, especially his change-up, looked good for much of his time with the Ports, so there is hope that he will see a dramatic improvement with his ERA next season if the velocity on his fastball returns.

[Gary Daley](#) was only with the team for a little more than a month, but he provided a boost to the staff while he was in the rotation. In six starts, he went 3-0 with a 3.21 ERA. Daley had a 22:12 K:BB ratio in 33.2 innings and held opposing batters to a .226 average. He would spend most of the season with Midland.

The Ports' bullpen was an area of strength for most of the season. Closer [Jose Guzman](#) finished second in the Cal League in saves with 20 and he posted a 2.91 ERA in his first full season at the High-A level. The Dominican right-hander, who re-signed with the A's rather than elect minor league free agency this off-season, struck-out 71 in 68 innings. He held opposing batters to a .203 average and walked 28.

Left-hander [A.J. Huttenlocker](#) had the team's best ERA with a 1.83 mark and he led all Stockton relievers with 69 innings pitched. Huttenlocker showed impressive command, walking only 12 against 60 strike-outs. He also allowed only three homeruns and had a 1.07 WHIP. He did a good job of keeping the ball on the ground and improved as the season went on despite the heavy workload. A 44th-round pick in 2009, Huttenlocker has been impressive at every level in which he has competed and he should get an opportunity at the Double-A level next season.

Josh Lansford also showed impressive command out of the Ports' bullpen. The converted infielder walked only 11 in 58.1 innings. He also struck-out 68 and held opposing batters to a .200 average. Like his younger brother Jared, Josh proved to be a groundball pitcher for the Ports, inducing nearly 1.5 groundouts for every flyout and allowing only four homeruns. Josh, whose fastball touched as high as 95 MPH during the season, should move on to Midland next season, as well.

Scott Deal and Connor Hoehn both got a lot of work out of the Stockton bullpen. Deal, in his second season with the Ports, posted a 4.92 ERA in 64 innings. He struck-out 43 and walked 26. The right-hander out of Washington state was originally drafted by the A's in the fifth round in 2005. He is a minor league free agent this off-season and will be 25-years-old throughout next year. Deal spent three seasons at the Low-A level with Kane County before moving up to Stockton in 2010.

Hoehn had a strange season for the Ports. His ERA was 5.21, but, at times, he looked like the best pitcher on the staff. He finished second on the team in saves with seven and had an impressive 59:12 K:BB ratio in 48.1 innings. He also held opposing batters to a .214 average. Hoehn was sloppy with his location at times, however, and that led to 11 homeruns allowed. He missed some time during the season with minor injuries. Despite the high ERA and high homer total, Hoehn improved both his K/9 and BB/9 ratios over his 2010 season and lowered his WHIP nearly .2. He should get an opportunity with Midland next season and could be a breakout candidate if he can cut down on the homeruns allowed.

Veteran Michael Benacka joined the team in June after rehabbing an injury that cost him the first half of the season. Benacka was his typical high-strike-out/high-walk self while with Stockton. In 31.2 innings, he struck-out 30 and walked 15. Opposing batters hit only .214 against him and he posted a 2.84 ERA.

## **Oakland A's 2011 Rule 5 Preview**

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Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Oct 31, 2011

The deadline for protecting prospects from the 2011 Rule 5 draft is merely weeks away. The Oakland A's have already had some activity impacting the 40-man roster this off-season, but the A's could still add players to the roster to protect them from the Rule 5 draft in December. We take a look at the players who could be added to the A's roster or impacted by the Rule 5 draft.

### **The Rule 5 Draft Rules**

Any player not on a team's 40-man roster who signed his first professional contract in 2008 or earlier who was at least 19 years old at the time he signed and any player who signed his first professional contract in 2007 or earlier who was at least 18 years or younger at the time he signed is eligible for the Rule 5 draft this December.

Teams select in draft order until all teams have declined to select players. Once a player is selected from an organization, that organization can pull back another eligible player to be protected. Teams that select a player must keep that player on their 25-man roster for the entire regular season or offer him back to his original team. Teams generally set their rosters in advance of the 40-man roster in late November.

There is a minor league portion of the draft, but determining what players are exposed in that draft is tricky because it involves knowing whether players have been placed on a Triple-A or Double-A roster during the post-season. That information is usually kept secret by most organizations, so we won't address that part of the draft in this article.

As of October 31, the A's had no open slots on their active 40-man roster. The roster composition will be changing soon, however. Rich Harden, Coco Crisp, David DeJesus, Josh Willingham and Hideki Matsui are all expected to file for free agency this week. Sixty-day disabled list members Brett Anderson, Dallas Braden, Joey Devine, Trystan Magnuson and Daric Barton will need to be added back onto the active 40-man roster. The A's will also likely remove some players from the 40-man roster to open spots and they have a few arbitration-eligible players who may be allowed to pursue free agency.

Last off-season, the A's had a number of their top prospects that they needed to add to the 40-man roster, including Michael Taylor, Adrian Cardenas, Corey Brown (who was later traded) and Sean Doolittle. This year, they don't have nearly as long of list. Both of the A's top picks in the 2008 draft (Jemile Weeks and Tyson Ross) are already members of the Rule 5 draft and the A's added potential minor league free agents Jai Miller and Anthony Recker to the roster before the 2011 season ended, protecting them from the draft as well. Graham Godfrey, who had a breakout campaign on the mound for Sacramento this past season, was also added to the roster during the 2011 campaign, so he won't need to be protected either. The team will still have some difficult decisions to make regarding their roster, however.

Below we highlight some of the players who could be exposed to the Rule 5 draft this year and discuss their chances to be

added to the A's 40-man roster and thus protected from the draft.

## **Notable Rule 5-Eligible Players**

### *Previously Eligible*

**Jermaine Mitchell**: Mitchell has been left unprotected from the past two Rule 5 drafts, but he wasn't much of a candidate to be selected in those previous years given his struggles from 2008 through 2010. The 2011 campaign was a breakthrough for Mitchell, who hit .332 with 15 homers and 16 triples and posted a 960 OPS for Triple-A Sacramento and Double-A Midland. Normally, Mitchell would be a slam-dunk to be protected. He is a solid defensive outfielder who can handle all three positions and he has good speed and plate discipline, all three characteristics making him an ideal fourth outfielder candidate for a team looking for depth through the Rule 5 draft. However, it isn't clear whether Mitchell will be ready for the start of the season.

Mitchell played much of the season with a torn meniscus in his knee. When he went to have the meniscus repaired this off-season, it was discovered that he had some additional structural issues with the knee that needed to be fixed. While the surgery was successful and a full recovery is anticipated, the rehab is six months, meaning he could potentially miss spring training and some, if not all, of April.

In some ways, Mitchell's injury could be a deterrent to teams looking to take him in the draft, and the A's could bank on that fact and risk leaving him exposed. However, it could also be an incentive for a team that has longterm plans for Mitchell. Injured players selected in the Rule 5 draft can be kept on the disabled list for most of the season and can even play up to 30 days in the minor leagues on a rehab assignment. If a team wants a longer look at Mitchell, they can keep him on the DL for much of the year, have him spend a month in the minors and then activate him during the expanded roster month in September, making him less of a risky investment than a player that has to be carried on the active 25-man roster all season.

The A's may have tipped their hand that they aren't going to protect Mitchell when they claimed Cedric Hunter off of waivers from the Padres last week. Hunter is a centerfielder like Mitchell with a solid glove and excellent on-base skills. Hunter doesn't have Mitchell's power or his raw speed, but he is more than three years younger than Mitchell. Of course, with all four of the A's main outfielders/DHs likely to leave the team via free agency this off-season, the A's should have room on their roster for both Hunter and Mitchell, but Hunter's presence certainly protects the A's if they lose Mitchell to the Rule 5 draft or if Mitchell's recovery from the knee surgery lingers later into next season than currently anticipated.

**James Simmons**: Simmons was the A's top pick in 2007 and he appeared to be on the verge of the major leagues at the start of the 2009 season. However, he struggled throughout that season with Sacramento. He developed a shoulder problem during that season as well that ultimately required labrum surgery. The surgery cost him the 2010 season and he went unprotected and unclaimed during that year's Rule 5 draft. This year, he made it back on the mound for the second half of the season. He threw 47.2 innings, mostly for High-A Stockton. Splitting his time between the rotation and the bullpen, Simmons posted a 4.91 ERA. He had his trademark fastball command and posted a 36:6 K:BB ratio, but his velocity was down and he was very hittable for much of the season. He finished with 56 hits allowed. If his arm strength returns next season, Simmons could re-emerge on the top prospect radar quickly, but given his numbers for the 2011 season, he is likely to go unprotected in this year's Rule 5 draft.

**Travis Banwart**: Like Simmons, Banwart was eligible for the Rule 5 last year, but went unclaimed. The right-hander was selected in the fourth round of the 2007 draft by the A's. He had an up-and-down 2011 campaign for Sacramento, finishing with a 4.63 ERA in 149.2 innings. Banwart had a solid 120: 46 K:BB ratio, but he allowed 22 homers and was a flyball pitcher in general for the River Cats. He has a good slider and a decent fastball. Banwart had some arm soreness early in his career that limited his innings some, but he has generally been durable, tossing at least 146 innings in each of the past three seasons.

With the A's current roster construction, Banwart isn't likely to be added given the organization's depth in terms of young starting pitching. That could change if the A's make some moves to trade some of that starting pitching for non-roster prospects. A final decision about whether to add Banwart to the roster is probably going to go down to the deadline.

**Carlos Hernandez**: Hernandez is in a similar position to Banwart. The left-hander was selected by the A's as a draft-and-follow out of high school in 2006, meaning he actually signed with the organization in 2007. Although not blessed with an overpowering fastball, Hernandez has risen steadily through the A's organization and has won at every level. This past season, his ERA was a career-high 5.27, but he had a number of strong outings mixed in with a few very poor ones. The A's have always admired Hernandez's toughness on the mound and his ability to pitch above his talent level. As an organization, they still haven't decided whether they see Hernandez as a starter or a reliever in the big leagues, although he has been a starter for most of his minor league career.

Like Banwart, Hernandez probably doesn't fit on the A's roster as it currently stands. However, if the A's don't tender a contract to left-handed reliever Craig Breslow or if they trade one of their starters, they could consider protecting

Hernandez. He is currently pitching in the Mexican Winter League where he could catch the eye of another organization if he pitches well.

**Jared Lansford:** Lansford was selected in the second round by the A's in 2005. The son of former A's star Carney Lansford, Jared was once one of the A's top relief prospects, but command issues have held him back the past few seasons. The right-hander had a 4.54 ERA in 81.1 innings this season, mostly with Double-A Midland. He did improve his walk totals (28 in 81.1 innings versus 27 in 54 innings the year before), but he still hasn't figured out how to miss many bats (48 strike-outs this year), something that hurt him this season. Lansford is an extreme groundball pitcher and he gets excellent movement on his sinking fastball. Given his mediocre strike-out and ERA totals the past two seasons, he is likely not to be protected in this draft, however.

**Josh Lansford:** Jared's older brother Josh was picked up by the A's as a free agent during the 2010 season. He began his career as a third-baseman but converted to the mound in 2008. Lansford pitched well for High-A Stockton this season, posting a 2.78 ERA with a 68:11 K:BB ratio in 58.1 innings. He also saw a spike in his velocity, sitting in the 91-93 MPH range and occasionally touching 95. Lansford has never pitched above the High-A level, however, so it would be a surprise if the A's chose to protect him from the Rule 5 draft, especially given their current bullpen depth.

**Justin Souza:** Souza was a member of the A's 40-man roster in 2010, but he suffered a broken elbow at the end of that season and was removed from the roster as he recovered from the injury. He missed the first part of the season, but managed to pitch in 63 innings for Double-A Midland and Triple-A Sacramento. Souza posted a 3.71 ERA and had a 48:13 K:BB ratio. The right-hander, who was a ninth-round selection of the Seattle Mariners in 2006, has excellent arm strength and looked like a promising relief prospect before the elbow injury. Although he wasn't 100 percent himself in 2011, he was healthy and a team that liked Souza's work in the past might be tempted to grab him in the draft. The A's aren't likely to protect Souza given the right-handed relief depth they already have on their roster, but as with Banwart and Hernandez, that could change if the A's make a few deals.

**Matt Sulentic:** The A's second pick in 2006 behind Trevor Cahill has had a strange minor league career. He began his career tearing through the Northwest League before stumbling badly in 2007 in the Midwest League. He had solid 2008 and 2009 seasons before suffering from a complete power outage in 2010. This year, Sulentic's power was a little better, but he still missed the .400 SLG mark for the second straight season. He did show good speed, however, swiping 24 bases in 31 chances and he has made himself into an excellent defensive corner outfielder. Although Sulentic hasn't hit lower than .272 since the 2007 season, his lack of power and his relatively low walk totals have kept him stuck at the Double-A level for the past three seasons. Given that the A's have yet to push him to Triple-A, he isn't likely to be protected in the Rule 5 draft by the team.

**Gary Daley:** Daley was signed by the A's as a minor league free agent at the tail-end of the 2010 season. Since then he has become something of a pet project for A's minor league pitching coordinator Gil Patterson. Daley was a third-round pick of the St. Louis Cardinals in 2006 out of Cal Poly. He struggled badly in the Cardinals' organization with his command. While his command can still come and go at times, Daley has improved significantly in that area since he started working with Patterson. He walked 67 in 148.2 innings for Stockton, Midland and Sacramento this season and posted a 4.90 ERA. He was set to be a minor league free agent this off-season, but the A's re-signed him. While the A's clearly think Daley is a talent worth devoting more time to, the team is unlikely to add him to the roster given his command issues.

**Josh Horton:** Horton was the A's second-round pick in 2007. He went unprotected in the Rule 5 draft last season and was not claimed. Horton was a non-roster invitee to the A's big league spring training this year and he was given an opportunity at the Triple-A level for the first time. He was also asked to serve as a bench player for the first time and he struggled in that role, batting only .217 in 26 games with the River Cats. Horton also had two bad hamstring injuries that cost him the majority of the season. The A's love Horton's glove and his ability to get on-base, but given his injury problems last season and his struggles with the River Cats, he is likely to remain unprotected for this year's draft.

**Julio Ramos:** Ramos was one of the A's most promising young left-handed pitching prospects at the start of the 2010 season. However, he was cut down by an elbow injury that season and has missed the past two seasons after undergoing Tommy John surgery. Ramos is nearly done with his rehab and has been throwing in games, but given the two years he has missed because of the injury, he is a longshot to be protected for this draft.

**Jose Guzman:** Guzman has been one of the A's steadiest minor league relievers the past two seasons. The right-hander saved 20 games for the Stockton Ports this season and had a 2.91 ERA in 68 innings. He struck-out 71 and walked 28 while holding opposing batters to a .203 average. Signed in 2005, Guzman was eligible for minor league free agency, but he chose to re-sign with Oakland at the start of the off-season. Guzman doesn't have a blazing fastball, but his 90-92 MPH fastball looks harder than it is thanks to a good breaking ball and a solid change-up. Given that Guzman hasn't pitched above the High-A level yet, it seems unlikely that the A's will add him to the roster, however.

*Eligible For The First Time*

**Shane Peterson:** Peterson was one of three prospects the A's received from St. Louis for Matt Holliday in 2009, and he's

the only one of the three still with the A's organization. Peterson was a second-round pick of the Cardinals in 2008 out of Long Beach State. The first-baseman/outfielder had been stuck at Double-A Midland since being acquired by Oakland until injuries opened a spot for him with Sacramento for part of the 2011 season. He played very well for the River Cats, batting .293/.377/.479 in 46 games. Peterson struggled after a late June demotion to Midland and wound-up batting only .260/.357/.379 in 59 games for the Rockhounds despite getting off to a good start with Midland.

Peterson is an extremely patient hitter who walked 53 times in 105 games. He has also hit for average for most of his career. He doesn't have the traditional power one expects from a corner outfielder or first-baseman and he doesn't have the traditional speed of a centerfielder, but he does a lot of things well. Peterson (23) is young for a player drafted out of college in 2008. The A's have a lot of roster decisions to make regarding their outfielders, and Peterson will likely come up in any discussions about the outfield depth chart. Whether the A's protect him may be tied to whether they sign any of their four outfield free agents.

**Brett Hunter:** The A's made some headlines in 2008 when they inked their seventh-round pick, Hunter, to a seven-figure signing bonus. Hunter was highly regarded in college but had injury questions entering the draft. Since signing with Oakland, he has been plagued with injuries and mechanical issues, although the 2011 season was his most promising to date. The right-hander pitched at three levels (High-A, Double-A and Triple-A) and had a 3.08 ERA with 46 strike-outs and 23 walks in 49.2 innings. He held opposing batters to a .220 average and allowed only four homeruns. It was the first time in his professional career that he had double the number of innings pitched than batters walked.

Despite Hunter's improvements, he is still not a finished product and his command isn't major league ready yet. The A's have made a significant financial investment in Hunter, but given their current bullpen depth, they may risk leaving him unprotected.

**Tyler Ladendorf:** Ladendorf was acquired by the A's during the 2009 season in exchange for shortstop Orlando Cabrera. Ladendorf was a second-round pick by the Minnesota Twins in 2008 out of Howard Community College. Since coming to the A's, his glove has stood out, but his bat has yet to come around. He had a decent season at the plate with Stockton in 2010, batting .274 with 20 stolen bases in 24 chances, but he walked only 35 times in 126 games and slugged .381. This year, Ladendorf hit only .224 with a 623 OPS in 129 games, most of them for Double-A Midland.

Ladendorf is arguably the most talented defensive player in the A's system. He can play all of the up-the-middle positions – shortstop, second base and centerfield – and plays them well. A team looking for a defensive bench player might be intrigued by Ladendorf, although his struggles with the bat could be too big of a deterrent. The A's currently have Jemile Weeks, Cliff Pennington, Adam Rosales, Eric Sogard, Scott Sizemore and Adrian Cardenas on the 40-man roster, so there probably isn't room for Ladendorf unless the A's make some moves involving a couple of those players.

**Petey Paramore:** Paramore was the A's third-round pick in 2008 and many at the time believed he profiled similarly to A's catcher Landon Powell: a switch-hitting catcher with power and a good eye, as well as good receiving skills. Paramore's glove has, for the most part, come as advertised, and he has demonstrated the ability to take a walk, but his bat has never lived up to his draft profile. Paramore began the 2011 season with Double-A Midland, but he was demoted to High-A Stockton after hitting only .192 in 45 games. He managed only a .235 average with Stockton, although he did homer seven times in 119 at-bats. For his career, he has never posted an OPS above .733 in any one season. The A's currently have four catchers on their 40-man roster and good minor league catching depth in general, so they are unlikely to protect Paramore despite his good glove and his history as a high draft pick.

**Dusty Coleman:** Coleman was the A's 28th-round pick in 2008, but he was a draft-eligible sophomore, so the A's went over-slot to sign him to a six-figure bonus. The shortstop has flashed an excellent glove and good power since turning pro, but he had two seasons heavily impacted by a broken wrist and has struggled to keep his strike-out totals down. Coleman is currently playing in the Arizona Fall League as a member of the Phoenix Desert Dogs' taxi squad, meaning he can only appear in games on Wednesdays and Saturdays. He is currently struggling in Arizona, with only three hits in 28 at-bats. Coleman did hit 15 homers and he stole 21 bases this season for High-A Stockton, although he struck-out 171 times in 120 games. He played well in a 10-game stint with Triple-A Sacramento late in the season. Coleman has a lot of talent, but the development time he missed in 2009 and 2010 has hurt him. The A's will probably leave him unprotected for this year's draft.

**Anthony Capra:** Capra is currently representing the A's at the Arizona Fall League. The lefty had a tough 2011 season, a season during which he lost the feel for his mechanics and spent a portion of the summer in Arizona working with Garvin Alston on regaining a consistent motion. Capra walked 57 in 107.1 innings this season and has walked seven in seven innings at the AFL thus far. Although he has yet to find his way in two seasons at the Double-A level, Capra is still only those two years removed from being amongst the leaders in strike-outs for all of the minor leagues (170 in 152 innings in 2009). He has arguably the best change-up in the A's minor league system. Capra, who was the A's fourth-round pick in 2008, is not likely to be protected given his recent struggles, but a good season in 2012 could land him a spot on the roster next year.

**Ben Hornbeck:** If Capra has the best change-up in the A's system, Hornbeck's change-up is "best 1A." Like Capra,

Hornbeck has utilized that change-up to rack-up impressive strike-out totals throughout his career. Also like Capra, Hornbeck is coming off of a disappointing 2011 season, although for a different reason than Capra. Hornbeck appeared in only 17 games – all in relief – this season thanks to arm troubles. After spending most of his career as a starter, Hornbeck was moved to the bullpen this year and it is a move that is likely to facilitate a quicker rise to the big leagues. He isn't a hard-thrower, but hitters have a tough time picking up the ball against him and he is able to pitch backwards thanks to that change-up. Had he been healthy all season, Hornbeck likely would have been a strong candidate for the 40-man roster, but his health issues make that less likely.

**Jeremy Barfield:** Barfield was the A's eighth-round pick in 2008 out of San Jacinto Junior College. The outfielder put together solid seasons in 2009 and 2010, but he struggled in his first season in the Texas League in 2011. In 131 games, he hit .257 and managed only a .384 SLG after slugging .417 with Stockton in 2010. Barfield has the best outfield throwing arm in the A's system and has shown flashes of being a profile corner outfielder with the bat. However, he has yet to develop the consistent power one would expect from a 6'5", 240 pound outfielder. He is likely not to be protected in the draft this year, but he remains an intriguing prospect thanks to his raw tools. Barfield is the one of the youngest players in the A's "first-time eligible group," having just turned 23 in July.

**Trey Barham:** Barham wasn't a highly touted player when he was selected in the 25th-round out of VMI in 2008. However, since he turned pro, he has produced nothing but positive results. In 163 appearances, he has a career 2.68 ERA with 202 hits allowed in 225 innings pitched. He has struck-out 181 while walking 74 and has allowed less than half of one homerun per nine innings pitched. Barham saw a dip in his K:BB ratio this season with Double-A Midland, but his other numbers remained in-line with what he produced for Low-A Kane County in 2009 and High-A Stockton in 2010. He relies on deception and off-speed pitches for success, but, like Carlos Hernandez, he has shown he can pitch above his talent level. Like Hernandez, Barham's chances of making the A's 40-man roster this off-season are likely contingent on whether the A's trade or release any of their current major league left-handed relievers. Hernandez is also ahead of Barham on the A's depth chart, so Barham's chances of being protected this off-season are more remote than Hernandez's.

**Ryan Doolittle:** Doolittle has struggled arm issues since being drafted a slot behind Barham in 2008. The right-hander has pitched well when he has been healthy, but he has only logged 47 appearances in four seasons (he missed the entire 2009 campaign). Doolittle has arguably the best command and pitch-efficiency of any reliever in the A's system. In 112 career minor league innings, Doolittle has struck-out 8.36 batters per nine innings while walking 1.21 batters per nine innings. He was healthy during the A's fall Instructional League and was throwing in the 90-92 MPH range. Given his history of health issues, Doolittle isn't a likely candidate to be selected in the Rule 5 draft, so the A's will probably pass on protecting him this time around.

**Shawn Haviland:** Haviland was a breakout performer in 2010 with High-A Stockton when he struck-out 169 in 153.2 innings. However, his first taste of Double-A didn't go as smoothly. Haviland struggled the entire season with Midland, posting a 7.08 ERA in 143.2 innings. He gave up 205 hits and 24 homeruns and he struck-out only 110. The A's haven't given up on Haviland and he will have another chance at Double-A next season, but he isn't likely to be added to the roster this off-season.

**Jason Christian:** Christian, like Coleman, had a serious injury in 2009 and it has dramatically impacted his development. Christian was the A's fifth-round pick in 2008 and he starred for short-season Vancouver that year. He was off to a good start the next season with Low-A Kane County when he injured his shoulder. That injury cost him nearly half of 2009 and a reoccurrence of the injury cut into his 2010 season, as well. In 2011, he found himself in more of a reserve role for Stockton and Midland and he hit .266 with a .684 OPS in 76 games. Christian has a good glove and can play all around the infield. He also has good speed, but he hasn't shown much power at the High-A and Double-A levels and he has fallen behind players such as Coleman and Ladendorf on the A's middle infield depth chart. He isn't likely to be protected.

**Other Eligible Players:** Jonathan Joseph, Pedro Vidal, Jose Crisotomo, Douglas Landaeta, Kelvin Rojas, Bruce Billings, Scott Deal, Fabian Williamson, Mitch LeVier, Jonathan Ortiz, any free agents the A's sign to minor league deals before the first week of December and any players the A's remove from their 40-man roster who clear waivers before the first week of December.

## **2011 Year In Review: Burlington Pitchers**

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Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Oct 25,  
2011

Our "2011 Year In Review" series continues with a look at the pitchers for the Oakland A's Low-A affiliate.

## **Burlington Bees Pitching At A Glance**



**Team ERA:** 3.45 (second in the league out of 16 teams)

**Strike-outs/Walks:** 1028/400 (fifth-least and fourth-least in the league, respectively)

**Team WHIP:** 1.24 (tied for first)

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*Pitchers with at least 50 innings pitched are discussed in this article.*

It was a successful first season in Burlington for the Oakland A's, as their Midwest League affiliate finished fifth in the league in wins and earned a playoff berth. Although they fell short of a Midwest League title, the Bees featured a number of strong individual performances, as well as a solid overall team performance.

As is often the case with Midwest League teams, pitching was the backbone of the Bees' success, especially during the team's red-hot start to the season. Burlington went 45-25 during the first half of the year, securing a first-half division title. As a number of their top starting pitchers graduated to High-A and above, the Bees slumped some in the second half.

Two of those early season stars were right-hander [A.J. Griffin](#) and left-hander [Jake Brown](#). Both breezed through their first two months in the Midwest League and were rewarded with early season promotions. Griffin made eight starts for the Bees, going 4-0 with a 1.56 ERA. His first start for Burlington was a near no-hitter and he never looked back from that outing. He struck-out 46 and walked only five in 52 innings and he allowed only 36 hits. His WHIP was a team-best 0.79. Griffin would ultimately pitch for all four of the A's full-season affiliates in 2011 and he finished with 156 strike-outs and only 32 walks in 160.2 innings.

Brown nearly matched Griffin's Burlington numbers. In eight outings, he went 4-0 with a 1.62 ERA and he posted a 39:6 K:BB ratio. The soft-tossing lefty utilized an array of breaking pitches and change-ups to keep the Midwest League hitters off-balance. He was unable to replicate that same level of success with the High-A Stockton Ports, although he improved with Stockton as the year went on.

With Griffin and Brown moving on to higher levels early in the season, the ace mantle fell to right-hander [Blake Hassebrock](#). The A's eighth-round pick in 2010 had a rough first professional season, but he righted the ship in 2011. In 26 starts, he posted a 2.64 ERA. Hassebrock had a 110:46 K:BB ratio in 139.2 innings and he allowed only nine homeruns. He also induced nearly two groundouts for every flyout.

Right-hander [Josh Bowman](#) was also a steady hand in the Bees' rotation. He led the team with 154.2 innings pitched and posted a 3.55 ERA. Bowman, like Hassebrock, did a good job of keeping the ball on the ground and he allowed only nine homeruns. He struck-out 98 and walked 44. Bowman's ERA jumped more than a run after the All-Star break, but his peripheral stats were nearly the same for both halves of the season.

Nate Long, [Jonathan Joseph](#), [Jose Macias](#) and [Tyler Vail](#) were the other pitchers who logged a significant number of starts for the Bees. Long split his season between the rotation and the bullpen, starting 15 games and relieving in 11. He posted a 3.42 ERA and saved three games. As a starter, the UT-Arlington alum had a 3.62 ERA with a 74:34 K:BB ratio in 79.2 innings. He posted a 2.86 ERA and an 18:8 K:BB ratio in 28.1 relief innings, most of which came early in the season. Long was the A's 16th-round pick in 2009 and had a 3.10 ERA for short-season Vancouver in 2010. The right-hander saw a number of improvements in his statline from 2010, including a jump in his K/IP ratio and a fall in his H/IP and HR/IP ratios.

Joseph missed the first six weeks of the season with an injury. He too split time between the rotation and the bullpen, logging 14 starts and seven relief appearances. The Dominican right-hander had a 3.05 ERA between short-season and Low-A ball in 2010, but he struggled to replicate those numbers in 2011. He had a 5.67 ERA in 81 innings for the Bees. Joseph allowed an uncharacteristically high number of homers (11) and gave up more hits than innings pitched. He also struck-out only 73 in 81 innings after striking out 90 in 94.1 innings in 2010.

Macias was impressive for Burlington. The right-hander had a 3.46 ERA in 80.2 innings over 16 starts for the Bees. He began his season at extended spring training, joining the Bees in late May. Macias struggled in June and July and was actually sent down to short-season Vermont for a brief period. After four impressive starts with the Lake Monsters, Macias returned and dominated for Burlington down-the-stretch. Over his final seven starts, he allowed six earned runs in 41 innings pitched (1.31 ERA) and struck-out 33 while walking six. For his entire year, Macias allowed only five homeruns in 102 innings pitched and posted an 83:24 K:BB ratio. The former collegiate infielder is in only his

second full year of being a pitcher.

Vail came into the season as arguably the most highly touted pitcher on the Bees' staff. He was also the youngest, and it showed. The A's fifth-round pick out of high school in 2010, Vail made 13 starts for the Bees. In 57 innings, he posted a 5.68 ERA and a 34:28 K:BB ratio. Things actually got worse for Vail when he was sent down to short-season Vermont. He posted a 6.05 ERA and walked more batters than he struck-out in 38.2 innings for the Lake Monsters. Vail actually had good life on his fastball throughout the season, reaching the mid-90s at times, but he struggled to learn to command his secondary pitches. The A's are still high on the soon-to-be 20-year-old and he should get another crack with Burlington in 2012.

Burlington had an outstanding bullpen throughout the season, anchored by closers [Daniel Tenholder](#) and [Zach Thornton](#). Tenholder led the team with 11 saves and he posted a 3.02 ERA in 53.2 innings. The slim right-hander struck-out 58 and walked 18, while allowing four homeruns. It was a second strong season in a row for the A's 2009 19th-round pick, who had a 1.86 ERA in 38.2 innings for short-season Vancouver in 2010.

Thornton spent time as both a closer and a longman for the Bees this season. He finished the year with 83 innings pitched, good for fourth-most on the team. He tied Tenholder with 40 relief appearances and he had five saves. The [Oregon](#) alum posted a 2.39 ERA and he struck-out 82 in 83 innings while walking only 22. Thornton also allowed only two homeruns and held opposing batters to a .204 average. He got a brief taste of Double-A baseball at the end of the year, tossing an impressive three innings for the Midland Rockhounds. In those three frames, he allowed only one hit and one walk and he struck-out four. Thornton was the A's 23rd-round pick in 2010.

Dominican right-hander Pedro Vidal was another stalwart in the Bees' pen. He was nearly unhittable, posting a 1.95 ERA in 69.1 innings. He struck-out 73 and walked 23 and held opposing batters to a .185 average. Vidal also saved five games. This was his first opportunity at playing full-season baseball.

[Drew Tyson](#) was also a workhorse out of the Burlington bullpen. The right-hander had 33 appearances and posted a 3.81 ERA in 54.1 innings pitched. The A's 17th-round pick in 2010 had a 36:19 K:BB ratio and held opposing batters to a .246 average. He also made two appearances for Vermont, tossing three scoreless innings with three strike-outs.

## **2011 Year In Review: Burlington Hitters**

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Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Oct 27,  
2011

Our "2011 Year In Review" series returns with a look at the hitters on the Oakland A's Low-A affiliate.

### **Burlington Bees Offense At A Glance**

**Team BA:** .245 (11th out of 16 teams)

**Runs Scored:** 611 (seventh out of 16 teams)

**Team OPS:** 689 (eighth out of 16 teams)

**Team Stolen Bases:** 146 (sixth out of 16 teams)

**Team Slugging Percentage:** .365 (10th out of 16 teams)

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*Note: this article covers all hitters who had at least 240 at-bats for the Bees this season.*

As was detailed in our review of the 2011 Burlington pitching staff, it was the pitching that led the way for the Bees for much of the 2011 season. The Midwest League is a difficult league for hitters and that fact was reflected in the team batting numbers throughout the league. Burlington's overall offensive numbers weren't pretty, but they were good enough to finish in the middle of the pack in almost all categories.

Despite the mediocre overall team offensive numbers, there were a few strong performances in the Bees' line-up. No performance was stronger than that of first-baseman/DH [Josh Whitaker](#), who was in the MVP discussion for the league at the end of the year and finished with a spot on the Midwest

League's post-season All-Star team.

Whitaker's year began at extended spring training, but it ended with him leading the league in batting average with a .326 mark. His 957 OPS was also tops in the league and he hit 17 homers in only 396 at-bats. Although not a speedy runner, Whitaker managed to swipe 10 bags in 12 opportunities and he collected 34 doubles and three triples. He hit .339 after the All-Star break and posted a 1007 OPS. He would be promoted to High-A Stockton for the Cal League finals and hit a homerun in that series. Whitaker's season was the best Midwest League offensive performance for any A's prospects since Jeff Baisley's MVP campaign in 2006. It will be interesting to see what kind of numbers Whitaker can put up in the California League next year.

No other Bees' hitter posted an OPS above 800 on the season. The next best offensive performance came from A.J. Kirby-Jones, who split time with Whitaker at first base and DH throughout the season. In fact, it was an early season injury to Kirby-Jones that gave Whitaker an opportunity to play everyday and establish himself in the Bees' line-up. Kirby-Jones struggled with injuries for much of the first half of the season and never found the groove that allowed him to post an 887 OPS in the Northwest League in 2010. Still, despite his struggles and those injuries, Kirby-Jones managed to finish the year with a 775 OPS and 13 homers in 325 at-bats. He walked 56 times in 94 games and had a .360 OBP and also drove-in 50 runs. Kirby-Jones had a strong fall Instructional League camp and he should team with Whitaker to form an intimidating middle of the line-up for the Stockton Ports next season.

Third-baseman Tony Thompson finished second on the team behind Whitaker in homeruns with 14 in 397 at-bats. Like Kirby-Jones, Thompson struggled with injuries and inconsistency throughout the season. He hit .290 before the All-Star break, but only .226 after. He demonstrated good contact skills, striking out only 57 times in 108 games, but he walked only 37 times. His OPS for the season was 738. Thompson, the A's sixth-round pick in 2010, has a promising bat, but he has yet to reach his full potential as a pro. He should have the opportunity to move up to High-A Stockton next season, although where he plays could depend on where the A's decide to start 2011 third-round pick B.A. Vollmuth, also a third-baseman.

Infielder Ryan Pineda joined Whitaker, Kirby-Jones and Thompson as the only Bees' regulars to post OPSs above 700 for the season. Pineda, a Cal-State Northridge alum and 2010 draft pick, had a 706 OPS for the year. Unlike Thompson, Pineda warmed as the weather did. He hit .200 before the All-Star break, but bumped that number up to .297 after the break. He had a 773 OPS after the break that included a .420 SLG. Pineda was a power hitter at Northridge and he has had to adjust his approach for wood bats. His strong second half is a good indication that those adjustments are starting to click and he could be in-line for a break-through season in 2011 with Stockton similar to the one Michael Gilmartin put together for the Ports this year.

At the start of the season, it looked like outfielder Douglas Landaeta was on his way to a break-out season. The native of Venezuela hit .291 with a 763 OPS before the All-Star break and was named to the midseason All-Star team. His production fell off of a cliff during the second half, however, and he hit only .193 with a 518 OPS. He finished the year with a .250 average and a 661 OPS. Landaeta has shown flashes of offensive potential throughout his young minor league career. He hit .293 for short-season Vancouver in 2010 and hit well this season with runners on base and runners in scoring position. He still has some work to do to make the next step forward with his development, however. He will be 23 throughout next season.

Royce Consigli is another young outfielder who started the season red-hot but struggled to maintain that pace throughout the season. The native of Canada didn't turn 20 until after the regular season had ended, making him the youngest position player on the Bees' roster. He hit .338 with a 901 OPS out of the gate for Burlington in April. He hit only .218 in May and vacillated between hot-and-cold the rest of the season. At season's end, he finished with a .247/.335/.350 slash-line and 16 stolen bases in 25 chances. At his best, Consigli was a game-changer for the Bees. He has always been a patient hitter and he walked 59 times in 127 games this year while striking out 83 times. Consigli also showed he could be disruptive on the basepaths, although he is still learning to pick his spots to steal. At 6'2", 220, he should continue to add more power as he grows into his frame. Defensively, Consigli is still a work-in-progress, but he has the tools to be a solid defender. The A's may have him repeat at the Low-A level next year given his age, but if he gets off to a fast start, he could make a mid-season move to Stockton.

Nino Leyja was another young player on the Bees' roster. Although he has been in the A's system since 2008, Leyja just turned 21 in early October. His development has been uneven, but he showed some signs of improvement in 2011. Like Consigli, Leyja got off to a fast start this season. Despite a wrist injury, he hit .329 in April with a 17:13 BB: K ratio. He was unable to maintain that pace in May

and June, but saw an uptick in production in July. Then in August he showed a burst of power, hitting five homeruns in 101 at-bats. He had hit only six homeruns total in his career before the month of August. Leyja sacrificed his plate discipline (28 strike-outs and only three walks) to post those power numbers in August and that isn't likely a trend the A's will want him to continue next season. Leyja profiles best as a top-of-the-order hitter. He has good speed (he stole 28 bases in 33 chances), but needs to continue to improve his plate discipline. Leyja can handle both shortstop and second base and that positional flexibility could give him an opportunity with Stockton next season. Despite the fact that he has already spent parts of two seasons in the Midwest League, it wouldn't be a disaster for Leyja to repeat the league again in 2012 given his age.

As the A's second-round pick in 2010, Yordy Cabrera came into the 2011 season as the most highly touted position player on the Bees' roster. He had a solid, though not spectacular, first half offensively, batting .254 with a 747 OPS. Cabrera struggled down-the-stretch, however, batting only .210 with a 587 OPS after the break. He also struggled with his glove throughout the season, committing 38 errors at shortstop.

Although Cabrera was 20 years old throughout the season (he turned 21 in early September), he was much more inexperienced than most 20-year-old professional ballplayers. Cabrera was born in the Dominican Republic and moved to Florida for high school. He had to learn English when he arrived in the States and was held back a year to allow for his language skills to catch-up. Consequently, he turned 19 only a few weeks after signing with Oakland out of high school. The A's were impressed with Cabrera's approach during spring training and felt he was ready for the challenge of full-season ball in his first year as a pro. Although he struggled, he showed flashes of the talent that made him a second-round pick. Cabrera stole 23 bases in 29 chances and had a .422 SLG before the All-Star break. He also hit considerably better versus right-handed pitching (723 OPS) than he did versus southpaws (506 OPS) despite being right-handed himself. Although he had a rough 2011 season, Cabrera could still find himself as the starting shortstop with the Stockton Ports on Opening Day next season. He should find the California League's hitting environment more to his liking.

Shortstop Wade Kirkland shared time with Cabrera at shortstop and also saw playing time at second and third base. The A's 11th-round pick in 2010 never got his bat going this season. In 258 at-bats, he hit only .217 with a 612 OPS. Those numbers were a drop-off from his 2010 campaign, during which he hit .271 with a 646 OPS. Kirkland did walk more this season. In roughly the same number of at-bats, he doubled his walk total (nine in 2010; 20 in 2011) although his strike-outs also increased (59 to 73, respectively). His on-base percentage, in particular, will have to improve for him to advance in the A's system.

Although he was replaced late in the season by 2011 fifth-round pick Beau Taylor, John Nester compiled the most at-bats for any Bees' backstop this season. Known mostly for his glove, Nester hit only .213 with a 644 OPS in 249 at-bats. Whether he moves up to Stockton next season will depend on where the A's send Taylor, as well as catching prospect Max Stassi and another 2011 draft pick, Nick Rickles.

Speaking of Taylor, the University of Central Florida alum made a strong impression in his brief time with the Bees' at the end of the 2011 season. He started off slowly, but hit his stride in August, batting .321 with a .408 OBP and an 813 OPS. He finished his first stint at the Low-A level with a .293/.367/.367 line in 43 games. Taylor is also a solid defensive catcher and is part of a strong group of catching prospects in the A's system.

## 2011 Year In Review: Lake Monsters Hitters

Story URL: <http://stlcardinals.scout.com/2/1116217.html>

Melissa Lockard  
OaklandClubhouse.com

Oct  
11,  
2011

Our "2011 Year In Review" series returns with a look at the hitters on the Oakland A's New York-Penn League affiliate.

### Vermont Lake Monsters Offense At A Glance

**Team BA:** .251 (sixth out of 14 teams)  
**Runs Scored:** 344 (sixth out of 14 teams)  
**Team OPS:** 683 (ninth out of 14 teams)  
**Team Stolen Bases:** 117 (first in the league)

**Team Slugging Percentage:** .349 (seventh out of 14 teams)

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*Note: this article covers all hitters who had at least 100 at-bats for the Lake Monsters this season.*

After a long affiliation with the Vancouver Canadians of the Northwest League, the Oakland A's began a new partnership at the short-season A level in 2011. Teaming up with the Vermont Lake Monsters of the New York-Penn League, the A's put forth a successful season in their new short-season league, earning a division title and a post-season berth.

The Lake Monsters' offense was in the top half of the league and it was an offense built mostly on speed, as well as a little bit of power. The majority of the Lake Monsters' position players were making their professional debuts in 2011, having been drafted in June. Others were in their second years as pros. Like the Northwest League, where the A's had their previous short-season affiliation, the New York-Penn League is a pitcher-friendly environment, a fact that was reflected in many of the Lake Monsters' team offensive numbers.

Two players who were unaffected by the pitcher-friendly nature of the New York-Penn League were outfielder Bobby Crocker and catcher Nick Rickles. Crocker, the A's third overall pick (fourth round) in the 2011, was the A's highest 2011 draft choice to suit up for the Lake Monsters until second overall pick (third round) B.A. Vollmuth joined the team for the final week of the season. Crocker looked every bit the part of a high draft pick throughout his stint with the Lake Monsters. He batted .322 with an 808 OPS in 32 games with Vermont. Crocker clubbed three homers and stole six bases in seven opportunities. He will make the jump to full-season ball in 2012 and has a chance to skip Low-A and land with the High-A Stockton Ports.

Rickles finished second on the team in OPS with an 806 mark. The backstop hit .310 and posted a .364 OBP in 41 games with Vermont. Despite being a catcher, Rickles showed above-average speed, collecting two triples and stealing five bases in six chances. The A's 2011 14th-round draft pick figures to be the Low-A Burlington Bees' everyday catcher next season.

Middle infielder Zhi Fang Pan led the team with a .336 average. Unfortunately for Vermont, Pan was sidelined for 10 days midway through the season with a hand injury. He also left the team before the end of the New York-Penn League campaign to return to his native Taiwan to tryout for their national team. In the 37 games he was with the team, Pan was a force near the top of the line-up. He has a slashing style of hitting and above-average speed. Injuries have limited him somewhat during his first two years as a pro (he had an elbow issue in 2010), but otherwise the A's couldn't be more pleased with the early development of their first amateur free agent signing out of Taiwan. Pan won't turn 21 until November and should be on-track to make the leap to full-season ball in 2012, barring any additional injuries.

Infielder Michael Fabiaschi stepped into an everyday role when Pan left the team for Taiwan and Fabiaschi did a solid job in Pan's stead. The 2010 draft pick was in his second turn through a short-season league, having played for Vancouver last season. The James Madison alum hit .282 with a .382 OBP in 40 games for Vermont this season and hit better than .290 over the final 23 games of the season. He was especially effective with runners on-base (.362 BA and a 984 OBP) and runners in scoring position (.412 BA and 1075 OPS). Fabiaschi spent time at second and third base. He should get a crack at full-season ball next year.

Outfielder Chad Oberacker made a solid first impression as a pro, batting .293 with a .371 OBP in his rookie campaign. The A's 2011 25th-round pick was solid on the base paths, stealing 13 bases in 15 chances. He also showed a solid understanding of the strike-zone, walking 20 times against 30 strike-outs, and played well defensively. The left-handed hitting Oberacker hit .313 with a 777 OPS versus right-handed pitchers, but struggled versus southpaws (.207/465, respectively).

Outfielder Aaron Shipman was another player who flashed above-average speed and showed a solid understanding of the strike-zone. The A's 2010 third-round pick finished second behind Pan on the Lake Monsters with a .385 OBP. He walked more than he struck out (42 walks against 39 strike-outs). When he got on-base, Shipman flashed the speed that made him a two-sport star in high school, swiping 17 bags in 20 chances. The 19-year-old didn't show much power with Vermont, collecting only nine extra-base hits and no homeruns, but the A's expect the 6'0", 175 pound Shipman to add a little more gap power as he matures into his body. Shipman made huge

overall strides with his game after struggling during spring training and the early part of extended spring training. Unfortunately, he was hit by a pitch on his hand during the final week of the regular season, costing him the Instructional League season. Despite that set-back, the A's should push Shipman to Low-A Burlington next season.

Shortstop Sean Jamieson led the team with 27 stolen bases and finished third in the league in that category. Jamieson, the A's 17th-round pick this season, was also by far the team's best defensive infielder. The Canisius alum became a fixture at shortstop for Vermont and led the league in fielding percentage with a .970 mark. He also drew praise for his approach at the plate. Despite batting only .235, Jamieson posted a .350 OBP thanks to 37 walks in 69 games. By the end of the season, he was the everyday lead-off hitter for Vermont. Jamieson has drawn some early comparisons to Mark Ellis. He will make the jump to full-season ball next year and could see time with High-A Stockton thanks to his advanced defensive skills.

Another 2011 draft pick who made a solid impression is outfielder Dusty Robinson. Despite not joining the team until the final day of June, Robinson, the A's 10th-round pick, led the Lake Monsters in homeruns with seven in 128 at-bats. The former Fresno State Bulldog also finished tied for fourth on the team in RBIs. Robinson got off to a very slow start with the Lake Monsters, but finished the year swinging a hot bat. He has work to do on his plate discipline (eight walks against 34 strike-outs), but he has solid power potential and could be in-line for a 20-homer season with Low-A Burlington in 2012.

Catcher Diomedes Lopez finished second to Robinson in homeruns with six. The Dominican native had only 21 hits in 107 at-bats this season, but six left the yard. Lopez had a more balanced approach at the plate in 2010 with the A's Arizona Rookie League affiliate. Whether he jumps to full-season ball in 2012 will likely be determined by the approach he employs during spring training.

Four players who will also be working on improving their BB:K ratios next season are infielders Chad Lewis and Jacob Tanis and outfielders Jordan Tripp and Xavier Macklin. Lewis and Tanis split time at first and third base this season. Lewis was the A's fourth-round pick last season out of a Southern California high school. At times, he flashed promising power, but overall his numbers were disappointing. In 70 games, he hit .238/.279/.332. Lewis doesn't turn 20 until December, so he still has plenty of time to develop. One area he will need to improve in the most is in the area of plate discipline. He struck-out 72 times and managed only 13 walks. He did homer four times and drove-in a team-high 40 runs, however. Lewis also played well in the post-season.

Tanis was the A's 13th-round pick this season out of Mercer. A senior draft pick, the A's expected a little more polish from Tanis in his first season, but he hit only .221 with a 594 OPS. Fatigue may have caught-up to the corner infielder. He hit only .183 in August after batting .258 in July. Tanis was a power hitter with a solid eye in college, but he managed only one homerun and had a 17:42 BB:K ratio. Despite the poor first season, Tanis could still make the jump to full-season ball with a good showing at the A's fall Instructional League and minor league spring training.

Tripp returned to short-season ball after batting only .186 for the AZL A's and the Vancouver Canadians in 2010. The A's 2010 seventh-round pick got off to a hot start with Vermont, but faded down-the-stretch. He still managed to finish third on the team in homeruns with five and he swiped 11 bases in 13 chances. He walked 23 times in 63 games, but struck-out 76 times. Tripp has as much raw ability as anyone in the A's system, but he is still learning to translate that ability into on-the-field success. He should jump to Low-A Burlington next year.

Macklin also got off to a fast start with Vermont. In his first 10 games with the club, he hit .378 with a 939 OPS. His numbers declined significantly after that, however, and he finished the year with a .230/.287/.289 line in 43 games. Macklin was the A's 12th round pick this season and he posted huge numbers in college at NC State A&T. Given his collegiate track record and his high draft position, Macklin will likely get every opportunity this spring to show that he's ready for full-season ball next year.

Signing just before the August deadline, B.A. Vollmuth was only able to appear in four games with the Lake Monsters. Although he didn't have nearly the at-bats to qualify for this article, his contributions during those four games are worth noting, as Vermont was in a win-or-go-home situation for the final week of the season. Vollmuth, the A's second overall pick and first position player selection this year, collected seven hits in 14 at-bats with Vermont. Five of those seven hits went for extra-bases (four doubles and a triple) and he scored eight runs while driving in six.

Vollmuth will enter the 2012 season as one of the A's top third base prospects and depending on how the rest of the system lines up, he could see his first extended time as a professional with High-A Stockton.

### **Prospect Green shifts to outfield for green and gold**

Harrell Miller, Napa Valley Register

Phoenix, AZ — It's that time of year again when our national pastime gets finely focused on the two teams that have worked their way through the season and the playoffs and find themselves in the spotlight of yet another World Series.

That's a beat for the big boys, and I'm sure they'll cover it with their usual aplomb.

Before the month is over, we'll know more about the Rangers from Arlington and the Cardinals from St. Louis than we ever imagined we could know.

Meanwhile, however, in the fading heat of yet another Arizona summer, Major League Baseball's other fall classic is taking place in a half dozen spring training ballparks in the Valley of the Sun.

Thirty big league organizations have sent a handful of their very best minor league players to Phoenix to play in this year's Arizona Fall League.

As it has been for the last 20 years, the AFL is once again minor league baseball's premiere stepping stone to the big time.

I made it to my first "fall ball" game of the year last Tuesday on a spectacularly balmy evening at Phoenix's Municipal Stadium.

The home team Desert Dogs were playing the Scorpions from Scottsdale.

Minor league players from the Athletics, the Blue Jays, the Indians, the Reds and the Yankees made up the Dogs' roster. The Scorpions had players from the Angels, the Giants, the Nationals, the Phillies and the Red Sox.

It was my first look at the rosters. Of course I was most interested in the boys with dreams of ultimately playing on one side or the other of the San Francisco Bay.

Scottsdale has seven Giant hopefuls — Gary Brown, an outfielder who played 131 games this year in Class A San Jose; Brandon Crawford, an infielder who was actually up with the big team for 51 games; Austin Fleet, a right-handed pitcher who spent most of this year in Class A Augusta; Stephen Harrold, another right-handed pitcher who split the season between Augusta and San Jose; Daryl Maday, yet another right-handed pitcher who spent the year in Double-A Richmond, with a quick trip at the end of the season to Triple-A Fresno; Joe Panik, an infielder drafted in the first round of this year's draft who spent the year in Short-A Salem-Keizer; and finally still another right-handed pitcher, Seth Rosin, who spent the year in Augusta.

Seven Desert Dogs were decked out in Oakland's green and gold — Anthony Capra, a left-handed pitcher who spent most of the year in Double-A Midland; Andrew Carignan, a right-handed pitcher who made appearances at one time or another during the year at every level (A, AA, AAA and the big team); Michael Choice, who spent the year in Class A Stockton; Dusty Coleman, an infielder who played most of the year in Stockton with a short trip to Triple-A Sacramento; Grant Green, an outfielder who spent the year in Midland with an end-of-season stint in Sacramento; Ryan Ortiz, a catcher who split the year between Stockton and Midland; and Tyson Ross, a right-handed pitcher who has been up with the big team briefly in 2010 and 2011.

Not surprisingly, I recognized almost no one, that is, except Oakland's Grant Green. I talked with Grant last year during fall ball and wrote a column about his minor league experiences. I had no idea what he was doing back in Arizona in the fall. Certainly, there are boys who play in the AFL a second and sometimes even a third time; however, that's not the norm.

Fall ball is usually a one-time event for players who have been pretty well identified as on their way up. That's the category I put Grant in when we visited last November.

He sat down with me a few minutes before the game and explained what happened. Interestingly, it did not have so much to do with him as it did the A's current shortstop, Cliff Pennington.

Shortstop was Grant's position in his highly successful high school and college careers. When he signed with the A's, that's what they were looking for. Bobby Crosby was gone and the position was up for grabs. Grant was in the pipeline.

He played a year at short for the Stockton Ports in 2010 and was in the midst of another year at the position for the Midland Rockhounds.

Back in Oakland, however, Pennington and newcomer Jemile Weeks were impressing everyone at short and second.

The A's felt like they had the up-the-middle combination they were looking for.

Suddenly, if Grant was going to make it with the Athletics, he needed to be doing something else.

He moved to the outfield and finished the year in that position.

Currently, his best case scenario is to be invited to spring training as an outfielder, where he can "learn some stuff" from the big leaguers.

"I hope to have a chance to pick their brains," he explained cheerfully.

In his first time at bat in the game later that evening, he lined a double in the gap and scored ahead of Oakland teammate Michael Choice, who hit his fourth round-tripper of the fall.

That'll work, I thought.

He just might make it in the big open spaces of the Oakland outfield.

I wish him well.

### **A managerial mover, shaker**

By Bob Ryan, Boston Globe

I was sitting in the visiting dugout at old Comiskey Park with Don Zimmer and Walt Hriniak. We were talking baseball, of course, and - get this - mortgages. Zim had just finished paying off his St. Petersburg house while Walt and I had eons to go with ours.

As we talked, a young White Sox coach, just up from managing in the minors, was on the field, practicing the tricky art of launching the straight-up pop fly coaches would hit for the catcher at the conclusion of that now sorely missed activity - infield practice.

It was the first week of his White Sox coaching career and he was less than a year away from his first big-league managerial job.

So you can kinda say we knew Tony La Russa when.

La Russa certainly fit the classic profile of a successful player turned manager, playing for 12 minor league clubs, good for 1,295 games, to go with a 132-game big-league utility infielder's career that finished with him hitting a point under the Mendoza Line, with no home runs and seven runs batted in.

Playing the game will not get him into the Hall of Fame. That's clear. But managing will. The Cooperstown clock began ticking yesterday when La Russa announced that he is retiring after 33 years, three world titles, and 2,728 regular-season victories, the last 1,408 of which have come as skipper of the Cardinals.

The fact is that statistical achievements can be exceeded. The mark of a truly special player, administrator, or manager is doing something that leaves either a lasting memory or special imprint on the game.



Babe Ruth, for example, is no longer the home run leader, either regular season or career, but he always will be the Home Run King. He, and he alone, established the primacy of the long ball, changing the game forever. Branch Rickey invented the farm system, and no one can imagine baseball without it. And Tony La Russa likewise changed baseball, for better or for worse, depending on your point of view.

He did so in 1988, 10 years into his big league managing career, by redefining the concept of the closer. He took a fading starter named Dennis Eckersley, made him his short reliever - the term "closer" not yet in full usage - and decreed that the only circumstance in which he would be used was when the A's were leading and there were only three outs to go. Period.

In so doing, he a) put The Eck on a path to Cooperstown, and b) re-wrote The Book Of Managing. If a big-league manager deviates from the manual it becomes instant news. They all employ their closer in this manner. The rare times when the rule is violated are almost exclusively limited to postseason play.

Beyond that, La Russa micro-managed the pitching aspect of the game in an unprecedented manner. He made a personal science out of matchups, thinking farther ahead (according to the folklore, anyway) than any of his foes. He became an orchestrator of five, six, or seven-pitcher shutouts. He became the father of the 3 1/2-hour nine-inning game.

Far too many of his imitators lacked his acumen. Their laughable attempts to copy the master led to what I jokingly began to call the Creeping La Russaization of baseball. I believe you can argue that few men in the history of baseball (I might give you John McGraw) have exerted such influence over the actual conduct of the game, and none, for sure, have worked in the post-McGraw (he retired in 1932) era.

He was the subject of one book, Buzz Bissinger's "Three Nights in August," and a primary figure in another, George Will's "Men At Work," published in 1990. It was thanks to the effusive praise lavished on him by Mr. Will that he has been derisively called "The Genius" by his critics for the past 22 seasons.

Bissinger's 2005 book burnished La Russa's legend, and both men have been vindicated by the Cardinals' World Series triumphs in 2006 and this past season, because in neither instance was St. Louis expected to win. What the Cardinals just have done, in fact, will go down as La Russa's greatest triumph.

Now many will argue that when the day comes for La Russa's Hall of Fame induction, Dave Duncan should be alongside him. There might even be pressure to have Duncan's name mentioned on La Russa's plaque, so prominent has his pitching coach of the last 25 years been in the establishment of the La Russa legend. The obvious solution, of course, is to vote Duncan into the Hall as the greatest pitching coach of all-time. But that's a story for another day.

There are no "geniuses" in sports, and that includes Tony La Russa. The record shows that he has been swept twice as often in the World Series as he has swept someone else. The A's should have won in 1988 (4-1, Dodgers) and 1990 (4-0, Reds). The Cardinals had a major league leading 105 wins when they were swept by the Red Sox in 2004. All of his vaunted brain cells weren't able to save his teams from disgrace in any of those instances.

But he was an undeniably great manager, one of only two men (the other Sparky Anderson) to win World Series titles in each league. He is behind only Connie Mack on the all-time games managed list and he trails only Mack and McGraw on the victory list.

La Russa has one real problem, and it may bother some voters when the new Expansion Era Committee considers his candidacy in December of 2013. His Oakland and St. Louis managerial careers are stained by steroids implications. He was the manager when Jose Canseco says both he and Mark McGwire were using them, and he was the manager when McGwire eviscerated the record for home runs in a season. Far from distancing himself from McGwire, he hired him to be the

Cardinals' batting coach in 2010. His basic response to the steroids allegations has been a See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil approach. It is conceivable he will live to regret it.

Tony La Russa was a great manager, but we all pay the price for his particular, dare we say it, genius. What was once Creeping LaRussaization is now at a full gallop. One man changed the game. Amazing.