



Clips

(August 23, 2014)

Today's Clips Contents

FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES (Page 3)

- **Angels' LeBlanc isn't replacing Richards, he's just taking his place**
- **Oakland Athletics take first game of series with Angels, 5-3**
- **Angels lose some ground in Oakland**

FROM THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER (Page 6)

- **Flooding in Angel Stadium shuts team store, other areas**
- **Angels will find playing time for Beckham**
- **On deck: Angels at A's, Saturday, 6 p.m.**

FROM ANGELS.COM (Page 9)

- **Freese seeing similarities to 2011 champions**
- **LeBlanc happy he chose to stick with Angels**
- **Richards' surgery goes as expected**
- **Angels' rally thwarted in opener of key series**
- **A's look to Lester with chance to catch Angels**

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS (Page 15)

- **A's win 1st game in key set against division-leading Angels**
- **Los Angeles Angels fall in series opener at Oakland**
- **Angels-Athletics Preview**

FROM FOX SPORTS WEST (Page 19)

- **Angel Stadium dealing with pipe breaks and flooding**
- **What to watch for as Angels kick off huge series with A's**

FROM THE SPORTS XCHANGE (Page 21)

- **Team Report – LOS ANGELES ANGELS**
- **Team Report – OAKLAND ATHLETICS**

FROM THE LOS ANGELES TIMES

Angels' LeBlanc isn't replacing Richards, he's just taking his place

By KEVIN BAXTER

With Garrett Richards out for the rest of the season following knee surgery Friday, the Angels figure to fill the right-hander's spot in their rotation -- at least temporarily -- with left-hander Wade LeBlanc, who was called up from triple-A Salt Lake on Thursday.

But LeBlanc, who has pitched in 98 big league games for five teams over parts of seven seasons, made clear that he isn't replacing Richards (13-4, 2.61). He'll just be starting in his place.

"I don't think there's really anybody outside of maybe two or three guys in the entire major leagues that can take the place of a Garrett Richards," said LeBlanc, who was 10-3 with a 4.00 ERA in 21 starts at Salt Lake. "Me not being one of those two or three guys, the only job that I have going in is to get as many outs as I can, keep the games close, get the ball to the bullpen."

The Angels' rotation is set through this weekend's crucial three-game series with Oakland, meaning LeBlanc's first start is likely to come Monday against Miami.

After that, the Angels could juggle their rotation again, leaving LeBlanc's status beyond Monday up in the air.

But even one start in the heat of a pennant race is heavy stuff, says LeBlanc.

"Perfect script, I'd be up here the entire season," he joked. "But that being said, if they ask me to give them some innings, they feel like I'm the best option out there, well, absolutely it's something you look forward to and appreciate."

Oakland Athletics take first game of series with Angels, 5-3

By KEVIN BAXTER

KEY MOMENT: Angels reliever Jason Grilli came into a tie game in the sixth inning and five batters later Oakland had a two-run lead on an infield single, Sam Fuld's triple to right-center and Andy Parrino's scoring fly ball. The Angels didn't quit, though, scoring once in the ninth and loading the bases before Oakland reliever Sean Doolittle struck out pinch-hitter Chris Iannetta to end the game.

AT THE PLATE: The Angels had just two hits through four innings but both of them were solo homers: Mike Trout's 28th of the season in the first and Josh Hamilton's first in 17 days in the fourth. Trout's homer was the Angels' first in six games. David Freese accounted for the Angels' other run with an RBI single in the ninth. For Oakland, Coco Crisp had two hits — including a homer — and scored twice and Alberto Callaspo had two hits and scored once.

ON THE MOUND: Hector Santiago, who hasn't won in August, worked hard to get through five innings, throwing 98 pitches and taking a line drive off his pitching hand. And though he allowed seven hits and

walked two, the only earned run he gave up came on Crisp's leadoff home run. A's starter Sonny Gray also hadn't won this month — until Friday, when he held the Angels to the two home runs in 81/3 innings. But he had to wait out a shaky performance by Doolittle to end a personal four-game losing streak.

EXTRA BASES: Right-hander Garrett Richards underwent left knee surgery Friday afternoon at the Orthopaedic Specialty Institute in Orange. Doctors said there were no complications and the procedure went as planned. Richards, a 13-game winner, is expected to be sidelined six to nine months.... Angels Manager Mike Scioscia said he had “no reservations” about first baseman Albert Pujols participating in a five-game postseason tour of Japan. A team of U.S. All-Stars including Pujols and the Dodgers' Yasiel Puig will play a Japanese national team in November. In 2013, the Angels were in favor of holding Pujols out of the preseason World Baseball Classic, but on that occasion the player was coming off minor knee surgery.

UP NEXT: The Angels entered the weekend second in the American League with a .276 average against left-handers, which is what they'll face Saturday when the A's send Jon Lester (13-8, 2.58 ERA) to the mound. Lester is 7-1 with a 1.67 ERA in his last 12 starts, but that loss came in his most recent outing, when he matched a season high by giving up two homers in falling to Atlanta. The Angels will counter with a left-hander of their own in C.J. Wilson (10-8, 4.59). Wilson has won his last two starts, giving up three runs in 12 innings to right the ship after a rough six-week spell in which he won just once. Wilson is 4-0 with a 2.60 ERA in his last five starts against Oakland, and he'll be facing an Oakland lineup that began Friday last in the AL with a .239 average against left-handers. On the air: TV: FS West. Radio: 830.

Angels lose some ground in Oakland

By KEVIN BAXTER

Mike Scioscia was fully aware of both the calendar and the consequences Friday when his Angels opened a three-game series against the Oakland Athletics.

The lead in the American League West was hanging in the balance with five weeks left in the season. Yet he urged the team to play the games as if they were meaningless March exhibitions just the same.

"We need to approach this just like you do any spring training game," he said. "Go out there and just play baseball. I think that's when we're at our best."

They weren't at their best Friday, though, with the A's twice rallying from one-run deficits for a 5-3 win that narrowed the gap between the first-place Angels and second-place A's to just a game.

The loss also snapped a four-game winning streak for the Angels, who had won eight of their last nine, while for the A's the victory was their second in 11 days.

However the Angels, who haven't won in Oakland this season, didn't go quietly. For the first 82/3 innings their only offense came from solo homers by Mike Trout and Josh Hamilton, but they scored once in the ninth and loaded the bases against Oakland reliever Sean Doolittle before pinch-hitter Chris Iannetta struck out swinging to end the game.

"I think there were a lot of good things on the field. And some things we didn't quite get done," Scioscia said. "We kept battling. Just couldn't get that last hit at the end."

Oakland erased its last deficit in the fifth inning when shortstop Erick Aybar, trying for an inning-ending double play, bounced his throw, allowing Coco Crisp to score from second.

That play may ultimately prove even more costly, though, because it started with pitcher Hector Santiago sticking his left hand in front of Josh Donaldson's line drive. The ball caromed to second baseman Howie Kendrick, who tossed to Aybar at second. But with Craig Gentry sliding hard into second, Aybar's relay to first skipped past Albert Pujols, allowing Crisp to race home from second with the tying run.

For the Angels, already smarting from the loss of ace Garrett Richards to knee surgery Friday, having to go without Santiago could be disastrous. The left-hander was examined by the Angels trainers and allowed to stay in the game, but he faced just two more batters before leaving after five innings and 98 pitches.

Afterward Santiago said the hand was still swollen and bruised, making it hard to hold a baseball.

"My breaking ball, I couldn't get a nice grip on it," he said. "Instead of going there and becoming a one-pitch guy.... I didn't want to do that. It's just a little bit of a bruise right now. Right now just ice and rest and it should be good to go."

After Santiago left, reliever Jason Grilli gave up two more runs on a walk, an infield single, Sam Fuld's triple and a sacrifice fly. That proved enough to make a winner of Sonny Gray (13-7), who was brilliant, pitching into the ninth inning before waiting out Doolittle's shaky effort to win for the first time this month.

The Angels, meanwhile, are left to ponder how they can shore up their ailing rotation.

"There's not an open-all-night, 24-hour super store that provides starting pitchers on the drop of a dime," General Manager Jerry Dipoto said. "It's a hard time to acquire pitchers."

Especially now that players must pass through waivers before they can be traded. One attractive option who reportedly has already cleared waivers is left-hander Jon Niese of the Mets. But New York, knowing of the Angels' plight, is sure to ask for an inflated package of prospects in return.

"We'll do the best we can," Dipoto said. "And if there's a way on the market to come up with an upgrade we will."

If not, Dipoto said the Angels "will spread out our total staff to support with depth" what they're lacking without Richards.

FROM THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Flooding in Angel Stadium shuts team store, other areas

Flooding in Angel Stadium shuts team store, other areas.

By SARAH TULLY / STAFF WRITER

ANAHEIM – Parts of Angel Stadium, including the team store, are closed today as crews clean up flood damage from a pipe burst overnight.

A three-inch fire pipe broke about 2 a.m. this morning on the fourth level, causing “extensive” damage, said Tim Mead, an Angels spokesman.

Stadium tours were canceled for the day.

The water from the higher levels above home plate dripped down to the dugout level of the stadium.

The areas that were damaged and closed include: dugout suites, clubhouse lobby and laundry area, team store, Halo Club, owner and general managers’ suites, broadcast level, Platinum suites’ hallway, the press dining room, the Homeplate Club and two of the elevators on all levels.

Crews this morning had yet to determine when the stadium areas could reopen.

The Angels are now playing on the road against the Oakland Athletics. Home games return Monday when the Angels face the Miami Marlins.

The stadium is owned by the city of Anaheim, but the Angels are responsible for maintenance of the building through a lease. The city provided carpet driers to help with the cleanup, but otherwise is not involved in the repairs, said Ruth Ruiz, a city of Anaheim spokeswoman.

Angels will find playing time for Beckham

BY JEFF FLETCHER / STAFF WRITER

OAKLAND – When Gordon Beckham joins the Angels, he is going to play.

The Angels’ acquisition of Beckham from the Chicago White Sox may have been puzzling in some circles – or viewed as a precursor to another deal – but the Angels actually picked up Beckham at least partly with an eye toward the schedule.

The Angels have just two off days the rest of the way, which is going to be a grind for the everyday players. Previously, if the Angels wanted to give a rest to Howie Kendrick, Erick Aybar or David Freese, they would have had to start John McDonald. While McDonald is outstanding defensively, he’s hitting .149.

Beckham, who the Angels believe is also solid defensively, gives them another alternative to start. Plus, they still have no full-time DH on the roster, so the Angels can have any of the regular infielders get a half-day off at DH while Beckham plays in the field, and that still leaves McDonald to go in for defense.

“He’ll get an opportunity to start,” Manager Mike Scioscia said of Beckham, who is expected to join the team on Saturday. “You’re going to have to give guys a blow if you are talking about playing 35 games in 37 days.”

Beckham has hit .221 with a .598 OPS this season, but against left-handers he’s hit .309 with an .803 OPS. Expect Beckham to get some starts against left-handed pitchers, with Aybar, Kendrick or Freese starting at designated hitter.

Grant Green fills some of the same role as Beckham, but the Angels believe Beckham is better defensively and has more power.

Green, who is on the disabled list because of a back injury, began his rehab assignment with Salt Lake City on Friday. Because of Beckham’s acquisition, Green may not be recalled until rosters expand in September.

BULLPEN DEPTH

The Angels have worked their bullpen hard lately, because starters have not been getting deep into the games and the offensive hasn’t provided many comfortable leads.

Scioscia, though, is clearly wary of the workload. He kept closer Huston Street out of two of the games in Boston, allowing the Angels to get saves from both Kevin Jepsen and Jason Grilli.

“You absolutely have to be in touch with where these guys are, not only at this point in the season but at any point,” Scioscia said. “Not only do you have to keep them healthy, but you have to keep their stuff where it needs to be.”

RICHARDS SURGERY

Garrett Richards’ surgery to repair a torn patellar tendon went “as they expected,” Scioscia said. Nothing was discovered during the procedure that would change the original prognosis of six to nine months of rehab.

Richards tweeted: “I’m out. Surgery went great! Thank you everyone for your support and positive vibes. I will get through this.”

Scioscia said he expected that Richards would rejoin the Angels, in the clubhouse and dugout, as soon as he’s able.

“If he’s mobile enough,” Scioscia said, “I’m sure Garrett will want to come in and the guys will want to see him.”

FREQUENT FLIERS

Wade LeBlanc and Cam Bedrosian, who were called up from Triple-A after Richards got hurt, had quite a travel odyssey this week.

Salt Lake City played Tuesday night in Iowa, and the team flew back home on Wednesday morning. Wednesday night, Richards was hurt and both players were told they were going to Boston. On Thursday morning, they flew to Boston, arrived at the ballpark around 4:30 p.m. About eight hours later, they were in the air again to cross the country. They arrived at their hotel in San Francisco around 4 a.m.

"I don't know if you can get jet lag if you don't go to sleep," LeBlanc said. "It's a lot of travel, but it's a lot of welcome travel."

NOTES

Mike Trout has tied the game or given the Angels the lead with 20 of his 28 homers this season...

Hank Conger started behind the plate on Friday night, ending Chris Iannetta's string of four consecutive starts. It was only the second time this season either Angels catcher had started four days in a row. Iannetta also had a stretch of five straight games, but with an off day in between...

The Angels are expected to send down a pitcher when they activate Beckham on Saturday.

On deck: Angels at A's, Saturday, 6 p.m.

BY JEFF FLETCHER / STAFF WRITER

Where: O.co Coliseum

Did you know: Angels closer Huston Street came up originally with the A's. He was the rookie of the year in 2005 and he helped the team to the American League Championship Series in 2006.

THE PITCHERS

LHP C.J. WILSON (10-8, 4.59)

A bounceback for Wilson is even more important now that Garrett Richards is out for the season. After posting an 11.03 ERA over a six-start stretch, Wilson has won his last two outings. He has allowed three runs in 12 innings in the two starts. Wilson is not a favorite of A's fans. A few years ago he referred to the A's disciplined approach as "lawyer ball."

Vs. Athletics: 11-7, 3.33

At O.co Coliseum: 6-3, 2.90

Loves to face: Coco Crisp, 5 for 34 (.147), 8 Ks

LHP JON LESTER (13-8, 2.58)

The Angels will be getting their first look at the veteran since he was traded from the Boston Red Sox at the deadline last month. Lester has a 3-1 record and a 2.93 ERA since coming to Oakland, including a shutout. The Angels will face Lester next week in Anaheim, too.

Vs. Angels: 4-2, 4.44

At O.co Coliseum: 3-3, 3.00

Loves to face: Erick Aybar, 3 for 14 (.214)

Hates to face: Josh Hamilton, 7 for 24 (.292)

FROM ANGELS.COM

Freese seeing similarities to 2011 champions

By Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Angels third baseman David Freese has played out a similar script before. It was 2011. The Cardinals announced during Spring Training that one of their rotation anchors, Adam Wainwright, would miss the upcoming season due to Tommy John surgery. And all the naysayers piled on, saying the Cardinals could never overcome the loss -- right up until they won the World Series.

Freese thought about that when Garrett Richards suffered the torn left patella tendon that ended his season on Wednesday -- though, Freese admits, it's a little tougher to recover from a loss like that with 5 1/2 weeks left in the regular season.

"I'll be honest," Freese said, "I'm sure it's tougher. You get in the groove, and you're a few months in, and you get a huge blow like this. But with that said, I'm sure there are plenty of times where this has happened, and teams have still gone on and accomplished what they wanted to do, which is to make an October run."

Freese's Cardinals didn't just overcome the loss of Wainwright; they came back from being 10 1/2 games back of a playoff spot as late as Aug. 25 to finish on top.

Shortly after Wainwright went down, the Cardinals held a meeting with the general message of not putting too much individual pressure on themselves and that it takes an entire team to play deep into October. The Angels held no such meeting. Nothing really needed to be said.

"We're professional enough to just go out and play," Freese said. "As important as Garrett has been, he's only on the mound once or twice a week. You understand that he's a big piece of your team, but there's guys who can step in and help us."

Wade LeBlanc, called up from Triple-A Salt Lake on Thursday, will be the first candidate. And over the next nine days, general manager Jerry Dipoto will do his best to acquire additional starting pitching help via the waiver wire, with the understanding that top-of-the-rotation arms are seldom traded this time of year.

Freese believes they can overcome Richards' loss internally, much like his Cardinals of three years ago, because of the fabric of the team as a whole.

"There's a reason why certain teams play as far as they do," Freese said. "Obviously, you have to have talent. But the few years that I was with the Cardinals, the guys you have in the clubhouse is a huge part of why we had success. It's a fault to look past that. You have to have talent, but that's not enough, especially at the Major League level. Teams that win understand that."

LeBlanc happy he chose to stick with Angels

OAKLAND -- Journeyman starter Wade LeBlanc went from the Angels to the Yankees to the Angels again, all in a matter of two weeks.

The 30-year-old left-hander was designated for assignment after one appearance for the Angels, who needed to make room on the roster for some additional bullpen arms, then was claimed by the Yankees on June 3. After one appearance in the Bronx, LeBlanc was placed on waivers again, but this time he cleared.

At that point, LeBlanc had a choice: accept an outright assignment to the Yankees' Minor League system or become a free agent.

He chose the latter, so he could return to the Angels.

"I made it clear to my agent that if the situation would arise, this was the place I'd like to try to come back to," LeBlanc said. "The opportunity is there, I know the staff, the staff knows me here. And I think I can help them at some point."

The Angels need LeBlanc to help them now. He was called up from Triple-A Salt Lake on Thursday, one day after Garrett Richards suffered a season-ending left knee injury, and now he's slated to take Richards' spot in the rotation on Monday -- if he isn't needed in emergency relief before then.

When the Angels designated LeBlanc for assignment on May 31, they made it clear that they'd like him to return to the organization if he clears waivers.

Now, both parties are fortunate LeBlanc chose to come back.

"I figured there was a good possibility when we looked at the situation here," LeBlanc said. "They hadn't really signed anybody else or made any trades to kind of replace me in Triple-A. When I saw that, I figured that there would be a good chance that this would work out."

LeBlanc has racked up 424 1/3 innings in the big leagues from 2008-14, posting a 4.56 ERA, a 1.44 WHIP and a 1.84 strikeout-to-walk ratio. In the hitter-friendly Pacific Coast League this year, he went 10-3 with a 4.00 ERA, a 1.38 WHIP and a 3.14 strikeout-to-walk ratio.

Asked what appealed to him so much about the Angels' organization, LeBlanc said: "From day one, they were very upfront."

"A guy in my situation, all you want is honesty," he added. "There's teams that will tell you, 'We love you, think you fit in our big league pitching staff,' and then you never sniff it. They were very honest, very upfront with where they saw me fitting, and they never steered me wrong."

Richards' surgery goes as expected

OAKLAND -- Angels starter Garrett Richards had surgery to repair a torn left patella tendon at Orthopaedic Specialty Institute in Orange, Calif., on Friday. The procedure, which comes with a six- to nine-month recovery, went "as they expected" and doctors were "very happy with the repair," manager Mike Scioscia said.

But the fact that it actually took place is obviously a crushing blow to a first-place Angels team with World Series aspirations. And don't bother with the narrative that this setback will "galvanize" the Angels and prompt everyone else to "step up" in the wake of Richards' absence.

Scioscia "doesn't see any silver lining" in Richards' season-ending injury. His Angels may persevere through this, but it won't be as a result of it.

"I don't know if there's anything positive that's going to come out of it," Scioscia said, rather candidly, when asked if the loss of Richards can bring the team together.

"There's a chemistry that's starting to form, especially in the clubhouse, that's very real and tangible. I think guys are motivated, even if Garrett was here, to prove they can play at a certain level. Not having Garrett here, I just don't see it changing that. We're a pretty close-knit team right now. Maybe some of the guys feel that way, but I don't know if I sense that."

Worth noting

- After Friday's 5-3 loss, the Angels optioned right-handed reliever Cam Bedrosian back to the Minor Leagues. That will clear up a roster spot for Gordon Beckham, who will be added on Saturday to give the Angels a four-man bench. Beckham, acquired from the White Sox for a player to be named or cash considerations on Thursday, will fill in at second base, third base and shortstop.
- A 3-inch pipe at the club level of Angel Stadium burst at 2 a.m. PT on Friday, causing water to pour out for roughly 15 to 20 minutes and prompting the Angels to close their team store. The flooding caused water damage on six levels, primarily the home-plate area, and affected the IT department, ticket office, downstairs news-conference area and the owner's suite. The team store will stay closed on Saturday, but Angels vice president of communications Tim Mead said "fan experience will not be affected" when the club returns home on Monday.

- Hector Santiago took a Josh Donaldson liner off the side of his left hand in Friday's fifth inning, an incident that left his hand swollen postgame. Santiago faced two more batters, getting a walk and a flyout, then left the game mainly because he had thrown 98 pitches. Santiago expects to make his next scheduled start on Wednesday.
- Infielder Grant Green, on the disabled list since July 23 because of a lumbar strain, was slated to start a rehab assignment for Triple-A Salt Lake on Friday until the game was postponed. Green is nonetheless scheduled to be activated next week, but he probably won't join the Angels until rosters expand in September because the newly acquired Beckham will fill a similar role.

Angels' rally thwarted in opener of key series

Bases left loaded in ninth; Trout, Hamilton connect on solo HRs

By Alden Gonzalez / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Erick Aybar's turn was too erratic, Jason Grilli's fastball to Sam Fuld grooved too straight, Kole Calhoun's line drive was too perfect, and the ninth-inning rally was too late. And so the Angels lost to the A's at O.co Coliseum on Friday night. The score was 5-3, and the game was tight, right up until the very end, just like you'd expect from a couple of teams that may be scrapping for the American League West crown all season.

"That's how these games are going to be, man," Calhoun said. "Both of these teams are fighting against each other, and there are going to be battles, just like tonight."

Friday was the first of three games this weekend, and one of seven the Angels and A's will play over 10 days. It hinged on the two runs Sonny Gray limited the Angels to through the first eight innings, and the two runs Grilli surrendered to the A's in the sixth, and the jam Sean Doolittle barely escaped in the ninth.

Down three with two outs and a runner on first, the Angels got back-to-back singles from Aybar and David Freese to make it a two-run game, then a walk from pinch-hitter Collin Cowgill to load the bases and put the potential tying run in scoring position. But Chris Iannetta swung through Doolittle's 2-2, 95-mph fastball and the A's -- losers of six of their last seven heading in -- trimmed their deficit in the AL West to a single game.

"They're not all going to be pretty," Doolittle said, "but that was a really, really important win to be able to nail down."

The Angels (76-51) entered with eight wins in their last nine games, a stretch that allowed them to gain 5 1/2 games on the A's (75-52) and push for the best record in the Majors. But they're now 0-4 in Oakland this year, having also been swept from May 29 to June 1.

"We haven't gotten it done up here yet this year, but I think we're a better team now than we've been at any time during the season," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "They're a good club over there and they certainly can shut you down when they get a lead. They do a lot of different things, and we have to be ready for it."

All the momentum seemed to shift in the top of the fifth.

The Angels held a 2-1 lead thanks to homers by Mike Trout and Josh Hamilton, and had a chance to tack on when Hank Conger's sacrifice bunt put runners on second and third with only one out for the top of the order. Calhoun followed with a liner up the middle, but A's shortstop Andy Parrino was playing the Angels' left-handed leadoff hitter right behind second, making the easy catch and stepping on second for the inning-ending double play.

"It's kind of the name of the game these days," Calhoun said. "There's so many different shifts. One team's going to play you one way, another team's going to play you another. Big spot right there. Obviously it's a big at-bat in the game, and I hit it right at him. It kind of worked out perfectly in their favor."

And then it all went south for the Angels.

Hector Santiago looked to be out of a tough jam in the bottom of the fifth, when Josh Donaldson's liner hit off his left hand and bounced right into Howie Kendrick's glove for what looked like the start of the Angels' own inning-ending double play. But Craig Gentry got just enough of Aybar's leg on his slide to second, forcing the Angels' shortstop into an errant throw that scored Coco Crisp from second.

Grilli entered in the sixth, with a 2.08 ERA in 26 appearances since being acquired from the Pirates, and gave the A's a two-run lead on an RBI triple by Fuld and a sacrifice fly by Parrino. Rookie Cam Bedrosian entered in the eighth, mainly because the Angels lead the Majors in innings from their bullpen since the All-Star break, and served up a solo homer to Stephen Vogt to make it a three-run game.

Said Scioscia: "Those guys didn't miss a couple of pitches when they had chances to hit them."

And that made the difference.

It's that close between the Angels and A's.

"One pitch, one play, one hit," Santiago said. "We're two pretty good teams."

A's look to Lester with chance to catch Angels

Holding one-game edge atop AL West, Halos counter with Wilson

By Aaron Leibowitz / MLB.com

Jon Lester will make his most important start yet for the A's on Saturday, taking the ball in the second of three games against the Angels at the Coliseum.

A's general manager Billy Beane has insisted his Trade Deadline deal to acquire Lester was made with an eye toward winning the American League West, and if that is the case, then now is the time for Lester to shine.

With a 5-3 victory in Friday night's series opener, the A's moved to one game behind the Angels atop the division.

Oakland's offense has sputtered without Yoenis Cespedes, and while Lester has been solid in four A's starts, the team has endured its worst funk of the year.

Meanwhile, the surging Angels -- who will counter with left-hander C.J. Wilson on Saturday -- have taken over first place in the West. Before Lester can help the A's make a playoff run, he will have to help them get there.

Last Sunday, the southpaw allowed four runs (three earned) in six innings to the Braves, who completed a three-game sweep.

"Guys are competing, we're just not getting results right now," Lester said. "The times that we need to get a guy in, we're just not doing it. The times we need to make a pitch, we're not doing it. This team's too good to stay in this funk."

In four starts for the A's, Lester is 3-1 with a 2.93 ERA. He would appear to have the upper hand against Wilson, who is in the midst of his worst season since becoming a starter in 2010.

Wilson's ERA is 4.59, though it has dropped 23 points over his past two starts, both victories. Most recently, he held the Red Sox to one run in 5 1/3 innings despite issuing five walks.

Though Wilson has not lasted seven innings since June 19, he believes that's about to change.

"I feel like I'm really close to doing that," he said.

In five starts against the A's in 2013, Wilson went 4-0 with a 2.60 ERA.

"We have to win ballgames, for sure," said Angels center fielder Mike Trout. "They play us hard every time, just grind out at-bats. It's going to be fun."

Angels: With Richards out, more heavy lifting for bullpen

The bullpen has become a force to be reckoned with since adding Jason Grilli and Huston Street, but manager Mike Scioscia must handle that force carefully.

With starter Garrett Richards done for the season, additional pressure now falls on the 'pen to finish out games. There has been plenty of work lately, as 26 of the team's last 32 games entering Friday had been decided by one or two runs.

"You absolutely have to be in touch with where guys are, not only at this point in the season, but at any point in the season," Scioscia said. "We have some guys that have pitched a lot and have had a big workload just in this past week. ... These guys have been out there a lot."

Since the All-Star break, the Angels' bullpen leads the Majors in innings with 122.

A's: Gentry activated, Otero optioned

Outfielder Craig Gentry was reinstated from the disabled list on Friday, and to make room for him, they made a rather surprising move by optioning reliever Dan Otero to Triple-A.

Oakland was desperate to get Gentry's right-handed bat and speed back in its sluggish lineup, and thus temporarily parted with one of its better right-handed bullpen arms.

"We don't have too many guys here with options, and Otero's one of the most valuable guys we have here in the bullpen," manager Bob Melvin said Friday. "It certainly is nothing that he's done to deserve going down, but with these two [Angels] lefties coming up, we're trying to get Gentry back, so it was a hard one, but that's the decision that was made."

It was the product of another decision made this week to skip Jason Hammel in the rotation. Hammel, who does not have Minor League options remaining, will fill the void in the bullpen left by Otero, who was 7-1 with a 2.28 ERA in 71 innings spanning 56 relief appearances this year.

Worth noting

- The A's have posted a winning record in each of the 14 months since May 2012, but that streak is in jeopardy: They are 9-11 in August.
- On Monday, the Angels moved into sole possession of first place in the AL West for the first time since May 15, 2011.

FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A's win 1st game in key set against division-leading Angels

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Sean Doolittle couldn't find much fault with his latest outing, which was strange considering the Athletics' closer nearly ruined Sonny Gray's best start in more than four weeks.

A game-ending strikeout of pinch hitter Chris Iannetta turned out to be the perfect remedy.

Doolittle gave up two hits and a walk in the ninth inning but recorded the final two outs for his 19th save Friday night, preserving Oakland's 5-3 win over the Los Angeles Angels in a matchup of American League West rivals.

"They're not all going to be pretty, but that was a really, really important win to be able to nail down," Doolittle said. "That was a huge game for us. There was a lot of adrenaline flowing."

Coco Crisp hit his 15th career leadoff home run and Stephen Vogt added a solo shot for Oakland in the opener of a three-game series. Sam Fuld hit a go-ahead triple in the sixth inning, and the A's pulled within one game of the division-leading Angels.

Angels manager Mike Scioscia noted before the game that "the pennant race is in full bloom."

The night had that type of feel, too.

Gray (13-7) allowed three runs and six hits over 8 1/3 innings to end a monthlong losing streak. He settled down after a shaky start to win for the first time since July 26.

Oakland's Opening Day starter, Gray had lost his previous four starts -- that skid coming after he had won six straight decisions.

Gray struck out five, walked two and left to a rousing ovation from the crowd of 33,810.

Fuld tripled off reliever Jason Grilli (1-2) as part of Oakland's two-run sixth.

"We haven't played a game like that, that crisp, for a while," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "(When) we took the lead, it really felt like we were finally in charge of a game, where we hadn't been in a while."

Mike Trout and Josh Hamilton homered for the Angels.

"There were a lot of good things on the field and some things we didn't get done," said Scioscia, whose club is 0-4 at the Oakland Coliseum this season. "We haven't gotten it down up here yet this season."

The Angels, owners of the best record in the majors, didn't get much rest before the game. They completed a four-game sweep of the Boston Red Sox late Thursday, then took a red-eye flight to California. Players and coaches didn't make it to their hotel in San Francisco until 4 a.m. Friday.

Trout hit his 28th home run off Gray in the first while Hamilton belted his solo shot with one out in the fourth.

The A's scored on Crisp's leadoff home run in the first. He also doubled and scored on a throwing error by Angels shortstop Erick Aybar in the fifth.

Angels starter Hector Santiago allowed two runs on five hits in five innings. The left-hander was replaced two batters after getting hit on his pitching hand by Josh Donaldson's line drive. Santiago's hand was swollen, but he said he expected to make his next start, according to MLB.com.

CRISP HITTING

Crisp's leadoff home run was his 13th with the A's, tying him with Bert Campaneris for the third-most in franchise history. It also marked Crisp's second multihit game in the past four days. Prior to that, he hadn't had one since July 8.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Angels: RHP Garrett Richards underwent surgery to repair the torn patellar tendon in his left knee. Scioscia said Richards' surgery "went as expected." He added that the timetable for Richards' recovery remains six to nine months.

Athletics: OF Craig Gentry (broken right hand) was reinstated from the 15-day disabled list. RHP Dan Otero was optioned to Triple-A Sacramento. ... First baseman Kyle Blanks is having pain in both feet and his lower legs so the team scheduled him for an MRI.

UP NEXT

Angels: LHP C.J. Wilson (10-8) is 4-0 with a 2.60 ERA in five starts against the A's last season.

Athletics: LHP Jon Lester (13-8) looks to bounce back from his first loss in an Oakland uniform and his first defeat since June 7 while with Boston.

Los Angeles Angels fall in series opener at Oakland

By Michael Wagaman, The Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — Sean Doolittle couldn't find much fault with his latest outing, which was strange considering the Athletics' closer nearly ruined Sonny Gray's best start in more than four weeks.

A game-ending strikeout of pinch-hitter Chris Iannetta turned out to be the perfect remedy.

Doolittle gave up two hits and a walk in the ninth inning, but recorded the final two outs for his 19th save Friday night, preserving Oakland's 5-3 win over the Angels in a matchup of AL West rivals.

"They're not all going to be pretty, but that was a really, really important win to be able to nail down," Doolittle said. "That was a huge game for us. There was a lot of Adrenalin flowing."

Coco Crisp hit his 15th career leadoff home run and Stephen Vogt added a solo shot for Oakland in the opener of a three-game series. Sam Fuld hit a go-ahead triple in the sixth inning and the A's pulled within one game of the division-leading Angels.

Angels manager Mike Scioscia noted before the game that "the pennant race is in full bloom."

The night had that type of feel, too.

Gray (13-7) allowed three runs and six hits over 8 1/3 innings to end a monthlong losing streak. He settled down after a shaky start to win for the first time July 26.

Oakland's opening day starter, Gray had lost his previous four starts — that skid came after he had won six straight decisions.

Gray struck out five, walked two and left to a rousing ovation from the crowd of 33,810.

Fuld tripled off reliever Jason Grilli (1-2) as part of Oakland's two-run sixth.

"We haven't played a game like that, that crisp, for a while," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "(When) we took the lead it really felt like we were finally in charge of a game, where we hadn't been in a while."

Mike Trout and Josh Hamilton homered for the Angels.

"There were a lot of good things on the field and some things we didn't get done," said Scioscia, whose club is 0-4 at the Oakland Coliseum this season. "We haven't gotten it down up here yet this season."

The Angels, owners of the best record in the majors, didn't get much rest before the game. They completed a four-game sweep of the Boston Red Sox late Thursday, then took a redeye flight to California. Players and coaches didn't make it to their hotel in San Francisco until 4 a.m. Friday.

Trout hit his 28th home run off Gray in the first while Hamilton belted his solo shot with one out in the fourth.

The A's scored on Crisp's leadoff home run in the first. He also doubled and scored on a throwing error by Angels shortstop Erick Aybar in the fifth.

Angels starter Hector Santiago allowed two runs on five hits in five innings. The left-hander was replaced two batters after getting hit on his pitching hand by Josh Donaldson's line drive.

RICHARDS HAS SURGERY

RHP Garrett Richards underwent surgery to repair the torn patellar tendon in his left knee. Scioscia said that Richards' surgery "went as expected." He added that the timetable for Richards' recovery remains six to nine months.

Angels-Athletics Preview

By JEFF MEZYDLO (STATS Senior Writer)AP - Sports

As Jon Lester moves on from his first loss with Oakland, C.J. Wilson hopes his 2013 success against the Athletics carries over to this season.

Trying to win a fifth straight start against the A's, Wilson looks to help the Los Angeles Angels maintain sole possession of first place in AL West by avoiding a fifth consecutive loss at Oakland on Saturday night.

Wilson (10-8, 4.59 ERA) allowed four runs in six innings while not factoring in the decision of a 9-5 home defeat in his first start versus Oakland last season, then went 4-0 with a 1.88 ERA while making three of those starts at the Coliseum.

The left-hander enters his first 2014 outing versus Oakland (75-52) having posted a 2.25 ERA while winning two straight following a six-start stretch in which he went 1-2 with an 11.03 ERA. Despite five walks, Wilson yielded one run in 5 1-3 innings of a 4-2 victory at Boston on Monday.

Wilson has completed six innings only once in eight starts, but he still feels capable of going deep into games.

"I feel like I'm really close to doing that," he told MLB's official website.

Lester (13-8, 2.58) has completed at least six in 12 straight outings.

He's allowed three earned runs in three of his four starts with Oakland and gave up four overall in six innings of a 4-3 loss at Atlanta on Sunday.

"Sometimes, you've got to tip your hat," said the left-hander, who is 3-1 with a 2.93 ERA with the A's. "Sometimes (the opponent) have a better game plan than you do, and they execute what they're trying to do."

Including the postseason, Lester is 5-3 with a 3.54 ERA in 11 starts against the Angels (76-51), but has not faced them since he allowed five runs and nine hits over eight innings of a 5-2 loss in 2012.

He'll try to help the A's pull even atop the division after they held on for a 5-3 victory Friday. Sonny Gray pitched 8 1-3 strong innings, and Coco Crisp and Stephen Vogt each homered to help Oakland to its second win in three games following a 1-7 stretch.

"You know coming in it's going to be big," Gray said. "It's great to get this first win of a big series, and now try to keep it going."

The result snapped a four-game winning streak for the Angels, who lost for the second time in 10 games. Mike Trout and Josh Hamilton each homered for Los Angeles, which left the bases loaded in the ninth.

"We haven't gotten it down up here yet this season," said Angels manager Mike Scioscia, whose team has been outscored 31-14 while going 0-4 at Oakland.

Trout is batting .400 with three home runs and eight RBIs in his last seven games against the A's, but he's 0 for 3 versus Lester.

Hamilton is 4 for 9 with five RBIs in three games since going 5 for 41 in his previous 11 contests. He's batting .292 with a homer against Lester.

Crisp is 6 for 17 with three doubles and six RBIs in his last four games. However, he's 5 for 34 with two doubles and a home run versus Wilson.

Vogt, who has never faced Wilson, is batting .357 with four homers and nine RBIs in his last 12 contests.

FROM FOX SPORTS WEST

Angel Stadium dealing with pipe breaks and flooding

Bear Heiser/FOX Sports West

Not even a little flooding could have stopped Kole Calhoun from making this incredible grab at the wall. The workers at Angel Stadium received an ugly surprise Friday upon arriving at work.

Team officials have said that a fire pipe break led an early-morning flood that have caused damaged on six levels of the stadium.

This is not the kind of news the best team in baseball wants to hear while embarking on the final stretch of a long road trip. Starting Monday, the Angels play seven home games in seven days, three against the Miami Marlins and then a huge four-gamer against the Oakland A's.

Though, if there were ever a time for something like this to happen, it's when baseball isn't being played.

Crews currently are working to fix the damage, according to the team's Twitter account. The Angels' team store will be closed today and possibly tomorrow, though we don't for sure know that the flooding is the cause of the closure.

We'll update the story here as more information becomes available.

What to watch for as Angels kick off huge series with A's

Abbey Mastracco/FOX Sports West

What to watch for in Oakland

The Oakland A's and Los Angeles Angels haven't faced off since June. Back then, the Halos hadn't quite found the winning identity they now seem to possess, the bullpen was a mess and the A's looked like World Series contenders.

Fast forward to today, when the two teams are the two best in baseball, with the Halos holding the 2.5 game edge. This series will be the first of three over the next month.

Here are three burning questions as the Angels and A's open a four-game series in Oakland.

Which pitchers will show up?

Sonny Gray followed up a five-game winning streak with a four-game losing streak. C.J. Wilson lost his curveball some time before the All Star break. Oakland's Friday starter and L.A.'s Saturday starter are the two wildcards of the weekend.

In his last three starts, Gray has been shelled, going 0-3 with a 6.48 ERA. The pressure effectively was taken off of Gray to carry the staff after the blockbuster trades that brought to Oakland Jeff Samardzija, Jason Hammel and later Jon Lester, but it hasn't made much of a difference. Oakland has had only the 17th-best ERA in the league in August and is 2-8 in their last 10 games.

Wilson has been inefficient nearly all season. His counts have ran high; he's worked into bad counts and has given up early leads. However, the lefty has limited the A's to just a .212 average in his career.

The A's will throw Lester (3-1, 2.93 ERA with the A's) and Scott Kazmir (14-5, 2.73 ERA) following Gray. The Angels will counter with Hector Santiago (3-7, 3.46 ERA), Wilson and ace Jered Weaver (13-7, 3.70 ERA).

Which hitters will break out of their slumps?

Mike Trout and Josh Hamilton have been scuffling at the plate but so has the entire Oakland lineup.

Trout is just .221 this month, while Hamilton finally has shown some signs of production with his 3-for-7 stretch in the last two games in Boston. But going back 10 games, Hamilton is batting a rough .222.

However, the A's, while still the top-scoring team in the league, saw their team average plummet. Brandon Moss, Josh Donaldson and Derek Norris (.161 in last 10 games) haven't been nearly as productive in the middle of the order. Coco Crisp also has struggled at the top.

Yoenis Cespedes is long gone and so is their first-half surge, as the A's team batting average has dropped 35 points since July 1.

Will this be an ALCS preview?

On paper, the A's have all of the tools to make a deep playoff push: Starting pitching, heavy hitters, speed and a deep bench. The offense is lacking some pop without Cespedes, though the remaining schedule works in their favor.

The Angels are without their best pitcher in Garrett Richards and another solid lefty in Tyler Skaggs. The schedule through the rest of the season is tough, but their bats and bullpen might be enough to carry them through.

With 10 games still left to play against Oakland, it's too early and too close to be able to determine the division. It could, however, be a preview of something better to come in October.

FROM SPORTS XCHANGE

Team Report - LOS ANGELES ANGELS

INSIDE PITCH

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Los Angeles Angels arrived Friday at the O.co Coliseum on the heels of a four-game sweep of the Boston Red Sox at Fenway Park.

The Angels had won eight of their past 10 games, passing the slumping Oakland A's and building a two-game lead in the American League West. But when the Angels and A's opened their three-game series, Oakland beat the Angels 5-3 and improved to 4-0 against them at the Coliseum this year.

"There were a lot of good things on the field and some things we didn't get done," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "We couldn't get the big hit at the end. We haven't gotten it done up here yet this season. That's a good club."

The A's swept a three-game series against the Angels at the Coliseum from May 30 to June 3. This time, A's right-hander Sonny Gray pitched 8 1/3 innings, giving up three runs on six hits, including solo home runs to CF Mike Trout in the first inning and LF Josh Hamilton in the fourth.

The Angels put together a furious rally after A's closer Sean Doolittle replaced Gray with one out and Hamilton on first after a walk in the ninth. Doolittle fanned second baseman Howie Kendrick, but shortstop Erick Aybar singled, and third baseman David Freese followed with an RBI single. Collin Cowgill walked, loading the bases, but Doolittle struck out Chris Iannetta to end the game.

"Both of these teams are fighting each other," Angels right fielder Kole Calhoun said. "Gray mixed pitches, threw strikes and got big outs when he needed. That's a perfect recipe for pitching into the ninth."

NOTES, QUOTES

RECORD: 76-51

STREAK: Lost one

NEXT: Angels (LHP C.J. Wilson, 10-8, 4.59 ERA) at Athletics (LHP Jon Lester, 13-8, 2.58 ERA)

PLAYER NOTES:

--LHP Hector Santiago allowed two runs, just one of them earned, over five innings and got a no-decision Friday night in a 5-3 loss to Oakland. The no-decision was Santiago's fourth straight. He struck out five, walked two and held the A's to one or no earned runs for the third straight start this season. In the bottom of the fifth, A's 3B Josh Donaldson hit a line drive up the middle that hit Santiago's pitching hand. Santiago finished that inning but didn't return for the sixth. "It's a little sore, but I'm good to go," Santiago said. "I couldn't get a good grip on my off-speed stuff, and I didn't want to become a one-pitch guy. This series is too important."

--CF Mike Trout hit his 28th home run of the season Friday night in the Angels' 5-3 loss to Oakland. With one out in the first inning, Trout golfed RHP Sonny Gray's 1-1 curve over the high wall in left-center field. Trout went 2-for-4 and drove in his 90th run.

--LF Josh Hamilton hit his ninth home run of the season Friday night, a solo shot in the fourth inning of the Angels' 5-3 loss to Oakland. Hamilton sent a curve ball from A's RHP Sonny Gray high and deep over the right-center field fence. It was his first home run since Aug. 4. All nine of his home runs this season have come on the road.

--RHP Garrett Richards (torn left patellar tendon), who went on the 60-day disabled list Thursday, underwent season-ending surgery Friday. "They said the surgery was as they expected and they're very happy with the repair and hopefully the rehab will go very well," manager Mike Scioscia said before the Angels' game against Oakland. "Same timetable they gave us before the surgery, six to nine months."

Scioscia said he was relieved that surgeons didn't discover more damage to Richards' knee than his MRI indicated. "Once you get in there you never know," Scioscia said. "But evidently everything was intact and they just had to make the repair to the patellar tendon."

--INF/OF Grant Green (lower back strain) began a rehab assignment Friday night with Triple-A Salt Lake. Green was placed on the DL retroactive to July 21.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "There were a lot of good things on the field and some things we didn't get done. We couldn't get the big hit at the end. We haven't gotten it done up here yet this season." -- Angels manager Mike Scioscia after a loss in Oakland.

ROSTER REPORT

MEDICAL WATCH:

--LHP Hector Santiago (sore left hand) took a line drive off his pitching hand Aug. 22. He finished the fifth inning but didn't return for the sixth. He said he expects to be able to make his next start.

--RHP Garrett Richards (torn left patellar tendon) went on the 60-day disabled list Aug. 21. He will undergo season-ending surgery Aug. 22. He is expected to miss six to nine months.

--LHP Joe Thatcher (sprained left ankle) went on the 15-day disabled list Aug. 3. He is expected to be out until early to mid-September. He can start some light throwing off a mound in Arizona but is not close to returning, manager Mike Scioscia said Aug. 20.

--LHP Tyler Skaggs (strained flexor tendon in left forearm) went on the 15-day disabled list Aug. 1, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on Aug. 10. He underwent season-ending Tommy John surgery Aug. 13. He will miss the rest of the 2014 season and all of the 2015 season.

--INF/OF Grant Green (lower back strain) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to July 21. He began baseball activities at the Angels' Arizona complex in early August. As of Aug. 20, he was running and hitting, and he was getting close to starting a rehab assignment.

--LHP Sean Burnett (torn left ulnar collateral ligament) went on the 15-day disabled list May 29, and he was transferred to the 60-day disabled list June 3. He underwent season-ending Tommy John surgery June 5.

--RHP Ryan Brasier (right elbow strain) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to March 21, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on April 16.

--LHP Brian Moran (left elbow inflammation) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to March 21, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on April 13. He underwent season-ending Tommy John surgery in mid-April.

ROTATION:

RHP Jered Weaver

RHP Matt Shoemaker

LHP C.J. Wilson

LHP Hector Santiago
LHP Wade LeBlanc

BULLPEN:

RHP Huston Street (closer)
RHP Joe Smith
RHP Jason Grilli
RHP Kevin Jepsen
RHP Michael Morin
RHP Cory Rasmus
RHP Fernando Salas
RHP Cam Bedrosian

CATCHERS:

Chris Iannetta
Hank Conger

INFIELDERS:

1B Albert Pujols
2B Howie Kendrick
SS Erick Aybar
3B David Freese
INF John McDonald

OUTFIELDERS:

LF Josh Hamilton
CF Mike Trout
RF Kole Calhoun
OF Efran Navarro
OF Collin Cowgill

Team Report – OAKLAND ATHLETICS

INSIDE PITCH

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Oakland A's announced a change in their rotation Tuesday, then didn't start All-Stars Josh Donaldson and Derek Norris on Wednesday.

Both things were done with the upcoming three-game showdown series against the Los Angeles Angels in mind.

Is it any wonder the A's went out and laid an egg in an 8-5 home loss to the New York Mets on Wednesday?

The A's did their best to downplay the upcoming series after Wednesday's game. However, their actions spoke louder than words in one of their uglier performances of the season, especially at home, where they had won 35 of their previous 47 games.

Hired gun Jeff Samardzija struggled through his worst game in an Oakland uniform. Meanwhile, the Oakland offense failed to capitalize on six walks, three Mets errors and a rare subpar performance by New York ace Zack Wheeler.

The A's got into the Mets' depleted bullpen (two relievers were unavailable because of injuries) in the sixth inning, but managed to add only one run -- and it was unearned.

Oakland begins the weekend two games behind Los Angeles in the American League West standings.

NOTES, QUOTES

RECORD: 74-52

STREAK: Lost one

NEXT: Angels (LHP Hector Santiago, 3-7, 3.46 ERA) at A's (RHP Sonny Gray, 12-7, 2.99 ERA)

PLAYER NOTES:

--RHP Sonny Gray brings a career-worst, four-game losing streak into the opener of the Athletics' showdown series with the Los Angeles Angels on Friday night. Just about everything else about the matchup is a positive for the 12-game winner. Gray has gone 10-2 in his career against the American League West, including 1-0 against the Angels. That win came earlier this season, when he allowed three runs in 6 2/3 innings in a 6-3 A's victory. Gray has a 2.45 ERA in three career starts against the Angels.

--RHP Jeff Samardzija was the victim of two-out hits in by far his shortest outing as a member of the A's in Wednesday's 8-5 loss to the New York Mets. Samardzija couldn't get out of the fourth inning, giving up seven runs on seven hits. Six of the hits came with two outs, including a half-swing blooper that landed near third base and yet resulted in a single by RF Curtis Granderson against a shifted Oakland defense. Three batters after what could have been the third out, Mets 1B Lucas Duda belted a three-run homer, turning what might have been a 1-0 game into a 5-0 runaway.

--3B Josh Donaldson did not start the Athletics' 8-5 loss the New York Mets on Wednesday, but he did finish it. In fact, the All-Star had what might have been the most important at-bat of the game, with two outs and the bases loaded in the bottom of the eighth inning and the A's down by three. He hit the ball hard, but right at Mets SS Wilmer Flores, who was able to knock it down and record the game-saving, inning-ending out at first base.

--C Derek Norris can expect a busy few days with the Los Angeles Angels starting left-handers in the first two games of the American League West showdown Friday and Saturday. Norris sat and watched left-handed-hitting John Jaso get the start Wednesday against the New York Mets. But instead of getting the full day off that manager Bob Melvin hoped, Norris had to be pressed into action late in a game the A's were losing. Norris went 0-for-2, once grounding into a double play.

--LHP Eric O'Flaherty is cleared to pitch in consecutive games, A's manager Bob Melvin announced before Wednesday's game against the New York Mets. O'Flaherty, who debuted for the A's on July 3 after undergoing Tommy John surgery on his left elbow, has pitched only 13 1/3 innings in his first 14 appearances, and never two days in a row. O'Flaherty pitched in Tuesday's 6-2 win over the New York Mets, striking out the only hitter he faced, and then was declared available had Melvin needed him Wednesday. As it turns out, LHP Fernando Abad and RHP Dan Otero were able to finish out the 8-5 loss.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "Usually your team gets you five runs, it ends in a victory. A big game today and I didn't do my part. It stings." -- RHP Jeff Samardzija, after the Athletics' 8-5 loss to the New York Mets on Wednesday.

ROSTER REPORT

MEDICAL WATCH:

--C Derek Norris (sore back) was in the lineup Aug. 19 but was only able to run at three-quarters speed. He appeared as a sub Aug. 20, and the A's had an off day Aug. 21. Manager Bob Melvin said he hopes Norris will be back to full speed Aug. 22.

--SS Jed Lowrie (hairline fracture of right index finger) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to Aug. 14.

--1B Kyle Blanks (torn left calf) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to June 23. An MRI revealed that Blanks' calf has a small tear and is not merely strained, the initial diagnosis. He ran full speed Aug. 2 and ran the bases Aug. 5 and Aug. 7. He began a rehab assignment with Triple-A Sacramento on Aug. 9.

--2B Nick Punto (strained right hamstring) went on the 15-day disabled list Aug. 3.

--OF Craig Gentry (broken right hand) went on the 15-day disabled list July 28. He began a rehab assignment with Triple-A Sacramento on Aug. 18. The timetable for his return was uncertain as of Aug. 19.

--RHP A.J. Griffin (right flexor tendinitis) went on the 15-day disabled list retroactive to March 21, and he was transferred to the 60-day DL on May 4. He underwent season-ending Tommy John surgery April 30.

--RHP Jarrod Parker (torn right ulnar collateral ligament) went on the 60-day disabled list March 20. He had a second Tommy John surgery March 24, and he will miss the entire season. He resumed playing catch Aug. 4.

ROTATION:

LHP Jon Lester

RHP Sonny Gray

LHP Scott Kazmir

RHP Jeff Samardzija

RHP Jason Hammel

BULLPEN:

LHP Sean Doolittle (closer)

RHP Dan Otero

LHP Eric O'Flaherty

RHP Ryan Cook

RHP Luke Gregerson

LHP Fernando Abad

RHP Jesse Chavez

CATCHERS:

John Jaso

Derek Norris

INFIELDERS:

1B Stephen Vogt

2B Alberto Callaspo

SS Eric Sogard

3B Josh Donaldson

INF Nate Freiman

INF Andy Parrino

OUTFIELDERS:

LF Brandon Moss

CF Coco Crisp

RF Josh Reddick

OF Jonny Gomes

OF Sam Fuld