

Runs again scarce as Oakland A's are blanked by Los Angeles Angels

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

That momentum the A's generated offensively in Seattle did not make the trip south.

Then again, Jered Weaver is spoiling the positive vibes for many teams this season.

The A's became Weaver's latest victim in Monday's 5-0 defeat to the Los Angeles Angels to open a three-game series.

The gangly right-hander made it look easy in tossing his third career shutout.

He struck out 10 and improved to 6-0.

Weaver leads the majors in wins, strikeouts (49) and ERA (0.99), and he's the first pitcher since the Arizona Diamondbacks' Randy Johnson in 2002 to win six of his club's first 23 games.

"The thing with him is he can throw everything for a strike," A's catcher Kurt Suzuki said. "It always seems like he's throwing something you're not looking for. You can't sit on one pitch."

Wondering what to make of the A's right now?

They've been shut out in three of their past five games. In between those duds, they combined for 14 runs Saturday and Sunday to beat the Seattle Mariners.

That gave them confidence coming in to face the Angels, one spot ahead of them in second place in the American League West.

But the A's advanced just one runner as far as third base against Weaver, the fourth pitcher in major league history to go 6-0 before the calendar turns to May.

Instead, it was the Angels who got healthy at the plate after scoring just five runs over their previous four games.

They jumped on Gio Gonzalez (2-2) early and knocked the lefty from the game after five innings. It was the first time in five starts that Gonzalez failed to go at least six innings.

He allowed eight hits and five runs (four earned) although he walked just one.

"He fought himself a little," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He never really got a great rhythm." Howie Kendrick's two-run single in the second put the Angels ahead.

Bobby Abreu made it 3-0 in the third with a double to left-center that scored Peter Bourjos.

Gonzalez appeared bothered on a couple occasions, springing awkwardly from his delivery once and getting a visit from Suzuki on another occasion. Gonzalez simply caught his foot in a hole and wasn't injured.

He's allowed a combined eight earned runs over his past two outings.

"I'm working up my pitch counts. I can't be doing that," Gonzalez said. "I've got to figure out how to go seven, instead of six and five."

The A's committed two more errors to give them 23 on the season, tied with the Houston Astros for second-most in the majors behind the Chicago Cubs' 24.

Shortstop Cliff Pennington's high throw to first on Bourjos' first-inning grounder didn't prove costly.

But in the fourth, center fielder Coco Crisp tried cutting off Erick Aybar's base hit to left-center and the ball skipped under his glove. That allowed Kendrick to score from first.

A's left fielder Josh Willingham left in the sixth after tweaking a muscle in his upper back during a swing. He's hopeful of returning Tuesday.

Crisp did provide a bright spot for Oakland by notching his third straight three-hit game.

Suzuki will miss Wednesday's road trip finale as he'll return to the Bay Area to be with his wife, Renee, who's having induced labor that day for the couple's first child.

tuesday's game

Chin Music: Michael Wuertz rejoins A's bullpen. Bobby Cramer sent down

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 4/25/2011 6:51PM

I always bring this up when the A's arrive at Angel Stadium, but the games feel like they take on a bigger meaning here. Maybe it's the NorCal-SoCal rivalry, or the divisional matchup, or the fact this stadium is packed for every game. But it's a pretty electric atmosphere (I feel cheesy when I use "electric" in that way, but it's accurate in this case).

On to the news

—Michael Wuertz was activated from the disabled list and Bobby Cramer was sent down. That puts the A's bullpen a little more in balance with three right-handers and four left-handers. Expect Wuertz to go back to his righty setup role along with Grant Balfour and Brad Ziegler. Remember how dominant Wuertz was in 2009, and then remember that he wasn't the same pitcher in 2010 after suffering an early-season shoulder injury. I don't think there's the same cause for concern given that he's now coming off a hamstring injury. The A's just need Wuertz to at least resemble his 2009 form, when he could enter a tough situation with men on base and get a strikeout when needed.

—Center fielder Coco Crisp is back in the lineup after crashing his left shoulder into the wall while making a catch yesterday in Seattle. "He was here early, smiling with the thumbs-up," A's manager Bob Geren said. "That's all it took. Hand signal, no words needed."

—The A's are trying to maintain the momentum they built in Seattle, when they combined for 14 runs Saturday and Sunday. The Angels? They're trying to turn the page, having lost four straight and been shut each of their last two games. ...

The lineups:

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

Angels — Bourjos CF, Abreu DH, Hunter RF, Wells LF, Callaspo 3B, Kendrick 2B, Aybar SS, Trumbo 1B, Mathis C; Weaver RHP.

Michael Wuertz works perfect inning in return

Steve Kroner, San Francisco Chronicle

Wuertz returns: The A's reinstated reliever Michael Wuertz (hamstring) from the disabled list Monday. He worked a three-up, three-down seventh inning with two strikeouts in Anaheim. To make room for Wuertz, Oakland optioned lefty reliever Bobby Cramer to Triple-A Sacramento.

A's still waiting as Selig eyes Dodger blues

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

Apparently, Bill Neukom's legal threats are far more convincing than Frank McCourt's.

That's one reason we're not seeing Commissioner Bud Selig exercise his "best interests of baseball" clause to make a unilateral call on the A's ballpark plight as he did with the Dodgers' ownership mess.

It took Selig less than a week to can McCourt after McCourt secured a loan from Fox to meet payroll demands, reaffirming he was unfit to run a franchise. It has taken Selig's three-man committee 25 months to examine the future of the A's .

That's 25 months and counting.

I asked Lew Wolff about Selig using his far-reaching powers to help resolve the A's ballpark issues, and the managing general partner said, "The commissioner's powers apply to all teams and all circumstances in MLB."

So, yeah, Wolff wouldn't mind Selig powering up on the A's behalf. But Wolff's pursuit to move to San Jose, where the Giants claim territorial rights and have a lawyer/MGP in Neukom to fight for them, is far more complex than McCourt getting disciplined for spitting on a once-proud franchise.

If Selig were to independently OK an A's move to San Jose, Neukom would take him to court faster than a Pablo Sandoval eye-high swing even though all owners agree before buying teams not to sue MLB.

McCourt's legal plans show how well that littleknown codicil works.

"Once it gets to court, anything could happen," said Andrew Zimbalist, the business-in-sports guru who teaches at Smith College and wrote "In the Best Interests of Baseball? The Revolutionary Reign of Bud Selig."

Zimbalist said another option would be for Selig to solicit owners to support a San Jose move by overturning the territorial rights, which would require 75 percent approval. That, Zimbalist added, would alienate the Giants' ownership, and Selig doesn't like doing that unless the ownership is the McCourts.

"There's no easy answer," Zimbalist said.

New ballpark in Oakland? A miracle would be required, maybe as big of a miracle as a new ballpark in San Jose.

Contraction? It's speculated MLB has spoken of disbanding the A's and Rays, both of whom have dogs as ballparks, with A's owners taking over the Dodgers. That was denied by Wolff and Pat Courtney, a Selig aide.

Selig canned McCourt because he thought he had no other choice, and he committed to a "thorough" investigation of the Dodgers' operations and finances.

Sounds familiar.

Want to bet Selig's "thorough" probe of the Dodgers' misdeeds ends quicker than his "thorough" probe of the A's ballpark woes? Didn't think so.

A's handcuffed by Weaver in loss to Angels

By David Ely / Special to MLB.com | 4/26/2011 2:00 AM ET

ANAHEIM -- Against Jered Weaver these days, a team has to put together a near perfect performance to have a chance to come away with a win.

Don't make any unforced errors. Take advantage of any run-scoring opportunity. And when all else fails, try to work the pitch count and force Weaver out of the game.

Unfortunately for Oakland fans, the A's did none of the above Monday night at Angel Stadium as Weaver continued to steamroll through opposing lineups en route to a seven-hit shutout in a 5-0 Angels victory.

With the win, Weaver became the first pitcher to earn six wins in his club's first 23 games since Randy Johnson did so in 2002 with the Arizona Diamondbacks. He also became the first Angel to toss back-to-back complete games since John Lackey in July of 2006.

"He's tough," said A's catcher Kurt Suzuki, who went 0-for-3 with a walk. "The thing with him is he can throw everything for a strike, and he mixes his pitches really well. It always seems like he throws something other than what you're looking for, and that's a credit to him. He can throw everything for strikes. So you can't sit on one pitch, and that's what makes him so good."

Weaver's ability to locate his pitches early in the count set the tone for his success Monday night. Weaver did not start an at-bat with a first-pitch ball until the fifth inning, when he fell behind Suzuki 1-0. He quickly responded with a strike and got

Suzuki to fly out to center. And Suzuki said after the game that Weaver's command of so many different pitches can make even favorable counts uncomfortable for batters.

"We want to jump out, and he's a guy you want to get early in the count," Suzuki said. "But when he does go 1-0, he doesn't throw a heater, he mixes it up. And then when you're sitting on an off-speed pitch, he throws you a fastball."

Weaver had eight strikeouts through six innings, and finished with 10 to push his MLB-leading total to 49.

While Weaver was in complete control on the mound, A's starter Gio Gonzalez endured an uneven night against an opportunistic Angels lineup.

After back-to-back hits put runners on second and third with none out in the bottom of the second, Howard Kendrick smacked an opposite-field single to plate Vernon Wells and Alberto Callaspo and give the Angels a 2-0 lead.

In the third, Bobby Abreu drove in Peter Bourjos with an RBI double to deep left field to extend the Halos' lead to three runs.

The Angels tacked on two more runs in the fifth, one via a fielding error by left fielder Josh Willingham.

"Our bats were much more focused all game," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "Gonzalez is one of the best pitchers in our league."

Gonzalez's five innings marked his shortest outing of the season, but the 25-year-old southpaw felt he was more of a victim of bad luck than an off night.

"The only one that got away from me was that double to Abreu," Gonzalez said. "Most of them were hits, and unfortunately these hits ended up costing me. But other than that I tried to battle all the way through. Just tough breaks, they found some holes."

From Suzuki's vantage point, the Angels' success was a product of a few balls finding holes in the defense, but A's manager Bob Geren said Gonzalez struggled to get into a groove on the mound.

"He fought himself a little bit," Geren said. "He never really got in a great rhythm. I thought his velocity and movement on his breaking ball was normal. It just wasn't located as well."

Gonzalez said he didn't feel any added pressure with Weaver on the mound, but said that it's interesting to watch the Angels' ace right now. "The guy is in the record books now," Gonzalez said. "You give him the credit he deserves. The guy's going out there pitching complete games and beautiful gems. You can't do nothing about it. You just try to match him as much as you can."

Oakland didn't help its cause, squandering run-scoring opportunities in the third, seventh and ninth innings. Coco Crisp, who went 3-for-4 for his third-straight multi-hit game, was tagged out oversliding second base on an attempted steal to end the third, and the A's left runners stranded in scoring position in the seventh and ninth.

The shutout is the A's third in five games, and extinguished any momentum gained from their 14-run performance over the course of two games Saturday and Sunday in Seattle. Given Weaver's 0.99 ERA, however, the A's can take solace in the fact that few teams in baseball would have fared much better.

"He really hit the glove," Geren said. "That's the best way to put it. He was mixing everything. Adding subtracting on his fastball and wherever [catcher Jeff] Mathis put his glove, he hit it. He was right around the plate with all of his pitches."

Resurgent McCarthy faces rookie Chatman

By Doug Miller / MLB.com | 4/26/2011 1:00 AM ET

A's right-hander Brandon McCarthy was magnificent in his last start, but not quite magnificent enough. Angels rookie righty Tyler Chatwood was impressive in his previous outing, too, but not impressive enough to get a win.

Both pitchers will be hoping for the result to match a similar effort when they go at each other Tuesday night at Angel Stadium.

The good news for McCarthy in his last outing was that he threw a complete game on the road, allowing only one run in eight strong innings in Seattle. His only mistake was a solo home run by Adam Kennedy with one out in the fourth inning. He allowed only three other hits and struck out six.

"It's an at-bat I'd like to have back," McCarthy said of Kennedy's. "Just not a good at-bat. I got behind on him and have to come in on his wheelhouse with that pitch. Going in against [Mariners starter] Felix [Hernandez], you know with at-bats like that, you have to do your best to avoid them and do your best to keep zeros up there."

Oh, right. He was up against Felix, the 2010 American League Cy Young Award winner who didn't allow a run in 7 2/3 innings, which meant McCarthy took a hard-luck 1-0 loss.

McCarthy can take some solace in the fact that he won't be facing that pitcher Tuesday, but Chatwood has looked good so far.

In his third career start, the sinkerballer went six innings, giving up two runs and six hits, while walking five and striking out three for a no-decision against the Red Sox. He got out of jams in the first two innings and kept the Angels in the game.

"He was right around the zone and threw some good low bullets," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "I thought he handled himself very well out there pitching out of trouble for a while."

A's: DJesus ... no E

Outfielder David DeJesus has a 260-game errorless streak, which is the longest active streak among all Major League outfielders. His last error came on Sept. 15, 2008. He's also a .333 (69-for-207) career hitter against the Angels, his highest average against any American League team.

- Second baseman Mark Ellis has recorded 200 career doubles and is one double shy of climbing to eighth on the doubles list in franchise history.
- The A's had committed one error over the last four games until Monday's two-error game. The A's were charged with 11 errors in the previous eight games and opened the season by committing an Oakland-record nine errors over the first four games.

Angels: Kendrick making homer history

Howard Kendrick is the 15th second baseman in the live-ball era to have at least six home runs through his team's first 18 games. Jeff Kent hit eight in 1994 -- the most since 1920. Kendrick's six home runs are already a career high for any month and four shy of his total from a season ago, when he had 10 homers in 616 at-bats.

- The Angels' bullpen leads the AL with a 2.78 ERA following a rough start to the season. In their first five games, Angels relievers had a 5.40 ERA, but since then, in their last 17 games, members of the Angels bullpen have given up 10 runs in 49 2/3 innings for a 1.81 ERA.
- Scioscia is now seven wins shy of 1,000 as manager of the Angels. He is the longest-tenured manager in the AL and second in the Majors only to St. Louis' Tony La Russa.

Worth noting

A's (and former Angels) closer Brian Fuentes has six saves this season, tied for third in the Majors. ... A's (and former Angels) outfielder Hideki Matsui has scored a combined 1,499 runs between the United States and Japan. ... Angels right-hander Joel Pineiro (right shoulder tightness) is scheduled to make a rehab start with Class A Inland Empire on Tuesday.

A's activate Wuertz from disabled list

By David Ely / Special to MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- In an expected move, the A's activated right-hander Michael Wuertz from the disabled list prior to Monday's game against the Angels.

To free up a roster spot for Wuertz, the A's optioned left-hander Bobby Cramer to Triple-A Sacramento.

Wuertz's activation follows a successful Saturday outing with the River Cats in which he pitched a 1-2-3 inning with two strikeouts, while also displaying no lingering issues with his strained left hamstring.

"Real nice outing the other night in Sacramento," Oakland manager Bob Geren said. "Hamstring's all healed up. Had plenty of opportunities to test it out, and he feels good."

For Wuertz, Monday marked the end of what had been a frustrating first month of the season. He recorded two strikeouts in a perfect ninth inning on Opening Night against the Mariners. A few days later, he injured his hamstring during a pregame workout and was placed on the 15-day DL retroactive to April 6.

Wuertz struggled to regain his form on the mound during his first couple rehab assignments with Class A Stockton and Triple-A Sacramento and the frustrations mounted.

"I think when I was down there, a little bit of frustration set in because of being off for a couple of weeks and then getting back on the mound and not throwing the ball exactly the way I wanted to," Wuertz said. "To have the outing I did the other night in Sacramento out of the bullpen, it was a real positive sign for me. I feel good and ready to get back in that bullpen and help out."

With Wuertz back in the mix, Oakland gets a needed extra right arm in the bullpen. For the past couple weeks, the A's carried five left-handed relievers, but are back down to four without Cramer.

"It adds another right-hander down there in the bullpen," Geren said. "You saw the job that he did two years ago. He was one of the best setup guys in the league."

Wuertz posted a 2.63 ERA in 78 2/3 innings in 2009, his first season in Oakland.

Geren also said that he expects Cramer to eventually work as a starter in Sacramento after a couple relief appearances. Cramer started four games for the A's in 2010, but worked out of the bullpen during his stint with the club.

"We have to talk about it," Geren said. "The specific plan is to get him built up, and he might make his first couple of outings out of the 'pen. But we'd like him to [start]."

A's offense starting to show some life

ANAHEIM -- The A's offensive number this year have been just that -- offensive. But they have shown signs of turning things around.

The club's 10 homers going into Monday were the second fewest in the Majors. The A's .242 batting average was fifth lowest among American League teams. The same thing could be said for their 80 runs on the season.

But after erupting for 14 runs in the past two games -- both victories over the Mariners -- A's manager Bob Geren feels like his team is breaking out of its slump.

"I feel like collectively just about all nine guys were struggling at once," Geren said. "We got three or four of them really coming out of it now, and the others guys feeling a little better. Definitely a lot better feeling each inning now."

One of the players leading the charge is Coco Crisp, who was 6-for-10 with two doubles, a triple and two RBIs in his last two games. The two games also marked the first time this year that Crisp had consecutive multi-hit days.

Oakland's recovering offense is set to get tested against the Angels though. While the A's pitching staff led the AL with a 2.45 ERA going into the series, the Angels ranked second at 3.15.

Willingham leaves game with back tightness

ANAHEIM -- A's left fielder Josh Willingham exited Monday's game against the Angels in the bottom of the sixth inning because of tightness in his left upper back.

Willingham was replaced in the field by Ryan Sweeney.

"Just some tightness in his back, his upper left side," A's manager Bob Geren said after the game. "It was something we thought worthy of taking him out of the game, and we will reevaluate when he comes in tomorrow."

Geren said Willingham mentioned his back bothering him after his at-bat in the fourth inning.

"It was on a swing in his last at-bat," Geren said. "He went out in the field to see if it'd go away, and it didn't."

Willingham said he does not think the tightness is related to the pitch that hit him in a similar area Sunday in Seattle, and that he hopes to be able to play Tuesday.

"I went out for the bottom half of whatever inning that was and it just sort of tightened up," Willingham said. "I don't think it's going to be a big deal."

Worth noting

A's catcher Kurt Suzuki will miss Wednesday's series finale against the Angels to fly back to Oakland for the birth of his first child, as his wife will induce labor that morning. Suzuki said his flight to Oakland is scheduled for 6 a.m. PT.

Gutierrez: A's Gonzalez can learn from 'Dream Weaver'

Paul Gutierrez, CSNCalifornia.com

ANAHEIM -- These are the games that will make Gio Gonzalez stronger.

So long as he does not let the disappointment crush his spirit and and usurp his will.

Be sure, Monday night's 5-0 series-opening loss to the Los Angeles Angels and their Jeff Spicoli-looking ace was a kick in the teeth. Fast Times at Angel Stadium?

All Jered Weaver needed against the A's were some tasty waves, a cool buzz, a filthy repertoire of pitches and he was fine.

Not so much for the A's, who were shut out for the third time in five games, the fourth time in their last 11.

Weaver is on an otherworldly early-season run, so you can excuse the A's hitters for flailing away.

And that's where Gonzalez comes in. The left-hander who can be as enigmatic as electric on the mound can learn from this. Soak it all in. Almost like osmosis.

In throwing his second consecutive complete game and lowering his big league-best ERA to 0.99 with 10 strikeouts and one walk, Weaver, who was once the can't -miss wunderkind who had trouble reigning in his emotions and talent on the mound, offered a blueprint.

"It's very impressive," Gonzalez said of Weaver. "He's in the record books. History. He's throwing complete games. Beautiful games."

It was what Gonzalez expected to do. Match Weaver, pitch for pitch. Inning for inning.

Except the Angels, riding a 20-inning scoreless streak and a four-game losing skid, played a beautiful game of put-it-where-they-ain't in the second inning.

A pair of hard-hit ground balls just eluded third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff down the line before Howie Kendrick singled to right-center. Suddenly, the high-strung Gonzalez was down, 2-0.

An inning later, Bobby Abreu's opposite-field double drove in Peter Bourgos and in the third, Gonzalez surrendered two more runs, on an infield single and on a double-play grounder.

So it wasn't like the Angels were banging Gonzalez all over the yard. Which, when you think about it, could be more maddening.

"They were getting their hits," said A's catcher Kurt Suzuki, "stringing their hits together."

But a five-run deficit against the likes of the 6-0 Weaver when he's on -- and he's been on all season, as evidenced by him joining Randy Johnson as the only pitchers to win six games in their respective team's first 23 games of a season -- and you can call it a night.

Perhaps the most impressive thing Gonzalez did, then, was answer with a scoreless fifth inning before departing. Yes, the damage was done, and it was the shortest outing of Gonzalez's season, but at least it did not get uglier.

Now wait for the catcalls to begin, what with Gonzalez's second straight subpar outing coming with his DL'd mentor Dallas Braden not in the park.

Two games is an awfully small sample size, but it bears watching. Especially since Gonzalez credits Braden so much with getting him to settle down when things start going haywire on the loneliest place in sports -- the pitcher's mound. And yes, even the hill jumped up and bit him. Twice Gonzalez caught his left cleat in the dirt.

"A new and improved change-up," Gonzalez said with a certain gallows humor.

And really, at least he didn't physically hurt himself on the pitches, which would have surprised no longtime A's observer.

Instead, it was against himself, and not Weaver, that Gonzalez battled most often.

"He fought himself a little," observed A's manager Bob Geren. "He never really got in a rhythm."

No, but he got a great seat from which to watch Weaver weave his magic.

"I've got to work on getting my pitch count down," a disparate Gonzalez said, after throwing 95 pitches with 58 strikes. "I've got to learn to go the distance. Go seven innings, not six or five."

It was a learning experience for Gonzalez. If he allows it to serve as one.

A's dominated by Weaver in 5-0 loss to Angels

Associated Press

The way Jered Weaver has been pitching this season for the Los Angeles Angels, his mound opponents have had to pitch shutouts to win.

Gio Gonzalez wasn't even close.

Gonzalez was charged with five runs — four earned — and eight hits over five innings on Monday night in a 5-0 loss to the Los Angeles Angels. It was only the second time in the Oakland left-hander's last 20 starts that he didn't pitch at least six innings. The A's have totaled just four runs in his last four outings, including a 1-0 win at Minnesota.

"Our whole pitching staff as a whole, they don't worry about who they're going up against," catcher Kurt Suzuki said.

"Maybe it comes into play, but when they go out there, their mindset is to keep the team in the ballgame and give us a chance to win. Gio got his ground balls, but they hit some balls hard and strung some hits together. Gio's tough to hit against, so when a team scores runs off him, it's a credit to them."

The Angels, coming off a four-game sweep by Boston in which they were beaten 5-0 and 7-0 in the last two games, took the lead against Gonzalez (2-2) in the second inning on a two-run single by Howie Kendrick that ended Los Angeles' string of 24 consecutive scoreless innings against opposing starters.

"Gio's been a guy who doesn't really give up a lot of runs, like Weaver," Kendrick said. "He was trying to attack the zone tonight and we just came out aggressive as a team. The last series against Boston we weren't as aggressive as we could be, but tonight we were against a good pitcher and it worked out for us."

Weaver scattered seven hits, but won for his sixth straight start and finished his second straight complete game.

"Obviously, we didn't do what we wanted to do against Boston, but our boys came to play tonight and were able to get me a couple of runs early off a great pitcher," Weaver said. "It wasn't just me. The guys played great defense behind me."

Weaver, last year's major league strikeout leader, threw first-pitch strikes to each of his first 15 batters and finished with 10 Ks. He walked one and allowed only one runner as far as third base, lowering his ERA to a major league-best 0.99.

"Coming into the game, you know that Oakland's hitters are kind of patient, for the most part," Weaver said. "But they came in and took some early hacks — which was kind of surprising. So I had to throw some off-speed stuff early. What you want to do is get ahead with first-pitch strikes. My location is a lot better and I'm feeling real good out there mechanically."

Weaver threw 114 pitches while sending Oakland to its third shutout loss in five games. It was the his third shutout and fourth complete game in 150 career starts.

The right-hander, who had won only one of his previous 11 starts against the A's, beat Texas 4-1 with a six-hitter last Wednesday. He didn't get his sixth victory last season until June 13, and it took him 14 starts to do it.

"He did a good job of keeping us off-balance," Oakland catcher Kurt Suzuki said. "We got our hits, but when he needed to make a pitch, he made a pitch. And he mixes it up. When you're sitting on an off-speed pitch, he throws a fastball. He throws everything, and he throws it for strikes."

Weaver began his big league career in 2006 by going 9-0 in his first 12 starts after he was promoted from the minors two months into the season. He is the first pitcher in the majors with six victories in his team's first 23 games since Randy Johnson did it with the 2002 Arizona Diamondbacks.

"Obviously, the run support really wasn't there too much last year, but I still wanted to compete and give us a chance to win," Weaver said. "But those guys have been helping me out a lot so far, and that's definitely contributed to my success."

Anytime you get five runs midway through the game, it takes a lot of pressure off your shoulders and you can go out there and attack the hitters."

Notes: Oakland LF Josh Willingham left the game in the sixth because of tightness in the left side of his upper back. ... Oakland LHP Brian Fuentes returned to Anaheim for the first time since the Angels traded their former closer to Minnesota last August. The four-time All-Star, who led the majors with a career-best 48 saves for the Halos in 2009, has six saves in seven chances with Oakland while filling in for injured closer Andrew Bailey.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Tucson tops first-place River Cats

By Mike Morris / Sacramento River Cats

Guillermo Moscoso's first three starts this season have put him among the league leaders.

However, he took an early exit Monday night after being roughed up by Tucson hitters en route to a 7-5 Padres victory at Raley Field.

Moscoso entered Monday leading the Pacific Coast League with a 0.56 ERA in 16.0 innings, striking out 16 and allowing nine hits. Things didn't fare so well in his fourth start, as he allowed eight hits and six runs in 4.1 innings.

Tucson jumped on the River Cats early, scoring four runs in the first two innings. The Padres opened the scoring in the first on first baseman Anthony Rizzo's two-run home run, his seventh of the season. Rizzo entered Monday tied for the league lead with six jacks.

Entering Monday, opponents have had their way with Sacramento in the first inning, scoring 25 of their 88 runs in the opening frame. But, fortunately for the River Cats, they have scored 21 of their 97 runs in the second inning. Monday night was a prime example, as Sacramento scored five in the second inning to take a 5-4 advantage.

The River Cats tied the game with four runs coming off the bats of players hitting under .200.

Josh Donaldson, batting .158, got things started in the second with a single past third that brought in Matt Carson. The newest River Cat, Shane Peterson (.100), had a line drive to right that brought in Anthony Recker - it was Peterson's first hit and RBI as a River Cat. Adam Heether (.171) brought in Donaldson and Josh Horton (.158) tied it with a single just past second baseman Logan Forsythe. All runs came with no outs.

Shortstop Eric Sogard grounded out to second, scoring Heether for a 5-4 lead. That lead lasted just two innings and wound up being their last as Tucson scored two in the fifth and one in the sixth to pull away. The River Cats were unable to take advantage of situations in which they had runners on base, leaving 10 runners on the base paths.

Sacramento remains in first place as Fresno (9-10) and Las Vegas (9-10) also lost Monday night. The River Cats look to even the series Tuesday night before heading to Las Vegas. Sacramento lost three of four to the 51s at home earlier this season.

RockHounds score 10 runs to beat Corpus Christi

Oscar LeRoy, Midland Reporter Telegram

As a leadoff hitter for the Midland RockHounds, Jermaine Mitchell knows that it's his job to set the table for the rest of the hitters to follow.

The center fielder did just that on Monday night as he got on base all five times he went to the plate as he was 2 for 3 with a home run, four RBI, two runs scored and walked twice as he helped the Midland RockHounds outlast Corpus Christi for a 10-8 victory to begin a four-game series at Citibank Ballpark.

Like they had against the San Antonio Missions in a 3-1 series loss, the RockHounds fell behind early but battled back in part because of a five-run fourth inning and then had the bullpen hold on.

"We're just trying to stay positive, which is the biggest key," Mitchell said. "We're staying positive and fighting. We don't ever give up and we never say die. We've got a lot of guys on this team who are really good and we all want to win."

Mitchell was a key to the RockHounds' big fourth inning rally. The RockHounds trailed 3-2 heading into that inning but Jeremy Barfield (2 for 4, 2 RBI) led off the frame with a solo home run to center field. Then after Kent Walton and Tyler Ladendorf drew walks, Mitchell connected for a monster three-run home run to right-center field.

"I was looking for a pitch up and (Hooks starter Jonnathan Aristil) threw me a pitch up. I was kind of sitting on a changeup and I hit it," Mitchell said.

Later in the inning, Stephen Parker gave the 'Hounds a 7-3 lead when he doubled home Grant Green (3 for 5), who reached on a double.

However, the Hooks made a rally of their own as they scored four runs on five hits in the fifth against RockHounds starter Carlos Hernandez (4-0) to tie the game at 7.

Hernandez wasn't his usual sharp self as he allowed seven earned runs on 11 hits to see his ERA go from 3.24 to 5.40. Midland manager Steve Scarsone said Hernandez will learn from this outing.

"I hate to see when we jump out to a lead and he can't shut it down in the next inning," Scarsone said. "I know he's frustrated about the same thing. We had a little chat after the game, but these are the things that help you grow. We're not down on him. We just hope he can shut down a batter to keep an inning from going."

The RockHounds didn't waste time getting the lead back with two runs in the bottom of the fifth. With the bases loaded, Mitchell drew a two-out walk by reliever Cesar Carrillo (1-1), and then Matt Sulentic scored on a wild pitch to give Midland a 9-7 advantage.

That walk by Mitchell just shows how well he's seeing the ball. On this current homestand, Mitchell is 10 for 20 with four walks.

"I'm trying to stay positive because baseball can be up and down," Mitchell said. "But the main thing is to have fun, and that's what I'm trying to do."

Scarsone said the way Mitchell has played this season shows his maturity.

"I had him last summer down in Stockton and there were times he got frustrated and tried to do too much," Scarsone said. "I think he's trying to stay within his own game and not feel like he has to do everything for us. He feels comfortable setting the table and he knows he's got some boys behind him to get him in."

The RockHounds bullpen once again slowed down an opposing offense in the late innings as Jonathan Ortiz was outstanding with 2 2/3 scoreless innings, and then Fautino De Los Santos picked up his third save by allowing one run on two doubles in the ninth.

Storm Snap Win Streak

Stockton Ports

The Stockton Ports saw their four-game win streak come to an end on Monday evening as the Lake Elsinore Storm defeated the Ports by a final total of 9-3.

The Storm struck first on Monday, posting a two-run second inning. Ports starter Rob Gilliam started the inning with a walk to Jason Hagerty, which were followed by three Storm singles and a pop out to bring Hagerty home. The Second Storm run would follow soon after as Rico Noel grounded out to score Nate Frieman.

While the Ports bats were active Monday evening, the Ports were just 2-for-10 with runners in scoring position. Despite the tough breaks the Ports caught, Myrio Richard had a big night for Stockton, starting with a big hit in the bottom of the third.

On a 2-2 pitch, Richard blasted a hit that bounced off the wall in front of the Ports bullpen. Storm centerfielder Noel made what would have been a good throw to second, had there been a man covering second. Unfortunately for Noel, but fortunately for Richard, second base was left open and Richard was able to advance to third on the error. Dusty Coleman would bring Richard home on a two-out single to center field. Coleman followed his single with a stolen base. The Ports could not capitalize on this two-out rally further, as Leonardo Gil popped out to right field to end the inning.

Richard would again make the Storm pay in the fifth. On the second pitch of the at-bat, Richard would slam a solo home run over the left field wall to tie the game. The Ports would take their only lead of the game in the fifth, when a Leonardo Gil double scored Michael Choice to put the Ports up 3-2. The Ports would not hold the lead for long, as a Hagerty two-run home run in the sixth put the Storm back on top. Hagerty, 1-for-3 on the night with a home run and three RBIs, worked the count to 3-2 and then knocked the long ball over the right field wall.

The Storm tacked on five more runs in the game, four of them in the ninth inning. Ports reliever Bo Schultz came in to close out the game for Stockton, and continued his struggles at home. The struggling side-arm gave up three hits, including two doubles, for four runs (two earned) before ending the game with a Frieman groundout. The Ports couldn't get anything going in the bottom of the ninth, falling to the Storm in their first meeting of 2011.

The Ports look to return the favor tomorrow as RHP Gary Daley Jr. makes just his second start for the Ports this season.

Bees Dominate the Snappers 7-3

By Jon Versteeg, burlingtonbees.com

BELOIT, WI-The Burlington Bees received six solid innings from RHP A.J. Griffin (3-0) and scored four runs in the fifth inning to earn a 7-3 win over the Beloit Snappers (5-7) on Monday night at Pohlman Field. The win is the fifth in a row for the Bees, who improve their record to a Midwest League best 13-3 with the win. The Bees scored two runs in the first inning against Beloit LHP Andrei Lobanov (0-1). CF Tyreace House (2-5) reached base on an error and went to second base when 2B Nino Leyja (2-3) walked. LF Douglas Landaeta (0-5) grounded out to move both runners into scoring position.

3B Tony Thompson (2-4) singled home both runs for a 2-0 Burlington lead.

Beloit scored a single run in the fourth inning against Griffin. RF Daniel Ortiz (2-4) and C Josmil Pinto (1-4) hit back-to-back doubles to make it 2-1.

The Bees sent eight men to the plate in a four-run fifth inning. SS Yordy Cabrera (0-3) walked and stole second base. 1B Josh Whitaker (0-4) flew out and C John Nester (2-4) singled to move Cabrera to third base. Nester moved to second base on a throwing error by Beloit 3B Andrew Leer and Cabrera scored to make it 3-1.

House reached base on a fielder's choice and Nester crossed home plate. Leyja walked and Thompson smacked a two-run double to make it 6-1.

Leyja added an RBI single in the seventh inning to make it 7-1

The Bees and Snappers continue their series on Tuesday evening at 6:30 p.m. RHP Josh Bowman (2-0, 1.57) starts for Burlington against RHP Manuel Soliman (0-0, 1.80) for Beloit. Pre-game coverage begins at 6:10 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at gobees.com.

2011 Bees tickets are on sale now! To purchase season tickets, bonus books or single game tickets, please give the Bees a call at (319) 754-5705 (319) 754-5705, go online to www.gobees.com, or stop by the box office at Community Field during normal business hours.