

Wednesday, June 30, 2004

Crosby pulling ahead?

The A's began an important series last night with a win over Anaheim, taking the 5-4 decision. They've got two more games against the Angels, who they now lead by a game and a half in the West, before they start another three game series against the Giants.

The first line in this game recap mentions Bobby Crosby's viability as a rookie of the year candidate, a point that, you'll remember, I addressed in an earlier entry. He did help his cause last night, though, with a pair of hits in four times up, including his 19th double of the year. I determined that Crosby was actually the third best rookie in the league by looking at VORP, but voters obviously don't vote on the basis of VORP. How, then, does Crosby stack up in the traditional numbers? ESPN.com has a neat "rookies only" stat-sorting feature, making this much easier than it might be.

The first thing to note is that in all of baseball, only six rookie hitters have played consistently enough to meet the "qualified for a batting title" requirement of having 3.1 plate appearances per team game. Those six, for the curious, are Lew Ford, Matt Holliday, Khalil Greene, Kaz Matsui, and two A's: Marco Scutaro and Crosby. That's a lot of middle infielders.

Looking at the full list points out an apparent mistake: Victor Martinez appears not to be a rookie. That pushes Crosby up to second, before we even begin this exercise.

Crosby is behind Ford in runs, hits, RBI, steals, walks, batting average, on-base percentage, and slugging, but leads in doubles and homers. While Crosby's position should help him, Ford's .320 batting average is a gaudy number, so at this point, I think Ford has to be considered both the correct choice as well as the likely choice for the hardware.

Back to the game, though. Overall, it looks like it was a solid win: Oakland had a three-run inning and a two-run inning, with the two runs coming against the vaunted Anaheim bullpen, this time represented by Brendan Donnelly and Francisco Rodriguez; Mark Mulder didn't pitch great, allowing four runs, but he had a 9-3 G/F ratio and got eight strikeouts in his seven innings; the bullpen went six-up-six-down, with Justin Lehr pitching the eighth and Octavio Dotel earning his first Oakland save in the ninth; and only Marco Scutaro didn't reach base at least once.

My only quibbles are the usual ones: fifteen base runners were converted into just five runs, in no small part due to a lack of power: the A's ten hits were made up of seven singles and three doubles.

The A's sort of had to win this game, as much as any game in June is a "must-win," because of the pitching matchups for the next two, or more accurately, who is pitching for the A's. Barry Zito goes tonight, and while any game could be the one in which he regains his touch, it's more likely that he'll continue to struggle and give up four or five runs in six innings while John Lackey shuts down the A's on the other side. Then, on Thursday, it's been announced that Rich Harden will miss his start. He apparently hasn't been DL'd yet, but I'm not sure who will go for the A's. Whether it's Justin Duchscherer or Kirk Saarloos or the A's pull some kind of surprise, though, the pitcher will probably be a fairly large drop-off from Harden.

Posted by jason in Baseball, Oakland A's at 10:51

Interesting. So I guess that makes Crosby the leading candidate after all.

Thanks for the tip.

Anonymous on Jul 1 2004, 09:57

Sorry twins fans... Lew Ford is not eligible. He told us on a chat wrap.

Anonymous on Jun 30 2004, 18:58