

Sunday, September 12, 2004

Rookies galore

It felt like it had been forever since the A's won a game, and it kind of had, but Oakland finally put another tick mark in the W column last night, coming back from a 4-0 deficit to win 5-4 against Cleveland.

The heroes of the game were Nick Swisher, who's really making a great impression on this team and Oakland fans, myself included, and Bobby Crosby, who hit back-to-back solo homers in the eighth inning that turned a one-run deficit into the eventual final score.

The A's homers were all the more surprising because of who allowed them. Bob Howry gave up his third and fourth bombs of the season, having seen just two prior balls leave the yard over 35 innings. He's been striking guys out, not walking them or giving up many hits, and he carried a 1.54 ERA into last night's game. Those homers handed him his first loss of the year, though, and raised his ERA over two for the first time this year.

Do you want me to go back and say that again? Bob Howry has had an ERA under two all season long.

Anyway, both starting pitchers threw six strong innings before running into trouble in the seventh, as Rich Harden gave up a three-run homer to Travis Hafner after having given up just one run previously and CC Sabathia, who I knew I had good reason to be afraid of, threw six scoreless before giving up a three-run rally to the A's and being knocked out of the game with two outs in the seventh.

If I'm an Indians fan, however, I'm a little worried about Sabathia's performance. He only gave up five hits in 6.2 innings, but he also walked six batters, including Nick Swisher twice, and 14 of his 20 outs came via the flyball. Harden, meanwhile, gave up just three flyball outs and struck out seven Indians, improving his strikeout ratio, which at 7.78/9 innings, ranks 15th in all of baseball.

Oakland's bullpen, which had done some suspect work during the losing streak, got back on the horse with three scoreless innings from Jim Mecir, Ricardo Rincon (who got the win, his first decision of the year, which is a good thing for a middle reliever, though I can't really say it's indicative of his overall performance), and Octavio Dotel, who earned his 19th American League save of the season, and 33rd overall.

Thankfully, Anaheim had the good grace to get whopped last night, 13-6, as the White Sox blasted off for eight runs in the second inning, staking Jason Grilli to a lead that even he couldn't lose.

Dallas McPherson got his first major league at-bat last night and, in a good omen for the A's over the next six years or so, struck out.

Today's the first big NFL day of the season, so I'll be futilely cheering my 49ers from afar, hoping they won't be on TV so I don't have to actually watch them bumble their way to a 2-14 record. Luckily, I've got a team that can actually do some damage in its league that will be on TV, as Cleveland sends Jake Westbrook against Barry Zito tonight at 8:00 in the ESPN Sunday Night game, which, due to football, is actually being bumped to ESPN2.

Anaheim's game should be over by the time the A's game starts, since Jose Contreras and Bartolo Colon will square off at 4:00 in Southern California.

I think the White Sox will win another win against the Angels, but I don't know if the A's will be able to pad their lead. Jake Westbrook's a good pitcher and, while the talk seems to be that Barry Zito's improving, he's also given up four runs in each of his last three starts without managing to finish the seventh inning. I'd look for Oakland's lead to be one or two games tomorrow, with my money riding on two.

Posted by jason in Baseball, Oakland A's at 10:39