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Tuesday, April 19, 2005

A's 8, Rangers 5 -- Rangers 3, A's 0

An "I told you so" for calling Monday's spanking of Chan Ho Park isn't really worth it: who didn't know he'd get smacked around a little? The offense finally came through in a place where they should succeed, and a good thing too, because Juan Cruz came on and almost tried to derail the whole thing, giving up three runs in just two thirds of an inning (though one of those was allowed in by Octavio Dotel, who was forced to come on and get a two-batter save when the A's should have been able to let him rest a day).

Dan Haren was good in terms of run prevention (two runs in six innings), not so good in terms of control (five walks). He stayed out of trouble, though, due in no small part to seven strikeouts. He also showed good ground-ball tendencies, getting seven of those type of outs, compared to just four air outs.

On Sunday, though, all the offensive gains came tumbling apart, as the unlikely Pedro Astacio came on and blew Oakland up, allowing no runs in eight innings and permitting the game to be completed in 2:17. Of course, that kind of game time can't be one-sided, and Joe Blanton did his part for Oakland, allowing two runs in six and two thirds innings. On the DIPS tip, though, it should be noted that he struck out just one Ranger, and on a related-to-DIPS tip, he gave up 11 air outs, compared to eight on the ground. He kept the ball in the yard, though, no mean feat against Texas, particularly at The Ballpark.

Worrisome trend of the day: Juan Cruz's inability in his first four games as an Athletic to get anyone out. Ken Macha tried to put him in a spot where he could work out some kinks on Monday, with a six-run lead, but he quickly blew that lead and forced a guy the team could count on into the game. The next day, Keiichi Yabu saw action with the score 2-0 in the bottom of the eighth, the kind of spot you'd like to see Cruz earn his way into.

Other worrisome trend of the day: Three errors so far for Eric Chavez. Small sample, I know, but forgive me, I'm a worrier.

ARC

MVOP for 4/18: Erubiel Durazo trying to get back on the horse with two doubles and a walk.

MVOP for 4/19: Marco Scutaro, who was the only player in positive figures for Oakland today, as he popped his third double of the year and also added a single. For nought, of course, but who's fault is that?

LVOP for 4/18: Eric Byrnes, who left an astounding eight men on base in going 0-5.

LVOP for 4/19: Geez, who wasn't? Well, aside from Scutaro. But the worst offender was Mark Kotsay, who's having a good start to the season, but took on ofer behind Scutaro's nice work with the stick. Having a bad day right behind a guy having a good day is a sure way to garner yourself an LVOP award.

MVP for 4/18: Dan Haren, for a pretty good six innings, components aside.

MVP for 4/19: Joe Blanton, who pitched a little longer and "benefitted" from one of his runs coming in on a bases-loaded error on Eric Chavez, which counts as an out in his ARC.

LVP for 4/18: Juan Cruz, for a terrible piece of work, continuing to stink it up.

LVP for 4/19: Keiichi Yabu, for allowing an uneventful run in his inning of work.

Standings

I've decided to save a little space and not post the standings every day, since they're updated in the stats section daily anyway. I will note that Erubiel Durazo has moved into the lead for most MVOP's, which is odd consider that he's also got the most LVOP's to his name. It might not be a coincidence that a great day from Durazo spelled eight runs for Oakland on Monday, while bad days surrounding it have yielded totals like one and zero.

Relievers

Macha's usage score has increased to 20, fast approaching the maximum of 24. It's a bit unfair, because 13 games into the season, he's still figuring out who's good and who's less good, particularly with a 'pen full of newcomers, one entirely new to these shores and one very new to the pro game, much less the major leagues (and thus not necessarily as successfully projected as the other, more established, pitchers). Still, I wonder why Yabu was used today in a 2-0 game rather than, say, Kiko Calero. It's one of those classic cases where a manager uses different guys (usually better) to protect leads than he does to maintain small deficits. It's, in the end, a relatively minor thing, but remember that the A's lost the division last year by one game. Is it inconceivable that optimal (i.e. non-traditional) bullpen usage might have made up that game and put the A's in the playoffs? I don't think so.

Next up

The A's go to Seattle for a quick two-game set, sending Barry Zito against Joel Pineiro tomorrow. That game could be on ESPN2, which is unfortunate in the sense that Barry Zito's not a guy I want to watch these days. Will he get pounded, or will he just lose the hard-luck way as Pineiro pitches a gem against Oakland?

On Thursday, Rich Harden goes against Ryan Franklin in the game I'm more hopeful of winning. Seattle really did improve their lineup this off-season and I always have this worry that a young guy like Jeremy Reed is going to choose the A's to be the team that he announces himself with. As in, "Hi, I'm Jeremy. Watch me hit two homers, two doubles, and steal a key base over the next two games."

That said, Harden's good. I think if Reed wants to do any announcing, he's best off aiming to do so against Zito on Wednesday.

Posted by jason in Baseball, Oakland A's at 20:07

Calero is nursing a slightly sprained elbow or some such thing; he hasn't been available for several days.
Anonymous on Apr 20 2005, 15:56

Thanks, Ken, I didn't know that. That's what I get for living in my own little "I only find out about the A's on ESPN" world.
Anonymous on Apr 20 2005, 21:11