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Two losses and a win

As I alluded to in an e-mail response to this comment, I figured I'd write again when the A's won again. Thankfully, Oakland lucked their way into a victory last night, so the backlog doesn't end up being as severe as it could be.

Working chronologically, the A's wasted a brilliant start by Joe Blanton and, apparently, by the defense, on Sunday, losing to the Angels 1-0. Blanton struck out just two and had a 1-1 ground-to-fly ratio, but gave up just six hits in the game, almost keeping the Angels off the scoreboard. Unfortunately, one of those six hits was a homer by Steve Finley leading off the seventh, which was all Kelvim Escobar (who had a more traditional no-run game, striking out seven Athletics), Scot Shields, and Frankie Rodriguez needed.

The A's lineup for this game, including pinch-hitter Adam Melhuse, had four players batting above .200 out of ten: Mark Kotsay (who walked once), Scott Hatteberg (who had two hits and a walk), Marco Scutaro (who walked once), and Jason Kendall (who's barely above .200 anyway). Sure, batting average, schmatting average, but still, it's an indication of just how poorly this team is hitting right now.

Things got worse the next night, as the A's were shut out by Jon Garland while Barry Zito and Juan Cruz did their usual craptastical work on the mound. Zito was reasonable, though, giving up nothing through six before allowing four runs in the seventh (the usual "big inning" problem for Barry), and Juan Cruz's two runs were unearned, but Eric Chavez's error came three batters before the runs scored, so Cruz had his chances to get out of the inning unscathed. Oh when oh when is Kiko Calero coming back?

Finally, though, the A's broke the scoreless streak and the losing streak (don't those things usually match up?) last night, breaking out for nine runs. It's a good thing they went for the big number, because Rich Harden wasn't his usual self, getting knocked around for six runs in five and a third innings.

That the A's hit into three double plays is a bad thing. That they scored nine runs despite it is a good thing, even if it did take three Chicago errors to help them out (though those errors must not have come at such crucial places, since eight of the nine Oakland runs were charged as earned to Chicago pitchers).

The Division

Is it a little early to talk about the standings? Absolutely. Do I want to do it anyway? Absolutely.

Oakland remains in last place, albeit tied for fourth with Texas (who lost to Seattle last night) and just a game and a half back of Anaheim (who lost to Alex Rodrig ... I mean the Yankees, who featured Alex Rodriguez's 10 RBI and three homers).

Upcoming

Today is an afternoon game against the White Sox, with Kirk Saarloos going against Freddy Garcia. Given Oakland's hitting troubles and Saarloos's general inability to throw a quality start, I'd bet on the one-game winning streak ending today.

Oakland is off tomorrow before Seattle comes into town for a three-game weekend set, led off by Aaron Sele vs. Dan Haren, that scintillating All-Star pitching matchup that we've all been waiting to see. If the A's can't win that game, if the hitters can't hit Sele, it may be "tirade time" in the Bay. Or at least here in Gramercy Park.

ARC

Don't forget to keep checking out the ARC page, linked in the right sidebar in the Stats section.

You've all been waiting for it, I know. By the way, here's a link to the post where I explain what all this junk is. I'll include this link at the beginning of every post about ARC from now on.

MVOP for 4/24: Scott Hatteberg, on a day when almost no one made a positive contribution, nearly scored the A's only

run after a double in the seventh. Unfortunately, he was thrown out at the plate on a ground ball to third.

LVOP for 4/24: Erubiel Durazo, again, who had the misfortune of having a bad day at the plate behind a guy who was having a good day, Hatteberg. Durazo even grounded into a double play, just to make sure he'd get the award.

MVP for 4/24: Joe Blanton, of course, who was the only pitcher, but did actually pitch well enough to earn the award with his one-run, eight-inning performance.

MVP for 4/25: Huston Street, who got out of Barry Zito's seventh-inning jam and then pitched a scoreless eighth.

LVP for 4/25: Juan Cruz, for his bad ninth inning. At some point, he'll get his head on straight. Right?

MVOP for 4/25: None. Nobody made a positive contribution against Jon Garland. Ugh.

LVOP for 4/25: Since I can't go with "everyone," the winner is Mark Ellis, who grounded into a double play after an Erubiel Durazo single.

MVP for 4/26: Justin Duchscherer and Octavio Dotel, for their scoreless eighth and ninth, respectively.

LVP for 4/26: Ricardo Rincon, who faced just one batter and gave up an RBI single to that man.

MVOP for 4/26: Eric Chavez, who had a couple of big hits and grabbed himself three RBI, finally hitting like the third-place batter he's supposed to be.

LVOP for 4/26: Marco Scutaro, who went 0-4 with a double play.

Standings

Don't forget to keep checking out the ARC Standings page, linked in the right sidebar in the Stats section.

Huston Street jumps into the lead for MVP while Erubiel Durazo maintains his distance from the field in the LVOP race. Unfortunately for Street, he's also tied for the most LVP awards, too, and fortunately for Durazo, he's tied for most MVOP's. Fickle players all.

Relievers

Don't forget to keep checking out the reliever page, linked in the right sidebar in the Stats section.

Macha's usage score has fallen a little, thank goodness, from 20 to 18, mostly because Octavio Dotel hasn't gotten into a blowout in a while. That said, Ricardo Rincon is probably the sixth best reliever on the team, and that's only because Juan Cruz is struggling. Rincon, though, is the guy the A's have used in the closest games, with a score differential average under two. He's appeared in three tie games and only one blowout.

Billy Beane may be best off trying to trade Rincon and getting Macha a pen with no lefties so that the manager will be forced to actually figure out who can get lefties out instead of automatically resorting to his one portsider anytime a fearsome lefty slugger pops into the box.

Rincon is probably a decent seventh guy to have around the bullpen, if you absolutely insist on carrying that many, but Macha can't be trusted with him.

Adjusted Standings

Don't forget to keep checking out the Adjusted Standings page, linked in the right sidebar in the Stats section.

If the A's continue playing their current style of baseball, they'll finish the year with a 72-90 record. That's ugly.

Posted by jason in Baseball, Oakland A's at 10:45