

Monday, May 2, 2005

A's 3 - Mariners 2

One of my kids loves to taunt me about the A's, and while his Red Sox (yes, he's a Sox fan in New York, though I'll testify on his behalf that he was one before they won the Series) have won a championship more recently than my A's, I can always come back at him with the recent success the A's have had getting to the playoffs. Unfortunately, I can't bring that up about last year, and it's looking like more of this same this season. What he mentioned when I walked into class today, though, was, "It's about time Barry Zito got a win." My response? "Yep."

What else can I say to that? "He should have won one other game this year, but didn't get much offensive support"? That's weak. No, Barry Zito just hasn't been good enough to win ballgames for his club this year and through large stretches of last season. Nobody can seem to figure out how he's supposed to turn this around and we're all sort of realizing that maybe the best course of action was to trade him after he won his Cy Young a few years ago.

What's (not) done is (not) done, though, so there's no use spilling milk in my tears or whatever. Let's just rejoice that Barry Zito (huzzah!) won a game yesterday (HUZZAH!). Sure, he only struck out one Mariner in seven innings. And sure, he was something less than economical, throwing 4.75 pitches to the average Mariner hitter. But he didn't walk anybody, he didn't give up any home runs (and gave up two extra-base hits overall, helped by his 12/7 G/F ratio). That's 2/3 of the battle right there, as far as Zito is concerned. The defense did the rest, taking his 23 balls in play and allowing just five hits as well as turning three double plays. The lack of homers and walks combined with the defense conspired to limit Zito's propensity for the big inning, as his runs were given up in single doses, one in the third and one in the sixth.

As if you needed more waffling out of me, though (yes, I am aware that I do a lot of it), I should note that another base stealer reached successfully against Jason Kendall. Ichiro! took second in the ninth inning against Octavio Dotel, which is, of course, a critical situation, the game being decided by one run and all. I don't know that Adam Melhuse is much of a thrower, but at some point, do you consider going to him in the late innings?

The offense wasn't great, as three runs tends to not win as many ballgames as you'd like, but eight hits and a walk is a decent output. What we end up with is just one member of the starting lineup for last night hitting under .200: Eric Byrnes. The A's aren't necessarily bursting out of slumps or anything, but there does seem to be some semblance of offensive life coming back.

Standings

Oakland is right where we left them last year, in second place, a game back of Anaheim. They've been outscored on the year, though, which is never a good sign for a team with hopes of contention. Unsurprisingly, that has come from their lack of offense. Just two teams have scored fewer runs than the A's. One of them (Cleveland) is just one run behind despite playing one fewer game and the other (Pittsburgh), while admittedly quite some distance back (23 runs), has played two fewer games. They're grouped with a bunch of teams toward the top of the middle of the pack in runs allowed and, while you might expect some of those teams to fall off a little (Chicago's Sox and Milwaukee's Brewers, perhaps), I wouldn't expect the A's run prevention to radically improve. It's going to have to be the offense, then, which should come as no surprise to the non-comatose.

Next up

The A's are at home for three against the Rangers. Pitching for Oakland will be Rich Harden, Kirk Saarloos, and Dan Haren. You've got to hope for mediocrity out of Saarloos against a tough offensive team. Luckily, he's up against the guy having the worst year of the three Texas starters, Chris Young. Unluckily, there are some things not to like in his statistical profile for the year. He's got a healthy strikeout rate (7 per nine), has only allowed one gopher ball in 26.7 innings, and is walking 2.7 batters per nine innings. In other words, you wouldn't necessarily expect an ERA closer to five than four.

The other matchups similarly leave plenty for the pessimist to moan about: Kenny Rogers would probably love to start up a new streak at the Coliseum against Rich Harden tonight and Chan Ho Park seems to finally have come alive for the Rangers (ERA under 4.00). This is one of those series where I wouldn't be surprised by a sweep out of either team, nor by anything in between.

Blog Export: Beaneball, <http://beaneball.org/>

Want me to make a call? Oakland takes two of three.

Injuries

Ok, just one. Let's just hope Nick Swisher is ok. It's not like he was hitting all that great, and this'll give the A's a chance to show off the supposedly five-deep outfield they built, but still, you don't like to see a good hitter, whether he's hitting well or not, hurt.

Will Carroll's latest column has no news, except that Swisher's sure to hit the DL, which is unsurprising given the A's reluctance with handing out medical information, but he doesn't sound any notes of alarm, either.

ARC

Moving on to things where I might have something original to say, here's today's ARC report. As usual, here's the link to the explanation.

Most Valuable Pitcher for 5/1: Barry Zito, for a strong start.

Least Valuable Pitcher for 5/1: None. All three pitchers did their jobs.

Most Valuable Offensive Player for 5/1: Eric Chavez, who had two hits and a walk and appears to be getting back on track offensively.

Least Valuable Offensive Player for 5/1: Eric Byrnes, who, sadly enough for him, wouldn't even have been in the game but for Swisher's injury. An 0-3 with two men left in scoring position is ugly.

Check out the ARC page here, or linked in the Stats section in the sidebar.

ARC Standings

No changes at the top of the ARC standings.

Check out the ARC Standings page here or linked in the Stats section in the sidebar.

Relievers

If you notice that the projected dERA numbers have changed and that the in-season numbers are very different, it's because I got park-adjustments working in the DIPS spreadsheet. I also decided to give decent guesses for HBP's and IBB's, neither of which are predicted by PECOTA (at least not visibly).

A few shifts in the stats of the relievers combined with good relievers working tight games recently have pushed Ken Macha's usage number down six spots since we last updated, from 18 to 12 (the scale is 0-24, from good to bad). Good job Kenny!

Check out the Relievers page here or linked in the Stats section in the sidebar.

Posted by jason in Baseball, Oakland A's at 19:57