

Saturday, July 2, 2005

### **A's 6, White Sox 2**

Oakland won yesterday, and while the White Sox only scored two runs, it wasn't solely because of a shutdown performance by Rich Harden. The young ace lasted just 5 2/3 innings, throwing 101 pitches, though he gave up just two unearned runs. The bullpen, though, took over from there, as Kiko Calero and Huston Street faced the minimum number of White Sox possible through the remaining 3 1/3 innings, with each pitcher striking out a pair of Pale Hose.

Contreras pitched like I predicted, rarely managing to get the ball in the strike zone (three wild pitches, seven walks in just 4 1/3 innings) but the A's apparently didn't chase enough to get themselves into trouble. Nick Swisher, rather than striking out three times, walked in three of his four trips. Scott Hatteberg also earned a pair of walks. The only A's not to walk were Eric Chavez (who was hit by a pitch once) and Mark Kotsay.

The relatively impatience of Kotsay is worrisome. He saw just thirteen pitches all night (in five trips to the plate) and twice put the first pitch in play, but ended up with just one hit. I'm of a mind that you can see as few pitches as you want if you're going to get hits on the ones you do see, but if you're one for your last fourteen, maybe patience could be the answer, particularly if your on-base percentage is .332. People are raving about Kotsay, but I think they've been a little blind to the fact that he's got an OPS of .723. He's 20th among major-league center fielders in VORP, behind such illuminaries as Alex Sanchez (!) and Damon Hollins. I know he got hot late last year and that he could do the same this year, but I think there's good cause for moving him out of the top three in the lineup right now. At least Jason Kendall, for all his lack of power, has a nearly-.350 OBP, justifying his place in the first or second spot of the batting order.

That's one predicted win down, two predicted losses to go. The A's are five and a half up on the Mariners and have passed the Diamondbacks in winning percentage. Next target: Philadelphia and the Yankees, who both sit at .500 right now.

Posted by jason in Baseball, Oakland A's at 15:11