

Daily Clips



August 9, 2018

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Dodgers settle for split, slip out of first place

By Ken Gurnick

OAKLAND -- Having won Tuesday night with precision execution and dominant relief, the Dodgers did neither on Wednesday night and lost to the A's, 3-2, dropping back into second place one-half game behind Arizona.

It's been back and forth in the National League West, with six lead changes in the last 10 days. The biggest lead the Dodgers have had this year is 1 1/2 games. At this time last year, the Dodgers led by 15 games.

"We'll take last year -- when we were up how many games? -- any day of the week," said Clayton Kershaw. "We couldn't lose. This team is figuring it out, we're playing well at times. This year, it's going to be more of a dogfight. If we do end up making the postseason, it might help, who knows?"

Reliever J.T. Chargois drew the loss, pitching in his second inning and his second consecutive game. He retired the A's in order in the seventh on nine pitches, but allowed a leadoff single in the eighth to Marcus Semien, who was singled to third with one out by Jed Lowrie.

Khris Davis followed with a two-bouncer fielded by third baseman Manny Machado, who threw home. With Semien's path to the plate forcing Machado's throw inside the baseline, catcher Yasmani Grandal tried to backhand the throw and reach back for the tag, but dropped the ball.

"I thought we had him out," said manager Dave Roberts. "A little bit throw to Yasi's right, but if he catches it clean, he's out."

The throw was in time, because home-plate umpire Mike Muchlinski originally motioned out, then realized the ball was on the ground and the go-ahead run scored.

"With the ball coming in at an angle and you've got to reach, it's going to be a close play and you can't really use two hands, it's got to be a swipe tag and a bang-bang play," said Grandal. "All I felt was the ball in my hand and I reached for the tag. There's not much to it. Semien did a really good job staying in the baseline to make the throw go inside. Heads-up play by him."

Chargois had taken over for Kershaw, who squared off with Mike Fiers in a no-decision draw. Kershaw allowed two runs on six hits in six innings with only one strikeout and no walks.

"Clayton didn't have his best stuff," said Roberts. "But he made pitches when he needed to."

Fiers, who no-hit the Dodgers three years ago while with Houston, opened the game with eight strikeouts in four perfect innings, but didn't make it out of the sixth inning.

Kershaw didn't dominate early like Fiers, but he kept Oakland scoreless until a 28-pitch fourth inning, when the A's parlayed singles by Khris Davis, Mark Canha, Stephen Piscotty and Ramon Laureano for a pair of runs. Canha's came on an 0-2 pitch, while Laureno's was a blooper that dropped between second baseman Brian Dozier and right fielder Yasiel Puig.

"I didn't have much of anything tonight. It was pretty much smoke and mirrors," said Kershaw. "That's a good team. I was getting ahead of a few guys, but a lot of hits with two strikes. Didn't have those put-away pitches tonight. This was definitely not one of my most memorable performances, that's for sure."

Grandal finally ended Fiers' perfect game and 12-inning no-hitter against the Dodgers with his 20th home run leading off the fifth inning, the third consecutive year he's hit at least that many. The Dodgers then left runners in scoring position in the fifth and sixth innings, but tied the game with a soft hit of their own. Cody Bellinger led off the seventh inning with a single and scored two outs later on Chris Taylor's soft line drive to left-center.

But the Dodgers left runners in scoring position in the seventh, eighth and ninth innings as well. They were 1-for-7 and struck out 11 times, the fourth time in the last five games that the Dodgers have struck out in double figures.

"I don't know what their approach was," said Fiers. "Looked like they were swinging pretty hard for the fences. I got a couple strikeouts. I'll take them."

SOUND SMART

Kershaw's first strikeout came 4 1/3 innings into his start, the longest he has gone into a start without a strikeout in his career and his only strikeout of the night. This was the second time in his career in which he started a game and struck out only one.

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Max Muncy's line single in the fifth inning against his former club ended a personal streak of eight consecutive strikeouts.

HE SAID IT

"It just speaks to the parity of the National League. Any team can beat anybody." -- Roberts, on the close division race

UP NEXT

Ross Stripling will return from a 10-day stay on the disabled list to start the Thursday night opener of a four-game series in Colorado, facing Tyler Anderson in a 5:40 p.m. PT game. Stripling steps into the starting slot of Alex Wood, who is on the 10-day DL. Before his All-Star Game appearance, Stripling's ERA was 2.08; since then, it's 9.35.

Too many starters? LA faces 'tough decisions'

By Ken Gurnick

OAKLAND -- Like having too much money, there's no such thing as having too many starting pitchers, but that's where the Dodgers are heading.

Ross Stripling is scheduled to come off the disabled list to start Thursday in Colorado, while Alex Wood threw a three-inning simulated game on Wednesday and is eligible to be activated on Tuesday. Hyun-Jin Ryu was impressive in a five-inning Triple-A rehab start on Tuesday night.

Add them to Clayton Kershaw, Rich Hill, Kenta Maeda and Walker Buehler and the Dodgers have the mathematical dilemma of dividing five by seven -- barring another timely injury.

"A lot of good pitchers, a lot of good options," said manager Dave Roberts, who insisted a six-man rotation is not one of the options. "Tough decisions coming. It's a high-class problem."

Ryu, out since May 3 with a left groin strain, can be a free agent after this season, so he's running out of time to prove his worth. Because of past injuries, Ryu is not considered a candidate for the bullpen.

"He pitched well, he feels well, to make our decision more difficult, that's a good thing for the Dodgers," Roberts said of Ryu.

"With Alex, it was three innings and he feels good. No signs of that adductor leg issue. The next step is a bullpen [session] in a couple of days and at that point we'll figure out where to plug him in."

Worth noting

- The Los Angeles Dodgers Foundation executive director Nichol Whiteman has been recognized by the Sports Business Journal/Daily as a member of their eighth annual class of Game Changers. The Foundation is dedicated to making an impact in the community, including the creation of 50 Dreamfields throughout the Southland.
- Kershaw's Challenge -- the non-profit organization led by Dodgers pitcher Clayton Kershaw and his wife, Ellen -- will hold its 6th annual PingPong4Purpose fundraiser and celebrity ping-pong competition on Thursday, Aug. 23, at Dodger Stadium. Oscar winner Matthew McConaughey and his wife, Camila, founders of the Just Keep Livin Foundation, will be saluted with the Kershaw's Challenge Impact Award for their work. EMMY Award winner Bryan Cranston and Robin Dearden are honorary hosts for the evening, with Cranston acting as emcee for PingPong4Purpose.

LA TIMES

Dodgers Dugout: A way-too-early look at a potential playoff roster

By Houston Mitchell

Hi, and welcome to another edition of Dodgers Dugout. My name is Houston Mitchell. Is it true that Disney is working on a Star Wars/Dodgers movie titled "Solo: A Dodgers home run story?"

The playoffs are just around the corner, and while there are no guarantees the Dodgers will get there, let's take a moment to discuss what the playoff roster could be. For purposes of this exercise, we will assume everyone who has played this season is healthy and available (except Corey Seager). And we will make our determinations based on how they are playing right now.

Catcher

Yasmani Grandal

Austin Barnes

Yes, I know Barnes is hitting about as well as a blindfolded drunk guy, but his defense is solid, and the Dodgers will usually give the spot to the best defensive guy. And Kyle Farmer isn't the greatest catcher in the world.

Infield

Cody Bellinger

Brian Dozier

Manny Machado

Max Muncy

Chris Taylor

Justin Turner

Chase Utley

Outfield

Kiké Hernandez

Matt Kemp

Joc Pederson

Yasiel Puig

That was relatively easy, but the pitching is a lot tougher.

Rotation

When Hyun-jin Ryu and Ross Stripling come back this month, the Dodgers will have eight pitchers who have started more than one game for them: Ryu, Stripling, Clayton Kershaw, Rich Hill, Kenta Maeda, Walker Buehler, Caleb Ferguson and Brock Stewart. For the rest of the regular season, I would expect

them to go with a six-man rotation, giving everyone an extra day off here and there while keeping Kershaw on a regular schedule. The playoffs need only a four-man rotation, so who will it be? Here's a prediction:

Clayton Kershaw

Rich Hill

Walker Buehler

Ross Stripling

If Ryu pitches great when he comes back, he could edge Stripling out (or Buehler, depending on how well Buehler and Stripling are pitching in late September). Maeda was so great in the bullpen last postseason that I think he could be the consistent setup man the Dodgers need. Ferguson is pitching well out of the bullpen, and I'd be surprised if Stewart is even on the playoff roster.

That leaves the Dodgers with this bullpen:

Scott Alexander

Daniel Hudson

Caleb Ferguson

Dylan Floro

Kenley Jansen

Kenta Maeda

Which leaves two spots to go to two of the following: Pedro Baez, Josh Fields, Erik Goeddel, J.T. Chargois, John Axford, Zac Rosscup. Whoever is pitching well in late September gets the spots.

Of course, the Dodgers have to make the playoffs first for any of this to become meaningful.

Dropped baseballs

OK, I know playing pro baseball is tough and that most of us would have no chance to even lay a glove on the ball, but, with all due respect, can someone show Yasmani Grandal how to hold on to a baseball?

Grandal has been one of the best hitters in baseball for the last few weeks, but Wednesday's game could have turned out much differently if he had held on to the throw home from Manny Machado in the eighth inning, allowing the go-ahead run to score in Oakland's 3-2 win.

I know Grandal is consistently among the best catchers in pitch framing (to me, a bogus stat because how do you know that the umpire called a pitch a strike because of how a catcher framed it? Maybe he would have called it a strike no matter how it was caught. A stat based on what you think an umpire is thinking isn't too reliable).

But you know what else Grandal is good at? Passed balls. He has led the league in passed balls three of the last four years, and he also seems to have a tendency to misplay balls that are thrown home.

Growing up in an era where the Dodgers catchers were Steve Yeager and Mike Scioscia makes these things tend to stand out more.

Hip, hip, ouch

Corey Seager had surgery on his left hip on Tuesday. Seager hurt the hip early in the season, and since he is already out for the year because of Tommy John surgery, there was no reason to wait until after the season to repair his hip.

However, Dave Roberts said something interesting when discussing Seager: "I know we see him as a shortstop. From what I understand, both those surgeries, we expect him to be the player that he was. Obviously with the elbow issues that he had, and the hip, probably a better player than he was, as far as the health side of it. He played at a high level with those injuries. We'd expect him to sustain that."

Let me do some arithmetic here. Take Roberts saying the Dodgers see Seager as a shortstop. Add in the fact that Manny Machado has said he would like to play shortstop, considering that's his natural position. Then add in what Farhan Zaidi said the day the Dodgers acquired Machado: "We hope he plays well and creates a good market for himself."

What does that add up to? To me, it means Machado won't be back next season. However, with the new math they are teaching kids these days, who knows?

Home run dependent?

I get a lot of emails from readers who say the Dodgers are too reliant on home runs and don't score many runs otherwise. I am a big believer that human nature wants to find patterns in things, and once we feel we recognize a pattern, we always say, "See!" It reinforces that belief and dismisses things that go in opposite of that belief. So, let's take a look at teams that have scored the highest percentage of their runs from home runs. Are the Dodgers near the top of that field?

1. New York Yankees, 52.8%
2. Baltimore, 49.1%
3. Philadelphia, 48.9%
4. Toronto, 48.7%
5. Milwaukee, 48.6%
6. Cleveland, 48.2%
7. Oakland, 45.9%
8. Dodgers, 45.8%
9. Washington, 45.7%
10. Colorado, 45.61%
11. St. Louis, 45.58%
12. Angels, 45.5%

13. Boston, 45.3%
14. Houston, 44.3%
15. New York Mets, 44.2%
16. Cincinnati, 44%
17. Seattle, 43.8%
18. Texas, 43.6%
19. Chicago White Sox, 42.3%
20. Arizona, 41.7%
21. Kansas City, 41.5%
22. Atlanta, 40.1%
23. Miami, 40%
24. San Francisco, 39.9%
25. Pittsburgh, 39.2%
26. Minnesota, 38.8%
27. Chicago Cubs, 38.4%
28. San Diego, 37.3%
29. Detroit, 37.2%
30. Tampa Bay, 35.7%

So, of the top 10, nine are solid playoff contenders and the other is Baltimore.

Last season, the juggernaut Dodgers scored 50.3% of their runs on homers, so they actually have improved in that area.

More clutch hitting

In the last newsletter, I listed the Dodgers who had the highest batting average with two out and runners in scoring position since the team moved to L.A. in 1958. Many of you emailed to ask who were the worst. Here's your answer.

Minimum 100 plate appearances

1. Dave Anderson, .179
2. Rick Monday, .185
3. Steve Yeager, .190
4. A.J. Ellis, .193

5. Scott Van Slyke, .194
6. Cody Bellinger, .195
7. Todd Hundley, .19565
7. Derrel Thomas, .19565
9. Mariano Duncan, .1958
10. Joc Pederson, .197

Minimum 200 plate appearances

1. Dave Anderson, .179
2. Rick Monday, .185
3. Steve Yeager, .190
4. A.J. Ellis, .193
5. Joc Pederson, .197
6. Dave Hansen, .200
7. Yasmani Grandal, .203
8. Greg Brock, .209
9. Tim Wallach, .211
10. Yasiel Puig, .215

Three current Dodgers are on that list; that's not good.

Minimum 300 plate appearances

1. Steve Yeager, .190
2. Yasiel Puig, .215
3. Frank Howard, .217
4. John Roseboro, .220
5. Joe Ferguson, .226
6. Mike Scioscia, .228
7. Jim Gilliam, .232
8. Raul Mondesi, .233
9. Andre Ethier, .237
10. Dusty Baker, .240

Ask Ross Porter

Walter McClure of Westerville, Ohio, asks: Ross, help me settle a bet. Have there been more no-hitters or batters hitting for the cycle in the modern era?

Ross: It's close. Players have hit for the cycle 319 times and there have been 299 no-hitters, including 23 perfect games.

The Dodgers have the most no-hitters, 26, four by Sandy Koufax. The Red Sox and White Sox each have 18. San Diego has none. Koufax has the only Dodger perfect game, but the franchise has been the victim of the most perfectos, three, by Don Larsen, Tom Browning and Dennis Martinez. The most no-hitters and perfect games have come since 2010. More no-hitters have been thrown on Saturdays and in September. Only three Dodgers have hit for the cycle (single, double, triple and home run in the same game): Wes Parker in 1970, Orlando Hudson in 2009, and Cody Bellinger in 2017. The Marlins have never had a player hit for the cycle.

Richard Rorex of Apple Valley asks: Ross, how many three-pitch half-innings have there been, and has there been a worst ninth inning than the one I saw in 1990 when the Phillies scored nine runs in the ninth inning to beat the Dodgers 12-11?

Ross: There have been over 200 three-pitch half innings in history. Walter Johnson did it three times. In that game 28 years ago, Richard, the Dodgers were ahead 11-1 after seven. In 1901, Washington led Cleveland 13-5 with two out and no one on base in the bottom of the ninth. The Indians scored nine runs to win 14-13 and the game was played in two hours.

Alice King of Quincy, Calif., and Jim Worthen of Pismo Beach ask: What is the function of the first base coach?

Ross: A batter who gets a hit uses the coach to decide whether to go for a double. If there is a runner on first base and the batter hits a line drive, the coach must find the ball and instruct the runner to go or stay. The baserunner may forget or miss a sign and relies on the coach to help him, perhaps asking for a timeout and holding a conversation in foul territory away from the first baseman. To keep the runner from trying to read the scoreboard, the coach can remind him of the count, number of outs, and can scream if there is a pickoff attempt. He can tell the runner to break for second base if there is a wild pitch or passed ball. If the runner is a potential base stealer, the coach can hold a stopwatch to time the pitcher's delivery to the plate, give a verbal sign such as a name or number, and might even whisper in the runner's ear.

Scott Yates of Valrico, Fla., asks: Ross, how are minor league players paid when they are called up to the majors and then back down to the minors?

Ross: The payment of a player called to the big leagues depends on that player's individual contract with the stipulation that a player added to a major league team for the first time is entitled to the major league minimum. Players could be paid a certain amount at the minor and major league levels, perhaps even above the MLB minimum. A major league club is responsible for the minor league contract.

More KTLA games

For those of you who live in the Los Angeles area and are unable to see Dodgers games on TV, there will be four games televised on KTLA (Channel 5). Those games are:

Wednesday, Aug. 15, vs. San Francisco, 7 p.m.

Monday, Aug. 20, vs. St. Louis, 7 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 31, vs. Arizona, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, Sept. 4, vs. New York Mets, 7 p.m.

Meanwhile, there is no agreement between DirecTV and Spectrum SportsNet coming in the near future.

Up next

Thursday, 5:30 p.m.: Dodgers (Ross Stripling, 8-3, 2.68 ERA) at Colorado (Tyler Anderson, 6-4, 4.05 ERA).

Friday, 5:30 p.m.: Dodgers (Kenta Maeda, 7-7, 3.73 ERA) at Colorado (Jon Gray, 9-7, 4.73 ERA)

Saturday, 5 p.m.: Dodgers (Walker Buehler, 4-4, 3.65 ERA) at (Kyle Freeland, 10-7, 3.04 ERA).

Sunday, noon: Dodgers (TBD) at Colorado (Chad Bettis, 5-2, 5.67 ERA)

Miscues late lead Dodgers to 3-2 loss to the Athletics

By Andy McCullough

The bullpen mounds were empty as J.T. Chargois returned to the diamond at Oakland Coliseum for Wednesday's eighth inning. He had pitched the seventh inning earlier in the night and the eighth inning a night before.

His presence at this moment reflected the confidence Chargois has earned since rejoining the Dodgers in early July and the dearth of relief options available to manager Dave Roberts.

Stretched beyond his regular usage, Chargois built a fire. The flames billowed into a 3-2 loss to the Athletics thanks to slippery hands of catcher Yasmani Grandal. After Chargois gave up two singles, he induced a grounder off the bat of Oakland slugger Khris Davis. Manny Machado scooped the baseball and pegged toward home to protect a deadlock. Grandal swept a tag across the legs of Oakland shortstop Marcus Semien.

One problem.

The baseball lay in the dirt in front of Grandal. He never caught it.

"It's going to be one of those plays where it's a bang-bang play," Grandal said. "If you happen to have the ball in your hand, he's out. And if not, he's safe."

Semien was safe, and the Dodgers (63-52) missed a chance for a two-game sweep. Roberts went to the mound to remove Chargois and insert another right-handed reliever, Dylan Floro. Floro had begun warming up as Chargois fell into trouble but did not arrive until Oakland had the lead.

Pitching at Oakland Coliseum for only the third time in his career, Clayton Kershaw allowed two runs in six innings. He struck out only one and induced only four whiffs in 97 pitches. Oakland stung him with a four-hit flurry in the fourth, which built a lead for their starter, Mike Fiers, who struck out eight before sputtering midway through the sixth.

“Fortunately tonight, I at least made it through six,” Kershaw said. “And gave us a chance there at the end.”

The Dodgers had not seen Fiers in three years. Their last encounter was a dismal one for the Dodgers and a historic evening for Fiers. He pitched the 11th no-hitter in Astros history, silencing the Dodgers on Aug. 21, 2015, at Minute Maid Park.

Only three members of the Dodgers starting lineup from that evening were in the lineup on Wednesday: Joc Pederson, Justin Turner and Grandal. Fiers had similar results with the new Dodgers. He retired the first 12 batters he faced. He struck out six in the first three innings.

Kershaw was less overpowering than Fiers. He was still effective. He pitched around a pair of singles through three scoreless innings. He did not register a strikeout but induced enough soft contact on the ground and in the air.

The Dodgers could scarcely connect with the pitches thrown by Fiers. In the fourth, Turner showed frustration with the strike zone of umpire Mike Muchlinski. With the count at 3-1, Turner took a fastball at the knees. The pitch appeared to catch the lower, outside corner of the zone, and Muchlinski called it a strike.

When the umpire had a similar ruling on the full-count fastball, a 91-mph heater aimed further outside than the previous pitch, Turner registered his displeasure. Muchlinski removed his mask and his cap to argue with Turner. Roberts intervened to joust with the umpire as Kershaw warmed up for the bottom of the inning.

Kershaw blinked before Fiers permitted a Dodger to reach base. Oakland strung together four singles in the fourth to bring home two runs. Davis whacked a slider through the left side of the infield and outfielder Mark Canha hit a 91-mph fastball into center field. With two outs, outfielder Stephen Piscotty redirected another 91-mph fastball for an RBI single.

“I didn’t have much of anything tonight,” Kershaw said. “It was a little bit of smoke and mirrors.”

Up next was Ramon Laureano, a 23-year-old rookie with only 13 career plate appearances. His 14th was memorable. Kershaw jammed him with a first-pitch fastball.

A lazy pop-up drifted into shallow right field, an area vacated by the Dodgers’ outfield shift. Brian Dozier sprinted from the diamond and Yasiel Puig scampered over from right-center, but the ball still fell for another RBI single.

A display of brute strength ended Fiers' pursuit of perfection. Grandal tattooed a 90-mph fastball over the fence in right field to start the fifth inning.

The Dodgers produced two more singles in that frame, including Max Muncy's first hit since Aug. 2, but could not even the score.

Fiers did not finish the sixth. Machado smashed a one-out double, which convinced Oakland manager Bob Melvin to try his bullpen.

Athletics reliever Lou Trivino walked Grandal but escaped with runners at the corners by getting Dozier to ground into the third out.

Trivino had less luck in the seventh. Cody Bellinger sprayed a leadoff, opposite-field single. Muncy hit a sharp grounder to the right side, which moved Bellinger to second base. With two outs, Chris Taylor lined into center for the game-tying single.

"I thought we were going to steal one tonight," Roberts said.

It was not to be. Chargois was the first man out of the Dodgers bullpen. He retired the side in nine pitches in the seventh. With the top of Oakland's lineup looming for the eighth, Roberts pondered his options.

Floro was available, but Roberts was hopeful he could use him in a multi-inning stint this weekend against the Colorado Rockies. Roberts opted for Chargois over Scott Alexander, Pedro Baez, John Axford, Caleb Ferguson, Zac Rosscup and Pat Venditte.

Semien led off with a single. Another followed from Jed Lowrie. Then Davis hit a grounder to Machado, who threw home to Grandal.

"All I felt was the ball hitting my hand," Grandal said. "As soon as I felt the touch, I went for the tag. There's not much to it."

Dodgers' Hyun-Jin Ryu poised to return from groin injury

By Andy McCullough

Hyun-Jin Ryu logged five innings in a rehab outing for triple-A Oklahoma City on Tuesday night, which brought him one step closer to rejoining the Dodgers and one step closer to creating a familiar headache for manager Dave Roberts: A logjam in the starting rotation.

With Ryu expected to get starts for the Dodgers during the final two months of the season, Roberts will have seven starters. He does not expect the team to return to a six-man rotation, as they did briefly after the All-Star break.

The Dodgers abandoned that approach earlier this month and started shifting starters to the disabled list with minor injury. Ross Stripling will return from toe inflammation Thursday against the Colorado

Rockies. Alex Wood threw a simulated game Wednesday as he misses 10 days with tendinitis in his left adductor.

Ryu is likely to pitch in one more rehab game before being activated. Roberts indicated it was a “possibility” that Ryu could make his next start for the Dodgers, but it sounds more conceivable he would expand his pitch count to six innings and 90 pitches in a minor-league setting.

“To Ryu’s credit, he pitched well, he feels well,” Roberts said before Wednesday’s game against the Athletics. “To make a decision that much more difficult, that’s a good thing for the Dodgers.”

Ryu posted a 2.12 earned-run average in his first six starts this season. He was interrupted by a torn groin muscle May 2 in Arizona. The Dodgers are hopeful Ryu can replicate his early season production.

The most likely four-man rotation for October would be Clayton Kershaw, Rich Hill, Walker Buehler and Alex Wood. But Stripling, Maeda or Ryu could alter the Dodgers’ plans if they catch fire in September.

Wood logged three innings Wednesday with “no signs of the adductor, the leg issue,” Roberts said. He will throw a bullpen session this weekend at Coors Field. The Dodgers could activate him for a start during next week’s series against the San Francisco Giants at Dodgers Stadium.

“A lot of starting pitching,” Roberts said. “A lot of good options.”

SHORT HOPS: Matt Kemp received a day off, one day after recording only his second hit since July 24. “He’s going through what he’s going through,” Roberts said. “As he said, he’s grinding.”

OC REGISTER

Dropped throw drops Dodgers from first place after loss in Oakland

By Bill Plunkett

OAKLAND — The bar of soap has been passed to the Arizona Diamondbacks again.

Yasmani Grandal dropped a throw home and the Dodgers dropped out of first place with a 3-2 loss to the Oakland A’s on Wednesday night.

The one-run loss to the A’s – a major league-best 22-9 in those narrowest of decisions – dropped the Dodgers a half-game behind the Diamondbacks in the National League West. Neither team has held sole possession of first place on consecutive days since July 30.

“Yeah, I mean, we’re all aware if Arizona wins or loses, if Colorado wins or loses,” pitcher Clayton Kershaw said of the level of scoreboard-watching going on in the Dodgers’ dugout and clubhouse. “But we’ve got so many games left against both those teams in the near future that ultimately that’s what it’s going to come down to.”

They have four of those divisional games coming up in Colorado now and head there having had no more luck getting a grip on the NL West than Grandal did with Manny Machado's eighth-inning throw.

The game got there tied 2-2 despite Mike Fiers' dominant debut for the A's – and Kershaw's unusually K-free evening.

"I didn't have much of anything tonight. It was a little bit of smoke and mirrors," said Kershaw who struck out only one batter in six innings, his lowest total in a start since July 2010. That one strikeout didn't come until the second out of the fifth inning, the longest Kershaw has ever gone into a start without a strikeout.

"I was getting ahead of guys but especially in that fourth inning when they scored their runs – a lot of hits with two strikes there," he said. "I didn't really have those put-away pitches when I needed them tonight."

Still, he almost smoked and mirrored his way through it.

Kershaw gave up back-to-back, one-out singles in the fourth then got Matt Olson to fly out. He was one pitch away from putting up another zero when Stephen Piscotty sent a full-count slider back through the middle for an RBI single. Ramon Laureano followed with another before Kershaw could close out the inning.

By contrast, Fiers looked unhittable to the Dodgers – again.

Facing the Dodgers for the first time since he pitched a no-hitter against them for the Houston Astros in August of 2015, Fiers picked up right where he left off. He retired the first 12 Dodgers in order, eight on strikeouts, before Grandal jumped on a 2-and-2 fastball for a home run leading off the fifth inning.

"He's a spin-rate guy, pitches at the top of the zone," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said. "So the fastball plays up, certainly. He was striking the back-door cutter, mixed the curveball in there.

"But I think it was just the fastball above the belt that we just couldn't square up. ... He's a guy that finds a way to miss barrels."

The Dodgers got two more hits off Fiers but couldn't score another run until the seventh inning when Cody Bellinger led off with a single, moved to second on a ground out and came home on a two-out single by Chris Taylor.

J.T. Chargois took over for Kershaw in the seventh and retired the side on nine pitches. That emboldened Roberts to send him back out for a second inning for only the fourth time this season. Chargois gave up a leadoff single to Marcus Semien and a one-out single to Jed Lowrie that sent Semien to third.

With the tying run at third and Khris Davis (third in the majors with 32 home runs) batting, Roberts stuck with Chargois as Dylan Floro warmed up. Davis and Chargois battled for eight pitches, Davis fouling off three after he was behind in the count 1-and-2.

He finally chopped a ground ball up the third-base line. Machado charged the ball and threw home as Semien tried to score.

The throw beat Semien to the plate but it was to Grandal's right, forcing him to reach across his body and then back for the tag.

"I was just looking at it (on video)," Grandal said after the game. "The ball was coming at an angle, a fast guy coming in – it's going to be a tight play. You can't really use two hands. It's gotta be a swipe tag – one of those things where it's going to be bang-bang."

The play happened so quickly that home plate umpire Mike Muchlinski first called Semien out. Then he saw the ball lying in the dirt in front of home plate and waved the winning run safe.

"I didn't," Grandal said when asked if he realized he had dropped the throw. "All I felt was the ball hitting my hand. As soon as I felt that, I went for the tag. If I wait to have the ball, he's going to be safe."

Amid deep slump, Dodgers' Max Muncy tries to rediscover the magic of early July

By Bill Plunkett

OAKLAND — It seemed almost too good to be true. Maybe it was.

In early July, Max Muncy had a higher OPS than Mike Trout and Mookie Betts and stood shoulder to shoulder with Nolan Arenado and Bryce Harper among the National League home run leaders.

It was heady stuff for a player discarded by the Oakland A's a year ago who started this season as a non-descript, non-roster invitee to the Dodgers' spring training camp and made for a fairy-tale narrative when Muncy participated in the Home Run Derby during the All-Star festivities.

It was also not sustainable.

When he struck out in his first at-bat Wednesday, Muncy had just four hits in a stretch of 46 plate appearances, more than half of them (24) strikeouts including each of his past eight at-bats. He finally snapped the strikeout streak with a single in the fifth inning.

But after hitting a home run every 9.9 at-bats in his first 72 games this year, Muncy has just two in his last 65 at-bats.

"It's just baseball," Muncy said. "A couple days not getting a hit leads to you start to press a little bit. You kind of get out of your zone. Then it's one of those things where it can snowball on you. ... one of those things where it's hard to get out of it, get out of your own head."

Muncy wrote his own prescription for that, taking Monday's off day as a mental break.

"A full day off from baseball, didn't look at any film, didn't really do anything baseball-related, just took a full day and relaxed," Muncy said. "Showed up (in Oakland) and try to act like nothing happened before. Just go out there today and act like it was two months ago."

Muncy did say he and hitting coach Turner Ward have studied video, looking for a flaw in Muncy's swing that would explain the freefall. They found nothing, Muncy said.

"There's nothing that's any different," Muncy said. "Just a couple days of not getting any hits led to me pressing and swinging at pitches I normally wouldn't swing at.

"It's definitely more mental than physical, for sure."

Dodgers manager Dave Roberts has seen the same thing.

"I think there's a little bit of pressing going on. He wants to perform and is just trying a little too hard," said Roberts, who dropped Muncy to eighth in the lineup Wednesday.

"For me – and I've said it from the beginning – this guy usually stays in the strike zone. So it's not about the league adjusting to him. It's about when the ball is in the strike zone, you've got to swing at it and when it's not, take it. There's a little bit more swing and miss through the fastball. But Max will get through this."

CROWDED ROTATION

Left-hander Alex Wood threw three simulated innings to hitters Wednesday afternoon and had "no signs of the leg issue" involving an adductor muscle on his left side that led to him going on the DL, according to Roberts.

Wood will probably throw a bullpen session in two days and, at that point, the Dodgers will decide when he will return to the starting rotation. Wood is eligible to pitch again on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Roberts indicated left-hander Hyun-Jin Ryu could be ready to return to the majors after just two rehab starts. Ryu has been on the DL since May 2 with a groin muscle tear. In rehab starts with Class-A Rancho Cucamonga and Triple-A Oklahoma City he allowed one run in nine innings.

Ryu will be ready to pitch again in five days – either for the Dodgers or in another minor-league rehab start.

"The next step for him – we haven't decided that yet," Roberts said.

Ross Stripling will come off the DL to start in Colorado on Thursday. Add in Wood and Ryu next week and the Dodgers could potentially have seven starting pitchers to choose from.

During their stretch of 17 games in 17 days after the All-Star break, the Dodgers briefly went with a six-man rotation. That would "probably not" happen this time, Roberts said, because of a more favorable schedule with three off days in a 12-day stretch coming up.

"Some tough decisions coming," Roberts said.

UP NEXT

Dodgers (RHP Ross Stripling, 8-3, 2.68 ERA) at Rockies (LHP Tyler Anderson, 6-4, 4.05 ERA), Thursday, 5:40 p.m., SportsNet LA (where available)

ESPN

Fiers solid in debut as A's top Dodgers 3-2

By AP

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Mike Fiers felt the adrenaline pumping early in his first day on the job with his new team, and he put it to good use.

Fiers pitched 5 1/3 strong innings and the Oakland Athletics beat the Los Angeles Dodgers 3-2 on Wednesday night.

Fiers gave up one run on four hits. He struck out eight and walked none.

"I think it kind of stepped up another level today," Fiers said. "Just trying to put together a good performance for this team. Definitely needed it after losing last night. We needed to come back with a win and we did that."

Fiers didn't allow a baserunner until Yasmani Grandal led off the fifth with his 20th home run.

Fiers was with the Houston Astros when he pitched a no-hitter against the Dodgers on Aug. 21, 2015.

The A's, desperate to add depth to an injury depleted rotation, acquired the 33-year-old right-hander from the Tigers on Monday for two players to be named or cash. He became the 13th starter the A's sent to the mound this season.

Fiers and battery mate Jonathan Lucroy were teammates on the Milwaukee Brewers from 2011 to 2015.

"He did well," Lucroy said. "He executed. Any time you can do that it gives your lineup a chance to settle in, even against a guy like Kershaw. We scratched two on him. If Fiers isn't keeping us locked in there for as long as he did I don't think we score those two runs."

The A's broke a 2-2 in the eighth inning when Khris Davis hit a fielder's choice grounder off Dodgers reliever J.T. Chargois (2-3), scoring Marcus Semien from third.

Dodgers third baseman Manny Machado fielded Davis' bouncer and fired home to catcher Grandal, but Grandal never had control of the ball when he swipe-tagged Semien. Grandal was charged with an error on the play.

"It's going to be one of those plays where it's going to be a bang-bang play, and if you happen to have to have the ball in your hand he's out, and if not he's safe," Grandal said.

Jeurys Familia (3-0) pitched a scoreless eighth for the win and Blake Treinen worked the ninth for his 29th save in 33 chances.

Second baseman Lowrie made a running catch with Yasiel Puig at second for the final out to preserve the win.

Oakland won for the seventh time in eight games and improved to 34-11 going back to June 16, the best record in the majors over that stretch.

The A's closed to within five games of idle Houston, which leads the AL West.

The Dodgers fell a half game behind Arizona, which beat Philadelphia on Wednesday to move into first place in the NL West.

Dodgers ace Clayton Kershaw gave up two runs in six innings. He remains winless in four starts against Oakland despite posting a 1.38 ERA over that stretch.

Kershaw is 2-1 with a 2.10 ERA since the All-Star break.

"I didn't have much of anything tonight," Kershaw said. "It was a little bit of smoke and mirrors. That's a good team over there and I was getting ahead of a few guys, but especially that fourth inning where they scored the runs, a lot of hits with two strikes right there, I didn't really have those put-away pitches when I needed them to tonight."

TRAINER'S ROOM

Dodgers: LHP Hyun-Jin Ryu (left groin strain) pitched in a rehab game for Triple-A Oklahoma City on Tuesday night. He threw 71 pitches and topped out at 91 mph, Roberts said. Ryu throw again in five or six days, possibly for Los Angeles, manager Dave Roberts said. "To Ryu's credit, he pitched well, he feels well, and so to make our decision more difficult, that's a good thing for the Dodgers," Roberts said. . LHP Alex Wood (left adductor tendinitis) pitched three innings in a simulated game on Tuesday. "At that point we'll figure out where to plug him in," Roberts said.

UP NEXT

Dodgers: Ross Stripling (8-3, 2.68 ERA) will come off the DL (right first toe inflammation) to pitch Thursday's series opener against the Rockies in Colorado. He's 1-1 with a 2.88 ERA in 10 appearances (three starts) against the Rockies.

Athletics: LHP Brett Anderson (2-3, 4.64 ERA) will pitch Friday's series opener against the Angels in Los Angeles on Friday. Anderson is 2-1 with a 2.96 ERA since coming off the DL (strained left shoulder) on July 8.

TRUE BLUE LA

Rincon homers twice, but Quakes fall to Giants

By David Hood

A light night on the farm saw wins at a premium, with only Great Lakes finding success.

Player of the day

Carlos Rincon hit home runs number five and six for him in High A in a Quakes defeat at San Jose. After a surprise call up, Rincon has been red hot in the California League, now hitting .412 in nine games at the level. Rincon also added a single as part of a 3-4 game.

Triple-A Oklahoma City

Oklahoma City was off on Wednesday and return to action Thursday at home Thursday against Memphis.

Double-A Tulsa

Tulsa could only muster a pair of runs on nine hits to fall 3-2 to the Corpus Christi Hooks (Astros). Gavin Lux continued to lead the offense by reaching base four times with three hits and a walk. Logan Landon also had a pair of hits, including a home run.

Dustin May was much better in his second start at Double A, lasting 7.1 innings and striking out 5. Michael Johnson took the loss in relief, allowing a run in just $\frac{2}{3}$ of an inning pitched.

Class-A Rancho Cucamonga

The Quakes hit four home runs but still fell short in catching the San Jose Giants, falling 8-4. Carlos Rincon (two), Brandon Montgomery, and Steve Berman each hit solo home runs for the Quakes only offense on the afternoon. The first five batters of the Quakes' order combined to go 1-21.

Isaac Anderson struck out eight in 4.1 innings, but allowed five runs on eight hits to suffer the loss. Ryan Moseley pitched 1.2 innings of scoreless relief, with Sven Schueller adding a clean inning himself in the ninth.

Class-A Great Lakes

The Loons were bottled up for eight innings until they erupted to tie the game with five runs in the ninth, and win it with six runs in the 11th to beat the South Bend Cubs 11-5. Josh McLain led the offense with three hits, including a two run home run in the ninth inning. Hunter Feduccia also had three hits with a pair of runs scored and driven in, while Deacon Liput also had a pair of hits and runs driven in.

Stephen Kolek was stellar in relief, pitching a scoreless ninth, tenth, and eleventh inning to earn the win, striking out four. Jeronimo Castro started but lasted just 2.2 innings, striking out a pair but surrendering four runs.

Short Season Ogden

The Raptors were off Wednesday for their All Star break.

Rookie Level Arizona

The Dodgers were rained out on Wednesday night.

Dominican Summer League

The DSL Dodgers Robinson defeated the DSL Red Sox One 3-2. Harold Restituyo had a pair of hits from the leadoff spot.

The DSL Dodgers Guerrero dropped a pair to the DSL Red Sox Two 3-2 and 5-4. Jesus Valdez had a pair of hits across both games, including a triple in game two.

Transactions

There were no listed transactions for Dodger affiliates on Wednesday.

Dodgers lose close game after Oakland rallies late

By Ryan Walton

A close game is not where you want to be when facing the Athletics this season. The A's rallied to break a tie in the bottom of the eighth for their 22nd win in one-run games.

After two singles placed runners at first and third with one out, Dodgers' reliever J.T. Chargois induced a ground ball to third. Manny Machado came up throwing to the plate but Yasmani Grandal couldn't hang on to the ball in what would've been an out tag. The run scored to give the A's what they needed to win the game by the score of 3-2.

The seesaw nature of the National League West standings continues with the Dodger loss, giving Arizona the lead once again. It could be some kind of race with less than 50 games to go in the regular season.

The Dodgers were up 16 games in the division after 115 games last year.

Clayton Kershaw would settle for his seventh no-decision after giving up two runs over six innings. Both would score in the fourth inning after there were two outs.

One strike away from getting out of the inning unscathed, Stephen Piscotty lined a 3-2 fastball into center field to give the A's a run. On the very next pitch, Ramon Laureano popped one into no man's land in shallow right, falling in for a base hit and a 2-0 lead.

With six innings tonight, Kershaw has now lasted at least six in seven straight starts. First time he has done that since nine straight from June 2 to July 18 last season. The strange part is that Kershaw struck out just one hitter — only the third time in his career he had one or fewer.

Oakland started their new acquisition Wednesday, a familiar face for those that remember when Mike Fiers no-hit the Dodgers back on August 21, 2015 as a member of the Astros. Fiers was perfect through four to start his time with the A's.

It wouldn't be until Grandal led off the Fifth that the Dodgers would break through. It would come with a no-doubt homer to the right field corner to pull Los Angeles within a run. Two more Dodgers would reach in the fifth but Fiers would get out of the inning without any further damage.

The Dodgers were able to pull even in the seventh against one of the toughest relievers in baseball this year. Rookie Lou Trivino had allowed just seven runs in 54 1/3 innings in 2018 before an RBI-single off the bat of Chris Taylor.

The two clubs split both of the two-game series they played this season.

Up Next

The Dodgers head to Colorado for four games with one of the teams chasing them in the NL West. Ross Stripling (8-3, 2.68) will come off the DL to face lefty Tyler Anderson (6-4, 4.05).

Podcast episode 1817: The evolving Dodgers lineup

By Eric Stephen and Jacob Burch

This week on the podcast we recap an odd week at Dodger Stadium that saw both a record offensive performance and a record shutout loss in a matter of just three days.

We examined the offensive slumps of Max Muncy and Matt Kemp, and wondered about the high strikeout rate for Chris Taylor and what to expect going forward. Despite the recent batting funks the Dodgers still basically have 10, maybe 11, everyday players for eight lineup spots, which creates a mix-and-match situation.

“We have a deep bench and they’re not starting, but that doesn’t mean they’re not going to contribute at some point in the game. That’s the message to anyone that’s sitting that particular day,” manager Dave Roberts said last week. “They all want to be in there, and they all have in their own right a case to be in the lineup that night. But there are only eight positions in the lineup.”

Also this week on the podcast: promotions for Gavin Lux, Will Smith and Dustin May, plus Hyun-jin Ryu and Julio Urias inch closer with their minor league rehab assignments.

DODGER INSIDER

A razor-thin difference between two contenders

By Cary Osborne

Universally known as one of the toughest, if not the toughest park to score a run in, the Dodgers and A’s scratched and clawed for any bit of offense at the Oakland Coliseum on Tuesday.

So it was apropos that the go-ahead run in the game was on a bang-bang play at the plate.

In the bottom of the eighth inning with A’s runners on first and third and one out, JT Chargois got a bouncer off the bat of slugger Khris Davis to third base. Manny Machado snagged and threw a rope to Yasmani Grandal’s right side at home, and the catcher couldn’t pull off the sweep and tag attempt, unable to catch the ball. Marcus Semien scored on the play.

The Dodgers lost 3–2, splitting the two-game series with the American League playoff contenders.

“Just one of those bang-bang plays where it’s do or die,” Grandal said. “Just got to do whatever you can to get the guy out. If I try and catch the ball (with two hands) and go tag him, he’s safe. Some days it goes your way, another day it goes the other way.”

The Dodgers got a rarity from starter Clayton Kershaw in a no-decision.

Kershaw went six innings, allowing six hits, no walks and two earned runs while striking out one. It’s the second time in his career that he struck out one batter in a start. The other time was a 4 1/3-innings outing against St. Louis on July 15, 2010.

“That was sheer compete to get through six,” said manager Dave Roberts.

Kershaw managed to grind through and limit Oakland. The fourth inning was the toughest grind. He allowed four singles, giving up RBI base hits to Stephen Piscotty and Ramón Laureano.

“I didn’t have much of anything tonight. It was a little bit of smoke and mirrors,” Kershaw said. “That’s a good team over there. I was getting ahead of a few guys, especially that fourth inning when they scored the runs — a lot of hits with two strikes right there. I didn’t really have those put-away pitches when I needed to tonight. Felt fortunate to grind through six right there, and our team did a good job of battling back. And we had a chance to win at least.”

Oakland starter Mike Fiers, acquired in a trade with Detroit on Monday, made his debut for the A’s, pitching against the Dodgers for the first time since he no-hit them as an Astro on Aug. 21, 2015.

Fiers was perfect through four innings until allowing a leadoff homer to Grandal in the top of the fifth inning — his 20th homer of the year.

The Dodgers tied the score 2–2 in the seventh against tough reliever Lou Trivino, who came into the game with a 1.16 ERA. Chris Taylor hit a bloop two-out single to score Cody Bellinger.

The Dodgers had runners on second base in the eighth and ninth inning with two outs, but were unable to push through a run.

Spectrum SportsNet to present “Dodgermentary: 1988” series

By Rowan Kavner

Spectrum SportsNet LA will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Dodgers’ 1988 World Series season with a three-part original series, ‘Dodgermentary:1988,’ premiering Wednesday at 11 p.m. PT.

The hour-long episode, beginning after the postgame coverage of the Dodgers’ game against the Athletics, will be narrated by actor and lifelong Dodger fan Jason Bateman, who also emceed Andre Ethier’s recent retirement ceremony.

The first episode of the three-part series takes Dodger fans through regular season moments that took the team from underdogs to champions. It also looks back at how Kirk Gibson set the tone for the team in Spring Training and includes Orel Hershiser's recollection of his record-setting scoreless innings streak.

The second installment, which airs at 8:30 p.m. PT on Sept. 5, looks at the National League Championship Series against the Mets. The final episode airs Sept. 25 at 10:30 p.m., detailing the 1988 World Series win against the Athletics.

Each hour-long episode will feature previously unseen footage from the archives and in-depth, exclusive interviews with former players, coaches, team management and broadcasters, including Vin Scully, Kirk Gibson, Tommy Lasorda, Bob Costas, Dennis Eckersley, Keith Olbermann, Mike Scioscia, Fred Claire, and Mickey Hatcher.

LADF Executive Director Nichol Whiteman named a 2018 Game Changer

By Rowan Kavner

Nichol Whiteman, executive director of the Los Angeles Dodgers Foundation (LADF), was recognized by the Sports Business Journal/Daily as a member of its eighth annual class of Game Changers.

Game Changers, which debuted in 2011, recognizes women in leadership roles from teams, leagues, media, agencies and sponsors who have broad, deep and varied responsibilities and who are contributing to the success of the industry in multiple ways. Whiteman and the 34 other honorees will be featured in the Sept. 10 issue of SBJ and celebrated on Sept. 12 in New York at the Game Changers: Women in Sports Business Conference.

In her five years directing the team's official charity, Whiteman has made a profound impact within the community and increased fundraising by 1,000 percent. This month, Whiteman executed a groundbreaking ceremony at Algin Sutton Recreation Center in South Los Angeles to celebrate the 50th Dodgers Dreamfield. The creation of this Dreamfield marks the start of the final leg of a commitment by LADF to create 50 fields in 15 years. Since 2003, more than \$10 million has been invested in these fields, which have impacted the lives of more than 10,000 kids in and around Los Angeles.

In June, LADF hosted its Fourth Annual Blue Diamond Gala, an event reflecting Whiteman's visionary approach. This exclusive "Party for LA" featured a performance by multi-award-winning, platinum-selling singer-songwriter John Legend, and raised more \$2.2 million.

With a bachelor's degree in economics from Spelman College, Whiteman's career began with positions in investment management and publishing. Launching her philanthropic endeavors, she served as VP, Western Region Director of the Jackie Robinson Foundation, where she supported scholars in pursuit of a college education.

Further highlighting her professional achievements, the New York native has been recognized throughout the industry for her exceptional contributions, having earned the Anti-Defamation League's 2018 Deborah Award, the 2018 inaugural Nartey Sports Foundation Leadership Award, Ebony Magazine's 2017 Woman Up Award, The Pink Tea Rose Foundation's 2017 Progressive Leadership

Award and the 2010 Woman of Inspiration Award presented by The Wave. She was also honored by the National Urban League Young Professionals of Los Angeles for her philanthropic and professional endeavors.

A member of the 2012 Executive Leadership Team for the American Heart Association's Go Red Campaign, Whiteman is also a member of the Women's Leadership Council and Women in Sports and Entertainment. She serves on the advisory boards of Covington Capital Management, A Better Chance, Inc. and the New Teacher Center. Additionally, she sits on the board of Positive Coaching Alliance.

Kershaw's sixth annual PingPong4Purpose fundraiser will take place Aug. 23

By Rowan Kavner

Clayton and Ellen Kershaw will hold their sixth annual PingPong4Purpose celebrity ping pong tournament on Aug. 23 benefitting their non-profit organization, Kershaw's Challenge.

Their signature fundraiser at Dodger Stadium helps raise money to allow Kershaw's Challenge to continue its mission of service to children and families in communities domestically and internationally.

Announcing its honorees and emcee for this year, Clayton and Ellen will honor Matthew and Camila McConaughy — founders of the Just Keep Livin Foundation — with the Kershaw's Challenge Impact Award for their work. The just keep livin Foundation is dedicated to empowering high school students with the tools to lead active lives and make healthy choices for a better future, implementing after-school fitness and wellness programs across the country. The Kershaws will also honor actors Bryan Cranston and Robin Dearden as honorary hosts for the evening, with Cranston acting as emcee.

Tickets and VIP packages are available now, with proceeds from PingPong4Purpose supporting Kershaw's Challenge beneficiaries — the Dream Center and just keep livin Foundation's initiatives in Los Angeles — and International Justice Mission's initiatives in the Dominican Republic.

"We are thrilled to be hosting our 6th annual PingPong4Purpose on August 23rd. The event has become an iconic part of Kershaw's Challenge and we are so thankful for the tremendous support of the LA community and our generous sponsors," said Clayton and Ellen. "This event is so much fun to be part of, and it plays a significant role in supporting our amazing beneficiaries. It is a great night with an even greater cause — making life better for children living in LA and the Dominican Republic."