



SF Giants Press Clips Monday, May 7, 2018

San Francisco Chronicle

Giants complete sweep of Atlanta in Andrew Suarez's first big-league win Henry Schulman

ATLANTA — The Giants' charge over the past five series can be dissected a dozen different ways, from their stable of older hitters starting to progress toward their career numbers, to the excellent pitching, to younger players such as Mac Williamson, Alen Hanson and Andrew Suarez arriving from the minors and infusing life into the team.

Or, just let Pablo Sandoval distill it in three words.

"We're having fun," Sandoval said after the Giants survived a ninth-inning scare and beat Atlanta 4-3 Sunday to complete their first series sweep of 2018 against a team that came into the weekend with the swagger befitting a 19-11 team.

The Giants finished their fifth consecutive series win and forged their first four-game win streak of the season. They have won seven of their past eight, and 12 of 16, with their two top starting pitchers, closer and second baseman out of the picture.

The Giants outscored the Braves 24-9 as several hitters who began the year slowly, contributing to the team's 7-11 start, got healthier at run-friendly SunTrust Park.

Andrew McCutchen went 5-for-10 with three walks, a hit batsman and a sacrifice fly. Brandon Crawford was 8-for-14 after entering the series 20-for-98 for the season.

Hanson was 6-for-14 with three doubles, a homer and two hand-first slides into the plate for runs that put a charge into the dugout.

Who knows if the Giants can maintain this type of offense? But they are giving themselves a decent shot by grinding through at-bats — and pitchers — all the way through the lineup.

The Braves had gone 19 consecutive games without a starter losing before the Giants beat Mike Foltynewicz, Brandon McCarthy and Mike Soroka (in his second big-league start). Foltynewicz was the only one to last five innings.

“That’s the thing we weren’t doing early in the season,” Sandoval said. “We have to get the pitch we want, work counts. We’re doing a great job.”

Sandoval, McCutchen, Gregor Blanco and Nick Hundley had the RBIs Sunday. As they did in the first two games, the Giants spotted Atlanta an early lead before roaring back quickly, this time going ahead 4-1 by the fourth inning.

They got one run when Hanson bolted for home on Blanco’s grounder to first baseman Freddie Freeman. Even though Freeman was playing in and threw a strike to the plate, Hanson beat it.

Suarez took on this hitters’ park and earned his first big-league win by holding the Braves to one unearned run in 5¹/₃ innings.

Suarez, Ty Blach and Chris Stratton, the oldest of them 27, allowed four earned runs over 19 innings. All three won. Only Suarez got a beer shower for the win in his third big-league start.

“They had goggles on. I didn’t,” said Suarez, who seems to have the tools to pitch consistently. His fastball sat at 92 mph and touched 94. He also has a knack for getting well-timed groundballs. For the second straight start, he induced three double plays.

“He knows what he’s doing out there,” manager Bruce Bochy said. “That team has been scoring a lot of runs. That’s a tough lineup to get through. The kid did a good job.”

Cory Gearrin, Sam Dyson and Tony Watson combined for 2²/₃ hitless innings to deliver the 4-1 lead to Hunter Strickland, who allowed two runs but made a huge pitch to end the game, getting Ozzie Albies to pop out with the potential tying run on third.

The Giants will seek their sixth straight series victory in Philadelphia, where they play four against another National League East team that has started hot.

San Francisco Chronicle

Giants’ Mac Williamson not returning soon, likely destined for AAA rehab

Henry Schulman

ATLANTA — The way things are going, the Giants might get Hunter Pence back in left field before Mac Williamson.

The team can extend Pence’s rehab assignment with Triple-A Sacramento only so long. Meanwhile, Williamson’s recovery from the concussion he sustained slamming into a wall at

AT&T Park has gone slower than hoped.

The Giants have learned all too well that is not unusual.

Manager Bruce Bochy reported that Williamson felt “woozy” after batting and fielding practice Friday night and was to be examined by a team doctor on the trip.

Before Sunday’s game, Bochy could not predict when Williamson might play, but his next games probably will be at Triple-A on a rehab assignment now that he has not faced a pitcher since April 27.

“It’s been a while,” Bochy said. “Now you run the risk of making a move and activating him, and his symptoms come back. I’d say it’s more than likely he’ll go down for some rehab games.”

Pence (right-thumb sprain) began his rehab April 27. By rule, it has to end May 16 unless he is reinjured and needs to start over. He was hitting .172 when he went on the disabled list. He is 6-for-27 (.222) with no extra-base hits and seven strikeouts for Sacramento.

Catcher signed: The Giants added minor-league catching depth by signing Ryan Hanigan, who famously stepped away from the plate and turned away when Buster Posey hit his grand slam off Cincinnati’s Mat Latos in Game 5 of the 2012 Division Series.

The Giants need the help after Hector Sanchez incurred another concussion at Triple-A. Hanigan, 37, played 33 games with the Rockies last season

Briefly: The Giants had an odd defensive series against the Braves. They made some great plays but committed seven errors, two Sunday by second baseman Alen Hanson. Bochy said the ball seemed “squirrely” coming off the dirt. The Giants last had seven errors in a three-game sweep in 1999, at Montreal. ... Pablo Sandoval made one of those highlight plays Sunday, a backhand diving stop to rob Johan Camargo of two RBIs. ... Losing pitcher Mike Soroka, from Calgary, Alberta, Canada, committed to Cal before signing with Atlanta as a first-round pick in 2015. ... Bochy reported that Reyes Moronta’s back felt better. Moronta left Saturday’s game in pain after facing two hitters and walking both on four pitches.

MLB.com

Collective effort leads to Giants' 4th straight win

Aimee Sachs

ATLANTA -- In his third career start, Giants left-hander Andrew Suarez was in control of the Braves' lineup on Sunday en route to San Francisco's 4-3 win -- the first of his career -- to complete a series sweep at SunTrust Park.

"It's something I'm never gonna forget, for sure," Suarez said. "I'm just glad we got the win, especially the sweep."

In his 5 1/3 innings of work, Suarez allowed seven hits -- all singles -- and the lone Atlanta run off him was unearned as he struck out six and issued just one walk.

"He knows what he's doing out there, so it's good to see him come up here and get off to a good start," Giants manager Bruce Bochy said. "As much as that, he's got a lot of confidence. It can be a tough time for a guy coming up and making starts. You try to get settled in, but from the get-go he's been good."

Suarez also induced three double plays, with six total turned in his last two starts.

"It's huge," Suarez said. "Just being able to throw strikes and knowing that my defense is gonna make plays for me, it just takes a whole bunch of pressure off."

For the third straight game, the Braves took a first-inning lead. A Tyler Flowers infield single put the Braves up 1-0 in the bottom of the first, but the Giants manufactured runs in the third and fourth innings on a day that 20-year-old Braves righty Mike Soroka lasted just four innings in his second career start.

The Giants took a 2-1 lead in the third inning on RBI singles by Nick Hundley and Pablo Sandoval. In the fourth inning, Suarez laid down a sacrifice bunt that set the stage for Gregor Blanco's RBI fielder's choice, followed by an Andrew McCutchen sacrifice fly to left.

The Braves scored two runs off Hunter Strickland in the bottom of the ninth on a Kurt Suzuki double and Ender Inciarte's ground ball to first to pull within a run, but Strickland got Ozzie Albies to pop out in foul territory with two outs to get the save.

"It got a little scary, didn't it?" Bochy said. "Yeah, it did. That's what your closer has to do, he has to keep his composure out there and make pitches and you know, you give [the Braves] credit. You know at some point they're coming alive, and they did in the ninth, and they got a big pinch-hit double there with one out. You hope your closer keeps his poise and makes his pitches, and he did."

MOMENT THAT MATTERED

After Flowers' RBI single, Johan Camargo came up with two outs and hit a scorcher to third base that Sandoval -- who got the start in place of Evan Longoria -- dove to his right to snag before making a strong throw to first to end the threat. The Giants would go seven straight innings without allowing a run.

SOUND SMART

Alen Hanson had his third straight two-hit game on Sunday with a single and a double. He went 6-for-14 with three doubles, a home run and five RBIs during the series sweep of the Braves to raise his batting average to .321.

YOU GOTTA SEE THIS

Hanson also made his mark on the basepaths. He dashed home on a grounder to first and was able to sneak under Flowers' tag to score the Giants' third run.

HE SAID IT

"That was a lot of fun. Yeah, I found out later on, but everybody was like, 'Just get ready for the beer shower. I hope you have goggles on.' But I didn't, so I wasn't ready for it." -- Suarez

UP NEXT

The Giants start a four-game series at Citizens Bank Park on Monday, when righty Jeff Samardzija (1-1, 5.27 ERA) will try to overcome his past struggles against the Phillies. He has an 8.18 career ERA against Philadelphia and a 15.43 ERA at Citizens Bank Park. The Phillies will send righty Zach Eflin (0-0, 1.50 ERA) to the mound. First pitch is set for 4:05 p.m. PT.

The Athletic

Giants pitchers contemplate a sad existence without shagging Andrew Baggarly

Giants relief pitcher Cory Gearrin retains a vivid memory of his first moment stepping on a major league field in a major league uniform.

It was before he made his debut on the mound. It was before he even picked up a baseball. It was at AT&T Park. He was a member of the Atlanta Braves.

"A funny thing happened," he said, "that first time I went to go shag."

It is a time-honored tradition. A time-consuming one, too. Somebody has to run around and pick up all the balls that get strewn about the yard in batting practice. For as long as AstroTurf mats and roll-out cages have existed, pitchers have served as the primary bird dogs. Play catch, then play fetch.

As much as the term might cause our British friends to snicker and snort, shagging is almost as old as the game itself.

That is beginning to change now. The Giants continue their road trip on Monday at Philadelphia, where Phillies manager Gabe Kapler is bringing different ideas to a sport that sure does love its orthodoxy. Among the more radical notions: no, we don't want our multimillion dollar pitchers standing around and bending over to pick up baseballs for an hour each afternoon.

As every major league front office seeks the next great efficiency, Kapler identified what he perceives to be a gigantic waste of time. From the first workout of spring training, he eliminated shagging duty for pitchers. The team is using teenagers from local Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities leagues to help out during BP this season.

Giants bullpen coach Matt Herges knew this was coming. He served the previous two years as the pitching coach for the Dodgers' Triple-A club in Oklahoma City while Kapler was the organization's farm director. Kapler didn't allow Dodgers minor league pitchers to shag during BP, either.

Herges saw the benefits. And he loves that Kapler is bold enough to bring some of his out-of-the-box theories to the big leagues.

"Occasionally a guy would come up and say, 'Hey, I want to get out there today and run around,'" Herges said. "I'd be like, 'OK, I don't know you're doing it, and don't go crazy.' But no, they loved the fact they got their work in and went inside and did what they had to do.

"And it's not screw-off time. It's, 'I'm going to go in and take a nap, I'm going to go in and eat, I'm going to look at scouting reports.' I saw the benefits throughout the season. At the end of the year, guys were still strong."

The Giants aren't likely to follow Kapler's lead. Manager Bruce Bochy said he values the camaraderie that pitchers gain through spending time together outdoors. It's 45 minutes or so when they interact with one another, with no temptation to check their phones or retract into their private worlds. That social connection is important with one another, and also with the fans.

"No, no, you know what? I like my pitchers out here," Bochy said. "It's part of the game. I think it's a good thing. So I don't see myself doing that."

An informal survey of several Giants pitchers resulted in moderate support for the Phillies' approach. None of them would protest if the Giants were to eliminate shagging for pitchers — add it up, after all, and we're talking about close to a week of your life every year standing in cleats under the sun picking up baseballs — but several acknowledged they would miss aspects of it.

Giants left-hander Tony Watson: "I guess you could say I'm not anti-shagging."

Right-hander Chris Stratton: "Naw, I don't think there's anything wrong with shagging."

Left-hander Josh Osich: "I like shagging, but if they told us not to do it, I'd understand."

Left-hander Derek Holland: "Oh, I can do power shagging, too. For a whole 30 seconds."

Yes, there is such a thing as power shagging, and every player knows it when he sees it. Almost every team has a devotee to the craft. The pitchers who power shag do not merely jog after fly balls or scoop them up on the warning track. They fancy themselves as legitimate outfielders, letting their competitive gusto fuel them as they sprint for drives to the gap and sometimes

leap at the fence. To steal a teammate's BP homer is the crowning achievement for a power shagger.

Watson recalled that former Pirates teammate Francisco Liriano would routinely power shag the day before his starts. Gearrin said Craig Kimbrel fancied himself a Gold Glove outfielder during their days together with the Braves, and would get his cardio workout through power shagging. Bochy, asked to name greatest power shagger he'd ever seen, did so without hesitation.

"The best was Fernando Valenzuela," Bochy said. "He was unbelievable. He loved baseball, he couldn't wait to get out on the field and if he wasn't pitching, he'd be the first one out there. He loved to shag. He could shag all day."

Osich listed former Giants teammate Javier Lopez as the smoothest shagger he's ever seen, "and he was, like, 40." Holland singled out another veteran reliever, Joe Nathan, for his shagging zeal while with the Texas Rangers.

"A lot of energy for a senior citizen," Holland said. "We had a lot of fun with him. We'd leave a walker out there in the dugout for him. I'd always ask him what it was like playing baseball with Ty Cobb. That sort of thing."

One afternoon in Texas, Holland witnessed the inherent danger of grown men power shagging in close proximity. Keone Kela went full bore after a fly ball and didn't see teammate Shawn Tolleson camped underneath it. The bone-crunching collision didn't result in any disabling injuries, but Tolleson was woozy for a few hours.

The most infamous shagging injury, of course, happened when future Hall of Fame closer Mariano Rivera tried to make a leaping catch at the wall and blew out a knee.

But the most dangerous part of shagging doesn't involve jumping at the track or sprinting in the gap. It's the ball you never see coming. And you are at greatest risk when you're working the bucket.

Stratton was on bucket duty during batting practice at Salem-Keizer in the short-season Pioneer League, standing in shallow center field and taking throws from other pitchers, when a line drive off the bat of Chuckie Jones struck his temple and sent him to the hospital.

"You have a screen there, but the one we had in Salem wasn't more than 7 feet tall," Stratton said. "One of those sinking liners can still get you. There's a lot of 'head's up' going on."

As Stratton recalled, someone threw a ball short from right field and he ventured from behind the screen to retrieve it. He looked to the BP cage before reaching down. But then another ball rolled near his feet. He reached for the second ball and never saw the line drive coming. In retrospect, he feels fortunate that nobody yelled a warning.

“I probably would’ve turned to look,” he said. “And it would have gotten me in the eye or something.”

Stratton’s concussion ended his season and it took almost a year before his equilibrium began to normalize. Yet he is not an advocate for eliminating the shagging experience. He enjoys being outdoors.

And besides, he doesn’t have to work the bucket anymore. In the minors, it’s the starting pitcher from the previous day. But in the major leagues, the duty usually falls to a bat boy, clubhouse assistant or some other staff member willing to take some ankle-nipping throws for a \$50 tip.

“There is no worst thing about the bucket because I’m not on the damn bucket,” Holland said, smiling. “But yeah, in the minor leagues, the bucket sucked. You can write it: the worst part is that asshole throwing the ball at my shoe. Thank you for always doing that.”

For Osich, that, ahem, individual was Jeremy Affeldt.

“One spring training Affeldt made me do bucket the whole time and he’d purposely throw them short,” Osich said. “Every ball that he got, he’d make me go out and get it.”

Other pitchers enjoy practicing their sinking, two-seam fastballs while firing throws to the poor sap on the bucket. Another favorite pastime: holding a ball along with five or six of your teammates, then throwing them all at once.

“You’re going to blow up a shin,” Gearrin said. “Guaranteed.”

Said Watson: “There’s a reason you won’t see (Madison) Bumgarner or Johnny (Cueto) on the bucket here.”

Major league pitchers are off bucket duty, and now Kapler is taking them off the field entirely. Phillies pitchers have the option to shag at home if they so choose. But they are encouraged to use the extra time as study hall or to power nap – something that club-hired sleep specialists are trying to get players in several organizations to embrace. The Giants built a “recovery room” off to the side of their home clubhouse for just that purpose.

Barry Bonds was often chided behind his back by teammates for napping in the clubhouse. So was Manny Ramirez. But Kapler told Herges that Manny was a power napper ahead of his time.

“We rebelled against him because you just didn’t do that,” Herges said. “I mean, I fell asleep once in the clubhouse and got my shoe lit on fire. Gregg Olson. Oh yeah. I was on the couch, closed my eyes for a couple seconds and boom! Smelled the burn. It’s just not something you were supposed to do.”

“But Gabe told me, ‘You know what? Manny had it right. All the studies show when you wake up from a nap, your alertness goes up. Even your testosterone levels go up. There’s a science behind it.’”

Most Giants pitchers were skeptical about how they would use their bonus time if they didn’t have to shag. On the road, where the schedule is more compressed, they said it might give them extra time to eat and digest before a game. But for the most part, they said they already devote enough time to video and scouting reports.

“And I feel like our coaches are already good at making adjustments,” Gearrin said. “We’ll sometimes come in after one (batting practice) group or we’ll alternate.”

And yet ...

“When we come back to Arizona in June, I promise you,” Gearrin said. “If the roof’s open during BP, there’s not a guy here who’s going to want to be standing around out there.”

There is one other aspect of shagging that pitchers say they would miss: interacting with fans. Gearrin, Holland, Watson and Osich have played catch with kids in the stands during batting practice. Several pitchers mentioned the charms of standing in the outfield at Wrigley as the early arriving bleacher creatures progress from vodka to beer.

“They’re at the bar having Bloody Marys all morning and now they’re onto a cold one and they’re trash talking you at 11 a.m. during BP,” Watson said. “It’s the best.”

There are unusual autograph requests. Holland recalled a time in Texas when a fan tried to get the entire team to sign a hot dog. On the bun or the frank? He didn’t get close enough to tell.

“I just saw it and I’m like, I’m not doing that,” Holland said. “But I’ve signed diapers. That was in a grocery store, though. That didn’t count.”

Mostly, there is time spent with fellow teammates. One year, Nathan lost a bet and had to wear a Tony Romo Dallas Cowboys uniform on the field during BP, complete with the helmet. Holland borrowed it for a few minutes.

“I put it on and took a fly ball off it, which was hilarious,” Holland said. “I said, ‘watch this’ and it hit right off the top of my coconut and shot straight up in the air.”

Then there is the fan that every National League pitcher knows on sight: the guy at AT&T Park who uses a coffee can and makeshift fishing pole to try to scoop up stray baseballs on the warning track.

“Oh yeah, the guy with the can,” Watson said. “He takes forever and he concentrates and holds

the line, and he finally gets one — and someone will throw a ball and knock over the can. He's got to start all over. That happens all the time."

Some pitchers take the harassment to another level.

"One of my clearest memories of being called up to the big leagues," Gearrin said. "I run out there to shag and Tim Hudson is there, a bunch of veteran guys. Derek Lowe waits for the guy with the can to collect a baseball. Then he pulled a pair of scissors from his back pocket and he snipped the line. I was like, 'Wow, this is the big leagues.'"

How sad it would be if those kinds of interactions would be lost. Holland said if he didn't shag, he would have to find some other time to "catch this cool farmer's tan."

Osich pinpointed the most practical aspect of shagging duty.

"Well, Gearrin freakin' played an inning in left field for us," Osich said. "We need to go shag because you don't know. We might need to know how to catch a fly ball, right?"

And while we're on the subject ...

"You know, we should mix in some reliever batting practice more often, too," Osich said. "Because, I mean, we do get to bat every once in awhile."

The Athletic

Down on the farm: Giants address catching depth issues; Marciano continues to dominate Melissa Lockard

With both Trevor Brown and Hector Sanchez on the disabled list in Sacramento with concussions, the Giants' catching depth behind Buster Posey and Nick Hundley was suddenly very thin. In the event either Posey or Hundley got hurt, the Giants weren't interested in rushing prospect Aramis Garcia, who has roughly a half season of playing time at the Double-A level, so they signed veteran Ryan Hanigan and acquired Tanner Murphy from the Braves for cash. Neither has been assigned to a team yet, although Hanigan is almost assuredly going to Triple-A Sacramento, while Murphy should slot in somewhere below that.

Hanigan brings 11 years of big league experience with him. Originally an undrafted free agent signing by the Reds in 2002, Hanigan has played in 680 big league games. Last season, he hit .267 in 33 games for the Rockies. He'll give the Giants a reliable veteran to turn to if Posey or Hundley go down.

Murphy was a fourth-round pick of the Braves in 2013 out of high school. The 23-year-old is a career .211 hitter in five minor league seasons. He's never played above High-A ball. Murphy gives the Giants another catcher at the A-ball level now that they've had to move John Riley from Low-A Augusta to Double-A Richmond to replace Ronnie Freeman, who takes Sanchez's

spot in Sacramento.

All stats good through May 6.

Sacramento River Cats (Triple-A, Pacific Coast League)

Current Record: 15-15

The River Cats went 4-3 this week against division rivals Las Vegas and Fresno to get back to the .500 mark. They still sit 3 1/2 games back of Fresno for first place in the Pacific Northern Division, but the River Cats will have a game against the Grizzlies on Monday to try to cut into that lead further.

Transactions

RHP Roberto Gómez: Placed on the 7-day disabled list on 5/5, retroactive to 5/3. Gómez has yet to pitch since returning to the River Cats from San Francisco on April 29.

C Hector Sanchez: Placed on the 7-day disabled list on 5/3. Sanchez left the River Cats' game on May 2 after suffering what was later diagnosed as a concussion.

C Ronnie Freeman: Assigned to Sacramento from Richmond on 5/3. Freeman takes Sanchez's spot on the River Cats' roster. He was batting only .184 for the Flying Squirrels.

OF Austin Slater: Optioned to Sacramento on 5/2. Slater had two hits and three walks in 10 at-bats for the Giants. He started at first base in his return to Sacramento, his first game at the position as a professional. Slater has appeared at shortstop, second base and third base in his minor league career, in addition to all three outfield spots.

LHP Andrew Suarez: Recalled to San Francisco on 5/1. Suarez has looked good in three big league starts. With Johnny Cueto on the DL and Madison Bumgarner still weeks away from a return, Suarez could play a big role for the Giants this season.

LHP Matt Gage: Assigned to Sacramento from Richmond on 5/1. Gage took Suarez's spot in the River Cats' rotation and promptly threw five scoreless innings in Las Vegas. He then followed that up with 5 2/3 innings of one-run ball against Fresno on Sunday. Gage had a 3.18 ERA in four starts with Richmond this year. He threw 67 1/3 innings for the River Cats last season, posting a 5.75 ERA and a 40:20 K:BB. Gage pitches off of his fastball, which sits 88-92, and he uses his slider as a put-away pitch. He also features a changeup.

RHP Dusten Knight: Assigned to Sacramento from Richmond on 4/30. Knight jumps to Triple-A after a dominating start in Double-A. In 13 innings for the Flying Squirrels, Knight had a 1.38 ERA and had allowed only 11 baserunners. He struck out 11. Knight threw two scoreless innings in his first outing for Sacramento on Thursday and another two scoreless frames over the weekend. He had a 3.43 ERA in 60 1/3 innings for the River Cats last season.

Notable Performances

OF Chris Shaw: Shaw homered three times this week to give him eight on the year. He also had a four-game hitting streak come to an end on Sunday. He's still struggling to cut down on his strikeouts (nine in 26 at-bats this week), but Shaw is batting .310 over his last 10 games and he has a .545 SLG for the year.

RHP Tyler Beede: Las Vegas isn't an easy place to pitch, and Beede got hit around in his start there on Monday. He allowed five runs on 10 hits and five walks in 4 2/3 innings. In a more neutral pitching environment, Beede bounced back on Saturday, allowing two runs on six hits and a walk in 5 2/3 innings. He struck out six.

OF Steven Duggar: Duggar had a quiet week, collecting four hits and three walks in 28 plate appearances. With the Giants' bats hot at the moment, Duggar's promotion doesn't appear quite as imminent.

UT Orlando Calixte: Calixte has an eight-game hitting streak. He's homered four times during the streak and three of those came this week. He's batting .279/.333/.488 on the year.

OF Hunter Pence: Pence had a couple of good games in Las Vegas to start the week, but he went 1 for 8 with a walk this weekend against Fresno. Pence is 6 for 27 with two walks and no extra-base hits in seven rehab games thus far.

IF Chase d'Arnaud: D'Arnaud went 8 for 18 with three walks this week. The veteran is batting .286/.369/.495 for the year. He's part of what has, at least initially, been a strong minor league free agent signing class.

RHP Dereck Rodríguez: Another member of that minor league free agent signing class, Rodríguez currently leads the River Cats in innings pitched after he tossed six strong innings in Las Vegas on Wednesday. He allowed just two runs on four hits and didn't walk a batter, and he struck out six. Over his last two starts, Rodríguez has allowed five runs on 11 hits with no walks and 12 strikeouts in 12 2/3 innings.

Richmond Flying Squirrels (Double-A, Eastern League)
Current Record: 16-12

After dropping their first four games of the week, the Flying Squirrels rebounded with wins on Saturday and Sunday to remain 1 1/2 games back of first-place Akron. They face Akron at home starting on Monday for a three-game set that could catapult them back into first place.

Transactions

RHP Tyler Cyr: Placed on the 7-day disabled list on 5/5. Cyr lands on the DL with the dreaded

“right elbow soreness” diagnosis. He had allowed six runs in nine innings this season for Richmond after posting a 2.19 ERA in 49 1/3 innings for the Flying Squirrels last year. He saved 18 games last season.

LHP Carlos Diaz: Assigned to Richmond from San Jose on 5/5. Diaz had a 1.69 ERA in 16 innings for San Jose before his promotion. He spent most of the past four-plus seasons in either Augusta or San Jose, but did have one appearance for Richmond in 2015.

C John Riley: Assigned to Richmond from Augusta on 5/4. With Freeman in Sacramento, Riley takes over as the backup catcher to Garcia.

3B Jonah Arenado: Placed on the 7-day disabled list, retroactive to 5/2. Arenado was batting .216 with three home runs when he injured his left shoulder on Tuesday. The injury occurred when he and teammate Ali Castillo collided while trying to catch a pop-up. He is expected to miss three to five weeks.

1B K.C. Hobson: Assigned to Richmond from extended spring training on 5/2. The son of former big league player and manager Butch Hobson, K.C. returns to Richmond after hitting .246 with 11 home runs in 56 games for the Flying Squirrels last season.

RHP Will LaMarche: Assigned to Richmond from extended spring training on 4/30. LaMarche made a spot appearance for the River Cats on April 17, but had otherwise spent the start of the season in Arizona at extended spring training until the Richmond bullpen had an opening with the Knight promotion. A former Tigers prospect, LaMarche signed with the Giants as a minor league free agent in 2017. He spent most of last season with High-A San Jose, posting a 3.46 ERA and a 49:8 K:BB in 41 2/3 innings.

Notable Performances

RHP Shaun Anderson: Another week, another fine performance from Anderson, who is making a push for a spot in the River Cats’ rotation. Anderson threw six innings on Saturday, allowing a run on eight hits and one walk. He struck out three. The win broke the Richmond four-game losing streak. Anderson has gone at least five innings in all of his six starts this season and he’s gone six innings four times. He has a 2.38 ERA and a 31:7 K:BB this year.

RHP Ray Black: Black made two appearances this week, tossing three scoreless innings. He struck out six and had dominating stuff, clocking numerous 101s and even a 102 on the radar gun.

SS Ryan Howard: Howard finished the week on a five-game hitting streak. He is 7 for 18 with two walks during the streak. He’s batting .306 on the year.

IF Miguel Gómez: Gómez hit safely in four of five games he played in this week. He’s batting .293 since being sent down from Sacramento, but he’s walked only once in 75 at-bats and he

has only five extra-base hits. With Alen Hanson now on the 40-man roster, Gómez's spot could be vulnerable if the Giants need to add a roster player in the coming weeks.

C Aramis Garcia: The Giants almost certainly would have added veteran catching depth in Triple-A when Sanchez and Brown got hurt no matter what, but Garcia's struggles made that decision even easier. Garcia homered on Saturday, but he had three hits in 17 at-bats this week. He's batting .221/.267/.382 on the season.

RHP Jordan Johnson: After a poor season debut, Johnson has been a reliable member of the Richmond rotation ever since. He threw at least six innings in each of his next four starts, including a 6 1/3-inning start on Monday. He allowed two runs on three hits and two walks while striking out five. On Sunday, Johnson didn't have a chance to go six innings, as the game was shortened by rain after five. He walked four in the game but allowed only two unearned runs and got the win. Johnson has 2.67 ERA in 33 2/3 innings this season.

San Jose Giants (High-A, California League)
Current Record: 18-13

A 4-3 week has the Giants tied with the Stockton Ports and the Visalia Rawhide for first place in the North division. The week ended with a loss to Lancaster, but the Giants took the road series after splitting a four-game set at home with the Rawhide. Not surprisingly, Visalia, San Jose and Stockton are 1-2-3 in the league in pitching.

Transactions

RHP C.J. Gettman: Assigned to San Jose from Augusta on 5/4. Gettman made quick work of the Sally League, posting a 1.26 ERA in 14 1/3 innings before his promotion to San Jose. He has a big arm and his stuff has bounced back quickly after Tommy John surgery kept him out all of last year.

RHP Connor Overton: Assigned to San Jose from Sacramento on 5/2. Overton was in the River Cats' bullpen for depth this week but didn't appear in a game. He threw two scoreless innings in his first outing back with San Jose.

RHP Michael Cederoth: Released by the Giants on 5/2. With Overton rejoining the San Jose bullpen, Cederoth lost his roster spot and, at 25, was too experienced to send back to Low-A or extended spring training. He'll try to find a new team in free agency. The 2014 3rd-round pick of the Twins has swing-and-miss stuff, but he has struggled with his command since turning pro. He had walked 13 in 10 innings for San Jose.

Notable Performances

OF Heath Quinn: Quinn continues to show the form that made him one of the Giants' top-20 prospects after the 2016 season. He has a seven-game hitting streak and he connected on his

third home run of the year on Sunday. Quinn is batting .350 over his last 10 games and has an .864 OPS for the year.

2B Jalen Miller: Miller hit safely in six of seven games this week and went 10 for 30 with two walks. Although he's still vulnerable to the slider down and away, Miller looks vastly improved at the plate over last season. He has a .798 OPS in 29 games.

RHP Melvin Adon: Adon began the week on an up note with seven strong innings against the Rawhide. He allowed a run on six hits and struck out five. Adon's next start came in Lancaster and, like many a pitcher before him, Adon ran into a buzzsaw at The Hangar. He allowed seven runs on 10 hits in 3 1/3 innings. That outing raised his ERA to 5.40 for the season. Despite the inflated ERA, there has been a lot to be excited about regarding Adon's performance with San Jose thus far.

LHP Mac Marshall: Marshall's scoreless streak came to an end in Lancaster, but it wasn't a bad performance. He allowed two runs on two hits and a walk and he struck out four in three innings. His fastball has been up to 93 mph and his secondary pitches — especially his changeup — have been sharp in his return from UCL repair surgery.

RHP Logan Webb: Like Marshall, Webb is being brought along slowly after he missed much of last season after undergoing Tommy John surgery in 2016. He threw a season-best four innings on Wednesday. He didn't allow a run and he struck out three while walking two. Webb has 16 strikeouts in 17 innings and a 1.06 ERA, but his command has wavered at times, as evidenced by his 11 walks.

OF Sandro Fabian: Fabian is off to a slow start, but the 20-year-old hit his second home run of the season on Monday. He also drew two walks this week after walking only three times all season going into this week.

IF Frandy de la Rosa: De la Rosa homered in back-to-back games on Saturday and Sunday, as he thoroughly enjoyed his visit to Lancaster. De la Rosa has five home runs on the season, which equals his total from last year and is two off of his career-high.

CF Johneshwy Fargas: Fargas stole bases in seven straight games, a streak that came to an end on Wednesday. He had a two-homer game on Monday, his first two home runs of the season. The Giants' outfield is crowded but Fargas is forcing his name into the lineup with his hot bat. In 15 games, he's batting .381/.471/.619 with a team-leading 10 stolen bases.

Augusta GreenJackets (Low-A, South Atlantic League)
Current Record: 20-9

Despite a slew of injuries (more on that below), the GreenJackets have the best record in the league. A 10-0 win finished their week at 3-3. The GreenJackets' offense has been ticking up and they now have a team OPS of .712, good for fifth-best in the league. Their 2.45 ERA is

second best in the league, as is their 293 strikeouts.

Transactions

OF Jean Angomas: Placed on the 7-day disabled list on 5/5. Angomas suffered a concussion as a result of a horrific outfield collision with Heliot Ramos. Angomas laid still on the field for several minutes after the collision before being taken off on a stretcher.

1B Jose Vizcaino Jr.: Assigned to Augusta from extended spring training on 5/5. The son of the longtime big leaguer with the same name, Vizcaino Jr. was a seventh-round pick of the Giants in 2015 out of Santa Clara. He's yet to play above High-A ball. Last season, he hit .251/.306/.346 for Augusta and San Jose.

3B/2B Shane Matheny: Activated from the 7-day disabled list on 5/5. With Malique Ziegler out (see below), the GreenJackets need Matheny's big bat in the lineup. He was batting .370 when he landed on the DL on April 20. Matheny homered on Sunday, his second game back in the lineup. It was his first home run as a pro.

RHP Ryan Koziol: Activated from the 7-day disabled list on 5/5. Koziol returns after missing all of last season recovering from Tommy John surgery. He last pitched for Augusta in 2016, when he had a 3.01 ERA in 68 2/3 innings. Koziol was a significant prospect in high school, but after a year at Arizona, he transferred to a junior college and then spent a season at Illinois State before joining the Giants as an undrafted free agent.

OF Malique Ziegler: Placed on the 7-day disabled list on 5/2. Ziegler was by far Augusta's top offensive performer to start the year and is a rising star within the Giants' system. The speedy centerfielder was hit by a pitch last Sunday. He didn't leave the game early but hasn't played since. He was batting .310 over his last 10 games and .275/.405/.522 before the injury.

OF Nick Hill: Assigned to Augusta from extended spring training on 5/2. A 26th-round pick of the Giants in 2016, Hill spent the last two seasons with the AZL Giants and the short-season Salem-Keizer Volcanoes. He went 0 for 6 with four strikeouts in his Augusta debut on Thursday. Hill is a speedy, leadoff type hitter.

RHP Eduardo Rivera: Released by the Giants on 5/2. The Giants signed Rivera to a minor league free agent contract this offseason after he was released by the Reds. The 25-year-old reliever allowed 12 runs in 10 innings for the GreenJackets. He struck out 17 and walked only four but managed to allow three home runs. Rivera, who played in the Yankees' chain until signing with the Reds in November, throws in the upper-90s, but without much command. He's never played above the High-A level in eight minor league seasons.

Notable Performances

LHP Joey Marciano: Marciano continues to be one of the biggest stories of the early season in

the Sally League, and it may soon be time to see how his arsenal matches up in the hitter-friendly California League. Marciano threw five scoreless innings on Thursday, striking out seven. He's allowed two runs in 28 innings and has a 30:4 K:BB on the year. The 6-5 southpaw doesn't overpower hitters with his 88-91 mph fastball, but he has a knee-buckling curveball and his extension down the mound makes hitters think the ball is getting on them faster than it really is.

RHP Jason Bahr: Bahr threw a career-high six innings in his start on Friday. The right-hander allowed two runs on four hits. He struck out seven and walked one. After mostly relieving in college and splitting last season between the rotation and the bullpen, Bahr is taking to a full-time starter's role quickly.

OF Heliot Ramos: Ramos went hitless this week to drop his season slashline to .204/.284/.316. Ramos did walk twice on Sunday and has six walks in his last 10 games after walking just twice over his first 15.

3B Jacob Gonzalez: Gonzalez also had a quiet week, going 3 for 18 with a walk. He's batting .243/.295/.369 in 26 games.

C Jeffrey Parra: Known more for his defense coming into this year, Parra is putting together a solid season at the plate so far this year. Although he's batting only .234, Parra has a .419 OBP thanks to 13 walks. He had two hits — including a home run ± and two walks on Sunday, and hedrove inn four. Parra, 20, has an .845 OPS.

The Athletic

Giants Analytics: Blach and Longoria's peculiar winning formulas, Crawford improving, the Harvey question Owen Piondexter

After edging out a series win against the Padres, the Giants are on vacation from the pitcher-friendly parks of the West Coast, namely their own. With a road sweep of the first-place Braves, the Giants (19-15) are a season-high four games over .500 with an offense that is coming together and pitching that has managed to hang on as their stars recover.

Ty Blach somehow keeps this going

Ty Blach does one thing very well: he induces ground balls. It's how he's gotten by thus far, and as long as he can keep this up, he can keep getting decent to good results. His start on Saturday was fairly typical: he got 23 outs (that part's not typical), 16 on grounders (including two double plays), five fly outs, and two strikeouts. On the season, 58 percent of his batted balls have been on the ground, which is keeping his home run rate down, and allowed him to hold batters to a slugging percentage of .371.

Imagine a hitter reaching for a low pitch on the outside part of the plate and tapping a weak grounder: that's what Blach does instead of striking people out. He keeps the ball down and

away, especially to left-handers, and his fastball doesn't sink, but it has relatively little rise. His changeup, the main alternative to the fastball, dives below the zone, and hitters have had a hard time doing much damage against it, batting .268 against the pitch with three doubles and no triples or homers.

I keep looking at his 12.4 K% (league average is 22.6 percent), paired with a slightly above league average 9.3 BB%, and thinking that eventually this is going to fall apart. So far, Blach has kept the ship steady, and after Saturday's strong performance has a 3.60 ERA, which is mostly validated by a 3.76 FIP and 4.18 xFIP. Even if the xFIP is the one that indicates his true talent, that's still an impressive feat for the sort of pitcher you don't see around much anymore.

Longoria is winning without walking

It's easy enough to explain Evan Longoria's power surge. His current ISO of .259 would match but not exceed his career high, and he ran a .248 ISO as recently as 2016. His average exit velocity of 90.7 mph matches his 2016 figure, and represents a significant bump up from the 86.7 mph he hit last year. The power he's showing now seems at the higher end of his range, but not out of his range — he's had many stretches like this in his career.

What's more confusing is that he's barely walked at all. Sixteen players have been hit by a pitch more times this year than Longoria has walked. His 2.6 percent walk rate (three in 116 PA) is sixth-lowest among qualified hitters. He's been around 7 percent over the last few years, and I suspect he will climb back toward that number, because somehow this is happening with only small changes to his contact, swing and zone rates.

	BB%	Contact%	Swing %	Pitches in Zone %
2017	6.8	81	49.8	43.1
2018	2.5	78.5	50.7	46.5
Career	9.1	77.7	45.5	45.6

While each of those metrics points to slightly fewer walks, the key word there is slightly. Longoria has been walking progressively less with age, but he should be able to at least double his current rate going forward.

Crawford busting the slump?

Brandon Crawford with a league-average bat is an incredibly valuable player, due to his elite defense. In 2016, for instance, he put up a 5-win season, according to Fangraphs, while running a 106 wRC+ (6 percent better than league average offensively). This year, his struggles at the plate have nearly cancelled out the value he adds with the glove. That may be starting to change.

Crawford's problem has been strikeouts. He's productive enough when he puts the ball in play, with an adequate average (.321 BABIP) and power (.134 ISO). The problem is that too often he ends at-bats with a walk back to the dugout instead of a sprint or a jog to first.

Here is Crawford's strikeout rate and wOBA (which measures overall offensive production), since the start of last year. The inverse relationship is easy enough to spot: it's hard for Crawford to be a real offensive contributor with an elevated strikeout rate (note the dotted horizontal lines, which show league average for each stat in each year).

Look to the right end of the graph and you see the recent dip in strikeout rate and the corresponding rise in hitting production. Like a lot of Giants hitters, Crawford should be getting better results based on how well he's hitting the ball, according to xwOBA. If his strikeout rate is returning to earth and the results on batted balls are improving a bit, he's on his way to better production.

The pitcher injuries and struggles of stars like Andrew McCutcheon have been getting more attention, but it would be just as big a boost for Crawford to rise from bad to acceptable. He has upside beyond that, of course, but as long as he's within spitting distance of an average hitter, he's a big piece of the puzzle for the Giants. With four straight multi-hit games, including an 8-for-14 line in the sweep of the Braves, he could be on his way back there.

Sign Matt Harvey? Only if he embraces middle relief

The Giants acquired two former franchise icons in Longoria and McCutchen last offseason, and now there is chatter around one more: Matt Harvey. The flame-throwing, spotlight-loving Harvey exemplified the recent Mets teams built around star young pitchers. After Tommy John and thoracic outlet surgery, and a brief, unwilling stint in the bullpen, Harvey is done as a Met, having been designated for assignment on Friday.

Here's the case for the Giants signing Harvey: part of his problem has been an elevated home run rate, which would be mitigated by AT&T park. In a relief role, maybe he'd find another tick or two of velocity, which could bring his fastball and slider (collectively 85 percent of his pitches) closer to where they were in better times. A change of scenery might help him shake off some demons, and maybe he ends up learning a new pitch or grip that helps him get outs when he's not blowing hitters away. The Giants could also let him audition as a starter if they've seen enough of Derek Holland.

The case against is easier: he hasn't been good in over a year. It's not just the home runs, his strikeout and walk rates have gone in the wrong directions post-surgery. Add in the poor track record of players coming back from thoracic outlet surgery, and his inability to go peacefully to the bullpen, and it's easy to imagine that Harvey will be more trouble than he's worth, especially for a team with a mind on staying below the competitive balance tax threshold.

If I were the Giants, I would be willing to offer him a spot on the roster with the understanding that he's joining the middle relief corps, and if he wants a bigger role, he's going to have to earn it.