

Pitching lets down Mariners in 7-5 loss to Astros

SEATTLE (AP) — It has taken more than a decade for the Seattle Mariners to put together the middle-lineup strength that is has shown this early season.

Now, after a 7-5 loss to Houston Monday and a 5-8 start, the concern that shifted.

"When you don't pitch well, that's a reason to be concerned," Manager Lloyd McClendon said. "We've got to get it straightened out. We have much better than what we've shown to this point. We score five runs in a game we should win that ball game."

They are scoring more runs behind 3-4-5 hitters, Robinson Cano, Nelson Cruz and Kyle Seager, but giving up too many more.

Starter Hisashi Iwakuma, who had allowed nine runs in 11 innings in his first two starts, worked 5 1-3 innings, allowing three runs on five hits. He struck out three and walked no one. The Mariners have had just two wins by a starter this season, both by Felix Hernandez.

Astros third baseman Luis Valbuena hit a pair of solo home runs, including a go-ahead eighth-inning shot, to give the Astros the victory.

Valbuena, who opened the first with a blast off Iwakuma, hit his on 1-1 pitch from Danny Farquhar (0-1). It was the first home run yielded by a Mariners reliever this season.

"I feel bad because the team is scoring a lot of runs and I'm not doing my job," Iwakuma said. "That's the first thing I need to win for myself as well as the team."

Cruz, the AL Player of the Week, Cano and Seager were a combined 6-of-12 with four doubles, three RBIs and four runs scored.

Over the last seven games, they have combined to hit .452 with eight doubles, eight home runs and 21 RBIs.

"Cruz has been doing it from the get-go so thankfully me and Robbie are starting to get going," Seager said. "The impact of Cruz is huge. You can't pitch around Robbie and you have to be real careful with him."

Luke Gregerson entered the ninth knowing he had to



Seattle Mariners Brad Miller singles in a run as Houston Astros catcher Jason Castro looks on in the second inning of a baseball game Monday.

face those three to earn the save and victory.

"The lineup card's there. The games going on, it's on the Jumbotron. It's hard to miss it," Gregerson said.

He induced Cano to hit back to him. Cruz flied out to right. Seager walked but Gregerson struck out Seth Smith to pick up his third save in three opportunities.

Houston is now 15-7 at Safeco Field.

Trainer's room

Mariners: SS Chris Taylor (broken right wrist) appears fully recovered and is playing for the Triple-A Tacoma Rainiers.

Astros: RHP Josh Fields (strained right groin), who began the season on the DL, was expected to pitch two innings Monday for Triple-A Fresno. ... LHP Brett Oberholzer (left index finger blister) was expected to throw batting practice Monday at

extended spring in Kissimmee.

Up next

Mariners: RHP Taijuan Walker (0-2, 17.18) made some progress from his first start to his second. In his season opener, he allowed nine runs in 3 1-3 innings then cut it back to five runs in four innings. All three of his career victories have come against Houston, 3-0 with a 2.91 ERA.

Astros: RHP Colin McHugh (2-0, 1.54) likes Safeco Field: 2-0 with a 0.61 ERA (one run in 14 2-3 innings) with 16 strikeouts in his two career starts. In his last start at Safeco on Sept. 9, he allowed one hit in eight innings. He appears unaffected by a tender finger that limited in his opening start.

Player of the Month?

Cruz had six home runs, 10 RBIs and hit .500 for the week, good enough to be

named AL Player of the Week, April 13-19. "Probably player of the month. I think it would be hard pressed to beat that," Manager Lloyd McClendon said. It was Cruz's fourth career player of the week honor. Cruz, who started the season at 1 for 15, said what turned him was "just a feeling. One swing can change whatever you're feeling at the plate."

Rest for Carter

Astros 1B Chris Carter, mired in a 3-for-40 slump, did not start. He hit 37 home runs with 88 RBIs last season but does not have an extra-base hit or a RBI this season, with 17 strikeouts. "It takes 30 to 40 at-bats to get to a bad number and it's going to take 30 to 40 to get back out of it," Hinch said. "It's going to take more than one day for him to feel great about it." Carter entered the game in the sixth as a pinch hitter and struck out. He fanned again in the ninth.



Seattle Mariners starting pitcher Hisashi Iwakuma throws against the Houston Astros in the first inning of a baseball game Monday in Seattle.

Lady Loggers cruise past Pirates, 22-2

KNAPPA — The Knappa Lady Loggers scored 14 runs in the second inning, on their way to another easy win over Neah-Kah-Nie, 22-2, Monday at Knappa.

Knappa improves to 6-0 in Northwest League softball, with a Class 2A-best 12 wins overall.

Freshman McKailyn Rogers pitched all five innings of Monday's game, allowing just two hits with six strikeouts.

Kacie Cameron led the Logger offense, going 4-for-4 with three doubles. Stacey Aho had her first career home run, and Rogers was 2-for-2.

Knappa plays a pair of nonleague games the remainder of the week, beginning today at Clatskanie. The Loggers play at Portland Christian Friday.

BOYS GOLF

Astoria 374, Tillamook 379
WARRENTON — The Astoria boys golf team (unofficially) scored its first victory in Cowapa League dual match play in four years

Monday, with a five-stroke win over Tillamook at the Astoria Golf & County Club.

"The seniors are saying it's the first win in four years," said Astoria coach Dan Foss. "I'm real happy for the kids. Our putting has improved, they're keeping the ball in play and making some nice strides. It's a nice stepping stone for the program."

Astoria was led by Will Keeran with an 86 (44-42), followed by Arthur Clark at 89. Both scores were personal bests.

Clark — whose first match last year ended with a 155 — had a personal best 43 on the front nine.

Tillamook's Carter Lee was medalist with an 80 (43-37).

Other Astoria scores came from Joey Voeller (46-50-96); Ron Schumacher (54-49-103); and Sydney Morris (50-55-105).

Competing for the Fishermen junior varsity were Tim Schumacher (111), Trevor Altheide-Nielson (122) and Henry Meiners (127).

SCOREBOARD

PREP SCHEDULE

TODAY
Baseball — Seaside at Astoria, 5 p.m.; Warrenton at Portland Christian, 4:30 p.m.; Knappa at Nestucca, 4:30 p.m.
Softball — Astoria at Banks, 5 p.m.; Seaside at Scappoose, 5 p.m.; Warrenton at Portland Christian, 4:30 p.m.; Knappa at Clatskanie, 4:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY
Baseball — Astoria at Seaside, 5 p.m.
Track — Astoria/Seaside at Tillamook, 3:30 p.m.; Warrenton at Clatskanie, 3:30 p.m.
Boys Golf — Seaside at Scap-

poose, 2 p.m.

THURSDAY

Girls Golf — Astoria Invitational, 10:30 a.m.

FRIDAY

Baseball — Warrenton at Catlin Gabel, 4:30 p.m.; Nestucca at Knappa (2), 3 p.m.

Softball — Astoria at Tillamook (2), 4 p.m.; Seaside at Banks (2), 4 p.m.; Knappa at Portland Christian, 4:30 p.m.

Boys Golf — Seaside at Crook County Invitational, 10 a.m.

SATURDAY

Track — Banks Invitational, 10 a.m.

Atlanta's Budenholzer voted NBA Coach of the Year

ATLANTA (AP) — After a tumultuous offseason and leading the Atlanta Hawks to the top seed in the Eastern Conference, Mike Budenholzer beat out Golden State's Steve Kerr for NBA coach of the year Tuesday.

Budenholzer, in his second year as a head coach, was honored after the Hawks went 60-22 during the regular season, the best mark in franchise history. They won their first division title since 1994, which also was the last time they held a No. 1 seed.

Budenholzer received 67 first-place votes and 513 points overall in national balloting by sports writers and broadcasters. Kerr, who guided the Warriors to an NBA-best 67-15 record in his first season as coach, received 56 first-place votes and 471 points.

A longtime assistant under San Antonio's Gregg Popovich, Budenholzer went 38-44 with the Hawks during an injury-plagued debut year. But the



AP Photo/John Bazemore

Atlanta Hawks head coach Mike Budenholzer signals to his players in the first half of an NBA playoff basketball game against the Brooklyn Nets Sunday in Atlanta.

Hawks surged to the top of the East in his second season, giving Atlanta its first coach of the year since Lenny Wilkins 21 years ago.

Milwaukee's Jason Kidd finished a distant third in the balloting with one first-place vote and 57 points. Popovich

and Chicago's Tom Thibodeau were the only other coaches to receive first-place votes.

The Hawks had a troubled summer after emails emerged showing owner Bruce Levenson made racially charged comments about the team's fan base. Shortly afterward, it was revealed that Levenson's emails were discovered during the team's investigation into insensitive comments by general manager Danny Ferry during a conference call to discuss the potential signing of free agent Luol Deng.

Levenson announced he would sell his share of the team — a process that is still ongoing — while Ferry took an indefinite leave that has lasted all season. Budenholzer, with help from assistant GM Wes Wilcox, was forced to take over control of player personnel matters as well as his coaching duties.

After a sluggish start, the Hawks suddenly got hot in December. They set a franchise record with a 19-game winning

streak and in January became the first NBA team to go 17-0 in a calendar month.

The streak brought a commanding lead in the East, and Atlanta finished seven games ahead of the overwhelming preseason favorites, LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Budenholzer was credited with bringing to Atlanta the team-first style that worked so well for the Spurs. The Hawks had six players average in double figures, with the five starters finishing between 12.1 and 16.7 points a game.

His philosophy was best epitomized when all five starters were honored as NBA players of the month for January, the first time the league has given the award to an entire unit.

The success led to a huge jump in attendance for a franchise that traditionally struggled to draw fans. Atlanta averaged a team-record 17,412 per game, an increase of more than 21 percent from the previous season.

Vogt's 3-run homer helps A's beat Angels in opener

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — Dan Otero's longest relief stint in the majors proved vital for the Oakland Athletics in the opener of their four-game series with the Los Angeles Angels.

The four-year veteran right-hander got credit for the Athletics' 6-3 victory over the Angels on Monday night, allowing one hit over four innings after Stephen Vogt's three-run homer in the third had put the A's ahead to stay.

"Dan Otero single-handedly gave us a chance to win this game," Vogt said. "That's the guy we know and love. That was exactly what he needed and what everybody else needed — to pick us up and take us out of a jam. He was some kind of on-point tonight. He had a couple of little hiccups to start the season,

but no one was worried about it."

Marcus Semien also homered to help stake rookie Kendall Graveman to a 5-3 lead in his third major league start. But the right-hander lasted just three-plus innings. Manager Bob Melvin pulled him after he walked Erick Aybar and C.J. Cron to open the fourth and ran his pitch count up to 73.

"I've got to go deeper in ballgames. There's no excuses," Graveman said. "I'm getting too deep into counts, and I'm not the kind of guy who can do that. But Dan did a great job coming in behind me."

Otero (1-1) bailed out Graveman by retiring the next three batters. He has not allowed a run in 13 career appearances against the Angels, spanning 19 2-3 innings.

"I'm sure they'll get one off me soon enough," said Otero, who threw 42 pitches. "I've tried to limit my pitch count. I'd been getting away from that, trying to be too fine. But tonight I was just trying to attack guys. I was able to keep going back out there and was very fortunate."

Melvin said: "He was a life saver. I mean, it looked like it was going to be a 10-8 game, and he comes in and just shuts it down. ... We don't win the game without him."

Evan Scribner pitched a perfect eighth and Tyler Clippard got three outs for his first American League save and 35th of his career.

Angels starter Matt Shoemaker (2-1) threw 68 pitches in three-plus innings, giving up five runs and seven hits while

retiring only eight of the 18 batters he faced. The right-hander had won his previous nine decisions, beginning with a three-inning relief stint against Boston in a 19-inning, 5-4 victory last Aug. 9.

Vogt, batting third in the order for the first time this season, gave the Athletics a 4-2 lead in the third with his fourth homer, following a leadoff double by Sam Fuld and an infield hit by Mark Canha.

"I've hit in every spot in the order except leadoff since I've been here with the A's," Vogt said. "And what I'm learning is that it doesn't matter where you're hitting in the order. You take care of your at-bat the same way you would in every other spot in the lineup, because we jumble things so often here."