

MLB

Bautista homers as Blue Jays blank Mariners

By IAN HARRISON
Associated Press

TORONTO — When opposing batters reach second base against Joe Biagini, Devon Travis likes to ask for their impressions of his Blue Jays teammate.

He's been hearing the same answer a lot lately.

Biagini and four relievers combined on a seven-hitter, Jose Bautista hit a two-run homer and Toronto beat the Seattle Mariners 4-0 on Friday night.

"That guy is nasty, man," Travis said of Biagini. "Every single guy that gets on (second) base, I ask them what they think about him and they've all got the same answer: he's something."

Travis had two RBIs despite a hitless night for the Blue Jays, who have won five of six.

Biagini (1-1) gave up four hits, walked none and struck out three, winning as a starter for the first time in his second career start.

"They've got a good lineup over there," manager John Gibbons said. "He shut them down."

Biagini said he's been working on improving his changeup, and catcher Luke



Fred Thornhill/The Canadian Press via AP

Seattle Mariners starting pitcher Christian Bergman walks back up the mound after giving up a two-run home run to Toronto Blue Jays' Jose Bautista, rounding the bases at left, during the third inning of a baseball game in Toronto on Friday.

Maile suggested using it against Seattle.

"I try to make sure my arm speed is up on that pitch," Biagini said. "When it is, it looks a little bit more like a fastball. (Maile) hasn't seen me a lot but he definitely seemed to think it might be effective. Not all of them were but when I was disciplined on getting it down, that was important for me."

Aaron Loup got one out,

Danny Barnes and Ryan Tepera each worked 1 1/3 innings and Roberto Osuna finished.

A Rule 5 pick from San Francisco, Biagini made 60 relief appearances for Toronto in 2016, and had 15 more before sliding into the rotation at Tampa Bay last Sunday.

"He's fantastic, man, the things he's been able to do for the ball club the last two years," Travis said. "Being

able to step into the starting rotation, that's not easy, especially when you're not expecting it."

Seattle has lost two straight after winning the previous four. After scoring 21 total runs in consecutive victories over Philadelphia this week, the Mariners have scored two runs in back-to-back defeats to Toronto.

"As hot as we were with the bat in Philadelphia, we've been just as cold here

in Toronto," manager Scott Servais said.

Mariners right-hander Christian Bergman (0-1) allowed three runs and seven hits in five innings.

"I thought he hung in there fine," Servais said.

Travis opened the scoring with an RBI groundout in the second. Bautista homered in the third, his second in three games.

Bautista had one homer and seven RBIs in 25 games in April. He has three homers and seven RBIs in 11 games so far in May.

Travis made it 4-0 with a sacrifice fly off Jean Machi in the sixth.

Seattle put runners at second and third with one out in the third but couldn't score. Third baseman Darwin Barney knocked down Jean Seagura's grounder and got an out while keeping Taylor Motter at third, and left fielder Steve Pearce ended the inning with a full-length diving catch on Ben Gamel.

HOME RUN DERBY
Toronto has hit 17 homers in its past 11 games in May after hitting 22 in 25 April games.

WALK THIS WAY
Biagini has not walked a batter in any of his past 13 outings, covering 21 1/3 innings.

TRAINER'S ROOM
Mariners' RHP Felix Hernandez (shoulder) felt sore after playing catch twice last week and will back off his throwing program, manager Scott Servais said.

... 2B Robinson Cano (right quadriceps) was held out of the starting lineup for the second straight night but was able to take part in batting practice. Cano left Tuesday's win at Philadelphia after four innings with the same injury. ... RHP Steve Cishek (hip surgery) made his first rehab appearance at Triple-A Tacoma on Thursday, striking out two in a scoreless inning. He'll make at least one more appearance with Tacoma before being activated. ... OF Mitch Haniger (right oblique) will swing off a tee for the first time Saturday.

Blue Jays: SS Troy Tulowitzki (right hamstring) will begin a rehab assignment at Class-A Dunedin on Saturday and is expected to be activated next Wednesday in Atlanta. ... LHP J.A. Happ (elbow) is throwing up to 120 feet on flat ground and will try throwing off a mound next week. Happ remains approximately three weeks away from returning. ... Kendrys Morales (left hamstring) ran without pain during batting practice but did not start for the third straight game.

UP NEXT
Mariners: Seattle has yet to name a starter for Saturday.

Blue Jays: RHP Marcus Stroman (3-2, 3.38 ERA) pitched six shutout innings against Cleveland in his previous outing, winning for the first time in three starts. The Mariners are the only AL opponent Stroman has never faced.

NFL

Malik McDowell hops into new role with Seahawks

By CURTIS CRABTREE
Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — Malik McDowell was called "too unique" to pass up by Seattle Seahawks general manager John Schneider after the team selected him with the 35th pick in the NFL draft.

On their first day of rookie mini-camp Friday, the Seahawks began to explore the versatility of their newest defensive lineman.

The Seahawks envision a substantially different role for McDowell in Seattle than he had at Michigan State.

McDowell frequently lined up over the center as a nose tackle in the Spartans' 3-4 defense last year. With the Seahawks, he'll be playing more defensive end with the plan to move him inside as an interior rusher in passing situations.

"We'll play him a little more at defensive end," coach Pete Carroll said. "He played inside a lot, he was on the center a lot. He doesn't look like that kind of a player in our system to us."

The differences in roles was glaring even on the first

day of rookie camp.

"I'm playing a whole different position," McDowell said. "... Moving outside and going from taking double teams to taking single blocks here mostly."

"I like it," Schneider said following the selection that they've been seeking a player of McDowell's abilities since they first got to Seattle eight years ago.

"He's too unique," Schneider said. "We've been looking for a pass rushing 3-technique since we've

been here together."

McDowell — a prospect who was viewed as a possible first-round selection before his final year of college — as plagued by evaluations that panned his effort at times. McDowell did deal with ankle issues throughout season that ultimately brought his season to an end prematurely in November. However, it is an area the Seahawks have acknowledged was an issue.

"It's what it is," McDowell said. "No excuses for it. I was out there playing."

McDowell played primarily at defensive end

during his first day on the field with the Seahawks. Listed at 6-foot-6, 299 pounds, McDowell doesn't look nearly that big. He's lean and sleek and has the explosiveness to get around the edge and pressure the quarterback. During the practice, McDowell blew by sixth-round pick Justin Senior at left tackle for a would-be sack of tryout quarterback Michael Birdsong.

Carroll said that McDowell will probably put on 10-15 pounds over the next few years just naturally as he gets stronger.

The Seahawks will need to keep McDowell's focus dialed in to see the greatest potential reward from his selection, but Carroll was quite happy with the first impression.

"Instantly, almost, you could see how comfortable he is with his movements, his body control and stuff," Carroll said. "He's got an awareness already how to use his hands that I'm surprised to see with that background technically. They did a really nice job with him at Michigan State so he got off to a really nice start and he looks great."

NASCAR

Blaney takes Kansas pole as eleven fail to pass inspection

By DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Kan. — Ryan Blaney was all alone atop the leaderboard Friday during qualifying at Kansas Speedway.

He probably felt all alone on the track, too.

Blaney earned his first career NASCAR Cup pole for Saturday night's race, but only after traffic jams at inspection prevented 11 cars from getting on the track. Among the big names that failed to turn a lap were Jimmie Johnson, Dale Earnhardt Jr., Clint Bowyer and Kasey Kahne.

The left just 28 cars for Blaney to beat for the right to start up front.

"It feels really good. We got better and better each round and that's all you can ask for," he said. "It's so cool to sit on the pole. We've been working really hard at it. We've been getting close — qualifying hasn't been my best suit, but we've been getting better and better."

Joey Logano will start second and Martin Truex Jr. third, while drivers that failed to get through inspection will start at the back based on car owner points.

"This is just, wow. Super disappointing," Bowyer said. "You're off 10-thousandths of an inch? It's ridiculous. Most people can't even understand how little that is. I get it. If you're off, you're off, but I watched my guys move the car and adjust the car accordingly for it and then actually overcompensate on it because we were



AP Photo/Colin E. Braley

Driver Jimmie Johnson (48) pulls onto pit row during practice for the NASCAR Monster Cup auto race at Kansas Speedway in Kansas City, Kan., Friday.

worried about not making it. Then they wheel it back in and fail the exact same amount? Twice? That makes no sense. None."

NASCAR has been closely monitoring tech stations this season, resulting in several cases where numerous cars failed to take the track. But the 11 cars that sat parked in the garage at Kansas was the most this year, raising red flags at a time the sport is trying to keep and attract fans.

"The only thing I'm not too sure about is how so many cars cannot get through," said David Ragan, whose care also failed inspection. "Everybody is not trying to cheat on the same thing."

NASCAR changed qualifying tech procedures this year, which could be partly to blame for the trouble. Teams only go through a quick safety and fuel cell check prior to practice, though they can voluntarily go through any of the four technical

areas, so many don't know they're out of compliance until they're trying to get on the track for qualifying.

Teams are also required to go through the entire inspection process again if a car fails any of the stations, a time-consuming endeavor that has contributed to the long waits.

NASCAR vice president of competition Scott Miller said most of the trouble has been at the laser inspection, which is a significant performance metric and an area where teams push the limits.

"It's fairly disappointing that they can't present their cars to pass inspection," Miller said, adding that there are built-in tolerances that give teams some leeway. "They want to be right on the limit and 11 of them were over the limit."

Ricky Stenhouse Jr. qualified fourth after his first career win last weekend at Talladega, while Kyle Busch will start fifth and Kurt Busch sixth.

PGA

Oosthuizen, Stanley share lead at Players Championship

By DOUG FERGUSON
Associated Press

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, Fla. — Each birdie by Louis Oosthuizen and Kyle Stanley pushed them higher up the leaderboard, a little further away from those chasing them in The Players Championship.

And as Friday showed, every little bit helps.

Anirban Lahiri looked like a lock to at least make the cut until he hit three shots into the water on the 18th and took a 10. Jim Furyk celebrated his 47th birthday with a solid round that came undone with two shots into the water on the island-green 17th that caused him to take the weekend off.

J.B. Holmes was tied for the lead until bogeys on his last two holes.

Vijay Singh, the 54-year-old surprise of the tournament, poured in putts from everywhere until a three-putt on the 18th gave him a 68 and put him three behind.

"I don't think you can every get too comfortable out here," Stanley said after an eight-birdie round of 6-under 66, matching Oosthuizen for the best score of the second round and giving them a share of the lead at 9-under 135.

As conditions toughened at TPC Sawgrass, they played even better.

Dustin Johnson and Rory McIlroy scrapped it around Friday morning, Johnson making only one birdie for a 73 and McIlroy managing



Louis Oosthuizen, of South Africa, follows his shot from the sixth tee during the second round of The Players Championship golf tournament Friday, May 12, 2017, in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla.

AP Photo/Chris O'Meara

through nagging back pain for a 71. They were at even par and not too bothered. They were only five behind when they finished, and they could sense that because of steamy weather and swaying pines that nobody was going to get too far away from him.

"I'm going to have to play two really good rounds on the weekend," Johnson said.

Johnson and McIlroy at least are still in the game.

Jordan Spieth was headed home after missing the cut for the third straight year, yet he didn't sound terribly upset. He chalked that up to not being able to handle this strand of grass when it gets firm and crusty. Spieth's last hope ended with a tee shot that bounced at the back of the island-green 17th and into the water.

The cut was at 2-over 146,

and there will be another cut Saturday because more than 78 players advanced to the weekend. That's when the tournament will finally start to take shape, and while Oosthuizen and Stanley stood out with the best scores of the second round, both know it can change quickly.

"We're in a pretty good spot going into this weekend," said Oosthuizen, the 2010 British Open champion who still hasn't won in America. "A lot of golf to be played around this golf course, and as we've seen the last two days, you can easily make a mistake around this track."

Yes, there were plenty of those.

Along with Lahiri, the other big number belonged to Zac Blair. He hit three shots into the water on the par-3 17th and made a 9.