

Jays' Morrow loses no-hit bid in 9th

By The Associated Press

TORONTO -- Brandon Morrow wasn't about to hang his head after coming inches away from a no-hitter. The Blue Jays pitcher still tossed his first shutout — first complete game, in fact — and struck out a career-high 17 batters.

"Those things combined were more than enough to overcome the feeling of the missed no-hitter," said Morrow, who allowed only Evan Longoria's single with two outs in the ninth inning of a 1-0 victory over Tampa Bay on Sunday.

"That would have been a great feat, but I'll start at a complete-

game, one-hit shutout with 17 strikeouts."

Longoria said that Morrow deserved the no-hitter, with the way he was mixing a devastating breaking pitch and a mid-90s fastball to plow through the Rays' batting order.

"He was putting guys away better than anybody I've ever seen," Longoria said.

The three-game sweep was crippling for the Rays, who have lost a season-high five straight after briefly moving ahead of the New York Yankees in the AL East earlier in the week.

The crowd of 22,313 gave Morrow a standing ovation as he took the mound in the ninth.

Jason Bartlett flied out to center, Ben Zobrist walked on four pitches and Carl Crawford popped out to bring up Longoria, who took a shaky swing at a 1-1 pitch and hit a grounder the other way. Second baseman Aaron Hill scooted to his

left and made a dive as the ball took its third hop, and it fell out of his glove and trickled away as he hit the ground.

"He threw a four-seam fastball away that I fouled off and I saw him shake on the pitch that I got the base hit on, so I just kind of guessed fastball away again," Longoria said. "With the walk and the runner on, that four-hole was open and it just gave me enough room."

Official scorer Dave Perkins, a retired Toronto Star writer working just his third game, wasted no time in making the call.

"I won't lose any sleep over it. That's a base hit all the way," Perkins said.

A disconsolate Hill needed time to cool off before facing reporters.

"Did everything I could, couldn't come up with it," Hill said. "Wish I could have gotten an error or something for it. Unfortunately that's just the way it is."

Morrow was drifting toward first base, saw the ball get loose and sagged a bit, putting his hands on his thighs. He then recaptured himself and started toward third base to back up the play — quick thinking, considering the outcome of the game still hung in the balance.

Blue Jays manager Cito Gaston came to the mound but never seemed to consider lifting Morrow from the game. Instead, Morrow promptly stuck out Dan Johnson swinging to end it.

"Cito gave me that chance to calm myself and refocus and say, 'Hey, I still got a chance to throw a shutout and get a 1-0 win and a big division sweep,'" Morrow said.

Johnson said a nasty slider was Morrow's best pitch.

"He was throwing that slider at will. Either you were chasing it and if you weren't chasing it, he was throwing it for strikes," Johnson said. "He had real good action and it was coming out the same way his fastball was."

Morrow got a cooler of water dumped on him by celebrating teammates after one of the most dominating performances in the year of the pitcher. There have already been five no-hitters this season — including two perfect games — and three others broken up in the ninth inning.

Vernon Wells drove in the only run for Toronto before leaving with a dislocated toe, which happened when he made a leaping catch against the wall in the sixth inning to preserve Morrow's no-hit bid. Wells stayed down briefly before jogging slowly off the field.

X-rays did not reveal any fractures but Wells will undergo further tests Monday.

"We were running in and I could feel it wasn't in place anymore," Wells said. "I was hoping it would pop back in as I was running in but it didn't, so they told me I had to come out."

The Rays came close to being involved in their fourth no-hitter of the season, which would be a record for the modern era. Matt Garza threw the first no-hitter in Rays history against Detroit on July 26, and Tampa Bay was on the short end against Arizona's Edwin Jackson on June 26 and

Oakland's Dallas Braden on May 9, when he finished off a perfect game.

"I was beginning to think no-hitters were kind of commonplace," Longoria said. "It seems like we've been a part of and watched so many this year."

Dave Stieb threw the only Blue Jays no-hitter on Sept. 2, 1990, at Cleveland. The franchise record for strikeouts is 18, set by Roger Clemens against Kansas City on Aug. 25, 1998.

Morrow had retired 13 straight when plate umpire Jeff Kellogg ruled that he hit Bartlett with a pitch in the sixth. Gaston argued the call and the umpires finally said that the ball hit Bartlett's bat, sending him back to the plate. Rays manager Joe Maddon then argued with Kellogg and fellow umpire Larry Vanover, before Morrow struck out Bartlett swinging.

Maddon acknowledged that the delay might have disrupted Morrow's rhythm.

"It was in the back of my mind," Maddon said. "I thought the longer I stayed out there, he might make a mistake. He didn't do it."

The next batter, Zobrist, drove a ball to deep center, but Wells made his leaping catch that ultimately forced him out of the game. He was replaced by Travis Snider in the bottom half.

Johnson was the only Rays batter to reach base through the first eight innings, drawing a walk in the second and reaching on Overbay's fielding error in the seventh. Fans chanted "Error!" after the play and cheered when the scoring decision was posted.

Toronto got the only run it needed in the first, when Yunel Escobar walked and was running when Jose Bautista grounded to third. Escobar beat the return throw and slid in safe at third, then scored when Wells followed with a bloop single to shallow right.

Rays right-hander Andy Sonnanstine (2-1) was activated off the 15-day disabled list to make his first start of the season in place of Jeff Niemann, who was scratched with a sore right shoulder. Sonnanstine allowed three hits in 5 1-3 innings, walked three and struck out one.



Darren Calabrese/AP

Brandon Morrow throws a pitch in the ninth inning against the Tampa Bay Rays Sunday. Morrow took a no-hitter into the ninth inning, but lost it on a two-out single by Evan Longoria.

Cowboys top Bengals in preseason opener

By Barry Wilner

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CANTON, Ohio -- Terrell Owens chatted amiably with his former Cowboys teammates. Chad Ochocinco wore gold shoes for his few plays.

Otherwise, the Cincinnati Bengals barely were noticeable Sunday night as Dallas won 16-7 in the Hall of Fame game.

In a game that might have made Class of 2010 inductees Emmitt Smith and Jerry Rice wince, the offenses generally sputtered and there were eight sacks. Neither team could get going with the ball in a sloppy affair. Clearly, none of

the aura of the NFL's career leaders in rushing and receiving rubbed off.

At least some of Saturday's other inductees — the ones who played defense, Dick LeBeau, John Randle and Rickey Jackson — could appreciate the lack of scoring and the takeaways. Dallas picked off three passes and recovered a fumble; Cincinnati also recovered a fumble.

Nobody could be impressed by the slew of penalties, 16 overall, 12

by Cincinnati for 90 yards. Then again, it was the preseason opener.

The Cowboys hope this is the opening step, small as it was, toward becoming the first team to play in a Super Bowl in its home stadium. That goal will take months before it can be achieved, of course, and the most memorable item this weekend for them will remain Smith's entry into the Hall of Fame.

"Having Emmitt inducted into the Hall of Fame is special," All-Pro linebacker DeMarcus Ware said. "For us now playing for the Cowboys, it does make it extra special."

Most of the regulars worked

short shifts. At least the Cowboys' starters looked sharp during their minimal stints.

Tony Romo led them to the Cincinnati 2 with a steady opening drive before they stalled and David Buehler kicked a 20-yard field goal. Romo was 5 for 10 for 59 yards.

"You just have to continue to work on the things we've been doing through the offseason and in training camp," Romo said. "You're never sure until you get into a game-like mode, and some of the new stuff, it was nice to see it work out really well. It's a start. We have to build off of it, but we still have a ways to go, and we're on the way."

Dallas certainly needs better protection for its quarterbacks after Cincinnati had five sacks, including two by linebacker Michael Johnson.

The Bengals made plenty of offseason news with the additions of Owens and Pacman Jones, who was not signed by its previous off-field issues and missed the season.

Neither former Cowboy had much impact, although Owens caught two passes for 18 yards and was thrown to four times by Carson Palmer.

"We're a work in progress," Owens said. "We're getting there."

Spikes

From Page 6.

runners on base in the seventh and two more in the ninth. Curry, a recently selected New York-Penn League All-Star, left seven of his teammates on base, going 0-for-4 with two strikeouts.

The lone hit with a runner in scoring position was a seventh inning RBI single by center fielder Mel Rojas Jr. that scored third baseman Kelson Brown from third base.

Santos said he thinks the Spikes, himself included, might have been pressing at the plate.

"Sometimes we just try to do too much as opposed to just going up there and just playing ball and having fun," he said. "We just need to get back to that and we'll be all right."

The Valleycats (22-27) got out in front with two runs on three hits in

the first inning off Zac Fuesser. Tri-City increased its lead to 4-0 with a run each in the third and sixth innings.

Fuesser was tagged with the loss, going just 3.2 innings, which tied the shortest of any of his six starts, giving up three earned runs on seven hits.

Mitch Fienemann pitched three shutout innings of one-hit ball to close out the contest for State College.

The Spikes didn't get their first hit until there was one out in the fourth inning — a single to left field by Santos. They would go on to tally eight hits to Tri-City's 10, but failed to capitalize when it mattered.

"I know this is kind of uncharacteristic of us to have runners on and not get them in, and we know we have that capability and we just didn't get it tonight," designated hitter Cole White said.

"But once again, it's just another

game that we let kind of go, and we're going to move on and at midnight let it go and move on for the next day."

State College and Tri-City will play the rubber match of their three-game set at 7:05 tonight. Tyler Waldron is set to take the mound against Andrew Robinson. White said though it would be nice to end the six-game homestand with a victory, a loss wouldn't crush the team's chances at putting together another winning streak.

"On the road we play well and we can get on a streak then," White said. "We don't look at it like we have to win (tonight)."

"We're going to play hard, and we're going to go out there with our best stuff, but at the end of the day it's another game and we're just going to take them one at a time."

To e-mail reporter: jyk5142@psu.edu

Bullpen

From Page 6.

the season allowing eight runs in his first nine innings.

"No more passive pitching," Fienemann said. "We're going out there with a ferocious mindset and just trying to just blow bats out."

The bullpen kept the Spikes (25-25) in the game, but the offense didn't deliver, leaving 11 runners on base in the loss.

"Sometimes you don't get the runs that you're hoping for," Fienemann said.

"Then again, next week we'll probably give up six and they'll

hit us eight. It always turns around like that."

State College right fielder Adalberto Santos said he has been impressed with the bullpen all season.

"They've been doing great all year," Santos said.

"They come in, and whether we give them run support or they hold them for us to get back into the game. Today we didn't do that for them, but all year we helped each other out all year."

"Today they gave us a chance, and we never really broke through."

To e-mail reporter: jyk5142@psu.edu

Naeher

From Page 6.

making a lot of solid plays while also experiencing some mistakes that will help her grow as a player.

"She has the ability to make the special save," DiCicco said. "She has great athleticism, really good range and right now she is doing a very, very good job for us in goal. She is helping us win games."

While Naeher possesses great physical talents, DiCicco believes her personality also helps play into her role as goalkeeper.

DiCicco noted that Naeher is well liked and has a calm about her that transcends to the position of goalkeeper. He said that she is not a high strung person and that is a good quality to have as a goalkeeper.

While Naeher just recently became a starter and was not a 2010 WPS All-Star, her coach believes that being named to the

"She has the ability to make special saves. She is helping us win games"

Tony DiCicco
Boston Breakers Coach

team in future years is a good possibility.

If the Breakers continue to experience success this year and do well in the playoffs, DiCicco believes that Naeher should be in the running for Rookie of the Year.

DiCicco added that Naeher could transition her performance in WPS to the international level.

"Probably the next step for her is to get back on the women's national team and make a run for the 2011 World Cup and the 2012 Olympics," DiCicco said. "I think that she is very capable of doing that as well."

Poll

From Page 6.

Tide took the top spot and left No. 2 Ohio State with just four first-place votes.

Iowa and Wisconsin were the other Big Ten teams that helped round out the top-15, ranked No. 10 and No. 12, respectively.

Just because the Lions are set to face three top-10 preseason teams, Prato said it's too early to gauge whether or not the opponents will live up to their preseason rankings.

"What could start off as a tough schedule could turn out to be a real different schedule because at the end, the teams could be disappointing," Prato said.

Using the 2002 Penn State-Nebraska game as an example,

the then-No. 25 Lions beat the then-No. 7 Huskers 40-7.

But, the game's significance lessened once the Huskers lost six more times and finished the season 7-7.

The same could be said in 2007 with the Lions' 31-10 win against Notre Dame.

After finishing the 2006 season with a loss to LSU in the Sugar Bowl, the Irish opened the season with five consecutive losses en route to a 3-9 season.

A major reason for Notre Dame's struggles in 2007 is something the Lions hope to quickly conquer this season — an inexperienced quarterback.

Freshman Jimmy Clausen was named Notre Dame's starting quarterback the second week of the season, just before playing at Penn State.

Prato recalled several years where Penn State went through similar player transitions, and though the Lions looked like a tough preseason opponent, once the season started, "the lion became a kitten."

The uncertainty at quarterback and a reshuffled offensive line, coupled with a top-notch road schedule, are what make this season tougher to predict, Prato said. "Most people think that the problem with the schedule is that we don't have the team capable of matching that," Prato said.

"The team has too many questions and holes in it. On paper it seems like a lot of good players, but we lost a lot of people. I think that's the question with the schedule."

To e-mail reporter: aas5220@psu.edu