

Milton Bradley haunts ex-team with three-run homer in Seattle Mariners' 3-0 win over A's

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's have done their share of late-inning damage against teams this season.

But the tables were turned Tuesday night at Safeco Field, as former Athletic Milton Bradley crushed a three-run home run off Brad Ziegler to break a scoreless tie in the bottom of the eighth inning and give the Seattle Mariners a 3-0 win.

The A's, whose 6-2 record entering the day tied Minnesota for best in the American League, came into Tuesday having scored an AL-leading 43 runs. Twenty-two of those, or 51 percent, were scored in the seventh inning or later.

But a night after shutting out Seattle on two hits, the A's mustered just three hits of their own as the Mariners tied the three-game series going into tonight's finale.

They can thank the switch-hitting Bradley, who made headlines over the weekend when he flipped off fans at Rangers Ballpark.

He came to bat in the eighth mired in a 2-for-25 funk. After Jose Lopez singled and Mike Sweeney walked, Bradley hit a towering homer to right field on a 2-0 pitch from Ziegler, sending a charge through the crowd of 18,043.

"He's not going to hit .045 (forever)," A's manager Bob Geren said. " ... Milton was in a hitter's count and got a pitch to hit."

All three of Bradley's hits this season have come against Oakland. Two have been homers.

"I don't think it's a terrible matchup for me," Ziegler (0-2) said. "But when he's ahead 2-0 it's a bad spot to be in."

Ziegler allowed just two homers in 731/3 innings last season. But the right-handed submariner also allowed left-handers to hit .310. Before the game, Geren spoke of how Ziegler must command his entire repertoire of pitches to handle lefties.

That wasn't the case Tuesday, as Ziegler said he missed location on "about 90 percent" of his pitches.

Brett Anderson, in his second straight start against Seattle, delivered six shutout innings for the A's. But it was hardly smooth sailing for Anderson, who threw 107 pitches. Nonetheless, he became the first pitcher in Oakland history to not allow a run over his first two starts of the season (that counts only pitchers who began the season with the A's).

He also uncorked the first wild pitch of his major league career, which came in his 32nd start.

Anderson stranded runners in scoring position in four innings. He ended three of those innings with strikeouts, as he had the Mariners fooled with his slider all night.

But he was out-dueled by Seattle's Doug Fister (1-0), who went eight innings and allowed just the three hits with four strikeouts. The A's advanced just one runner as far as third base.

"He obviously overshadowed my performance," Anderson said of Fister. "He was unbelievable tonight. We didn't really have a chance."

A's catcher Kurt Suzuki turned in the defensive play of the game in the seventh.

With Chone Figgins on second with one out, Ziegler delivered a slider to Franklin Gutierrez that was about five feet outside. Suzuki caught the ball, spun around as his mask flew off and threw a strike to third to nail Figgins, who tried to advance on the play.

"I don't even know how he caught it," Ziegler said. "Then to have the wherewithal to get up and make the throw, it's incredible."

TODAY:

A's (Gio Gonzalez 1-0) at Mariners (Jason Vargas 0-1), 7:10 p.m. TV: CSNCA+. Radio: 860-AM; 1640-AM

A's update: Reliever Jerry Blevins starts to pay dividends

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Reliever Blevins is starting to pay dividends

SEATTLE — Ever since the A's acquired reliever Jerry Blevins from the Chicago Cubs in July 2007, they have spoken highly of his potential.

Now Blevins is showing signs he's ready to fulfill it.

Entering Tuesday's game against the Seattle Mariners, the left-hander had given up a run in just one of his five outings, spanning 42/3 innings.

And the fact that he's being used in the late innings of close games shows that manager Bob Geren has confidence in him.

"I love the opportunities I've been put in," Blevins said. "The skipper, the whole organization has faith that I can get the job done."

The A's planned for Blevins, 26, to be an integral part of last year's bullpen. But he was used just twice in the first nine games and struggled. He was optioned to Triple-A Sacramento and spent most of the season there.

Blevins was perplexed at the time, saying he didn't get enough work to stay sharp. But looking back, he holds himself accountable.

"I didn't show in spring training that I was ready to pitch," he said.

Blevins started throwing about two weeks earlier than normal this past offseason to build arm strength.

"I thought the whole spring, each outing he built on the last," Geren said. "His velocity kept going up and up, and he looks like he's where he needs to be."

Second baseman Mark Ellis missed his second straight game but said his strained left hamstring felt much better. He remains day-to-day.

Michael Wuertz (shoulder tendinitis) threw a 20-pitch session and Geren said the reliever might begin a rehab assignment within three days.

Reliever Joey Devine (forearm tendinitis) will face hitters very soon, but his return remains weeks away.

Some updates from the minors:

Third baseman Dallas McPherson had 10 RBIs through Sacramento's first five games to lead the Pacific Coast League.

Michael Ynoa, the highly touted Dominican right-hander signed in 2008, is participating in extended spring training after elbow trouble held him back last season. Ynoa, 18, is expected to report to either low Single-A Vancouver or the A's rookie league team.

Chin Music: Postgame notes from A's 3-0 loss to Mariners

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Milton Bradley has just three hits this season. Unfortunately for the A's, all three are against them and two have been for homers. His three-run shot off Brad Ziegler in the eighth inning tonight was the difference in a 3-0 Seattle Mariners win.

A few tidbits from the game:

–Michael Wuertz’s absence in the bullpen definitely is missed in a game like this. Ziegler hardly had his best stuff tonight. But manager Bob Geren stuck with him in the eighth, probably hoping Ziegler could deliver a double-play ball even as he was struggling with his command. Ziegler said he missed his location on about 90 percent of his pitches, and he doesn’t have a huge margin for error on these kinds of off-nights.

–It wasn’t your typical “Web Gem,” but that was a terrific play by catcher Kurt Suzuki in the seventh inning. He managed to catch a slider from Ziegler that was way outside, spun around and fired a strike to third base to nail Chone Figgins, who tried to advance from second on the play. Geren, a former catcher, raved about the play afterward. I’m not sure I’d go as far as saying that Suzuki is “revolutionizing” the position with athletic plays like that, as Geren put it. But it was really impressive.

–Ryan Sweeney singled in the fourth inning, extending his season-opening hitting streak to nine games.

That’s all for now ...

Chin Music: Michael Wuertz, Joey Devine recovering well; Mark Ellis still sidelined vs. Mariners

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

How many of you would have guessed that after eight games the A’s would lead the American League in runs (43) and lead the majors in ERA (2.61)? These stats won’t mean too much until we get at least a few weeks into the season, but pretty interesting to ponder nonetheless.

Are you putting much stock into this fast start? Still skeptical? Feel free to sound off ...

–Not much pregame news to report tonight. Relievers Michael Wuertz (shoulder) and Joey Devine (elbow) are both recovering well. Wuertz threw 20 pitches today with a batter standing in, and manager Bob Geren said it’s possible Wuertz begins a rehab assignment with Triple-A Sacramento in the next three days. If not, he’ll throw from the mound one more time with the big club before joining the River Cats.

Devine is just about ready to face hitters, but his return is still looking to be sometime in May.

Here’s your A’s lineup, minus Mark Ellis at second base as expected. Ellis said his left hamstring is feeling much better, but Geren said he won’t rush the veteran back into the lineup. Tomorrow’s game is still a question mark ...

A’s

Davis CF
Barton 1B
Sweeney RF
Kouzmanoff 3B
Suzuki C
Chavez DH
Rosales 2B
Buck LF
Pennington SS

Anderson LHP

Mariners

Ichiro RF
Figgins 2B
Gutierrez CF
Lopez 3B
Sweeney DH
Bradley LF
Kotchman 1B
Johnson C
Wilson

Bradley homer beats his old team

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Brett Anderson has mastered the Mariners in two starts, but his dominance didn't help the second-year left-hander get a victory Tuesday night.

Instead, onetime A's outfielder Milton Bradley emerged from his season-opening funk with his new Mariners club and belted a three-run homer off Brad Ziegler in the eighth, all Seattle needed in a 3-0 victory.

That ended Oakland's four-game winning streak against the Mariners, who have struggled to score runs all season, with 21 in eight games entering Tuesday. Seattle was hitting .212 going into the game, and Bradley - already a figure of controversy after making an obscene gesture at fans in Texas last week - came into the game with an .045 average, with one hit in 22 at-bats.

"He's not going to hit .045," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He's always hit, and he's going to get big hits."

In two starts this season, both against Seattle, Anderson has thrown 12 scoreless innings, allowing nine hits and three walks. In his first start, the A's scored six runs, four of them when Anderson was still the pitcher of record.

On Tuesday, his teammates could provide him with zip against Doug Fister, who was even better than Anderson, allowing only three hits in a career-high eight scoreless innings. The A's had only one man advance past first.

"He obviously overshadowed my performance," Anderson said. "It wasn't even close. He was pumping in first-pitch strikes. We didn't have a chance."

Anderson was nails, though. When the Mariners had men in scoring position, they went 0-for-6 with four strikeouts against Anderson.

"I had to bear down a little bit," said Anderson, whose slider was the strikeout pitch. "Every time I looked up, it was (runners at) first and third."

Craig Breslow replaced Anderson in the seventh, but left after allowing a one-out double to Chone Figgins, and Ziegler entered. Ziegler's pitch to Franklin Gutierrez sailed wide, and it took a sideways leap by catcher Kurt Suzuki to grab it.

By that time, Figgins, a speedster, was en route to third. Suzuki somehow regained his balance and zipped a throw to third, putting it right in Figgins' path as he slid into Kevin Kouzmanoff's glove.

"It was a really bad slider, I jerked the ball," Ziegler said. "I don't even know how he caught it and then to have the wherewithal to make the throw, I don't know how he did that."

"Kurt continues to do amazing things," Geren said. "Athletically, acrobatically, he's kind of revolutionizing that position."

Oakland remains in first place in the AL West; the A's have held that spot for seven days, their longest stretch in the past four seasons, since winning the AL West in 2006.

Anderson is the first pitcher in Oakland history to start the season with the team and not allow a run in his first two starts.

Ziegler's left-handed compliment

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Reliever **Brad Ziegler** had worked in four games entering Tuesday and had yet to allow an earned run, and batters were hitting .091 against the sidearmer.

One of Ziegler's primary goals this season is to improve against left-handed hitters, who had a .336 average against him last year. Going into the second game at Seattle, Ziegler had faced only four lefties, walking two and retiring two.

"More than anything, it's about mixing it up," Ziegler said. "Last year, it was fastball, fastball, fastball, all the time, and now I'm going with the offspeed stuff earlier so I'm not so predictable."

Ziegler has another project this year, a charitable foundation he has established called Pastime for Patriots, which will be officially announced May 8, Armed Forces Day at the Coliseum. Among other things, the charity will provide tickets to major-league games for families of military members serving overseas and service members recently returned from duty, along with a scholarship program for high school seniors who have had a parent killed in active duty.

A Web site for the foundation will be in place next month, but for now, Ziegler is providing information on his Twitter page, @bradziegler.

Briefly: Second baseman **Mark Ellis** said he felt much improved two days after incurring left hamstring tendinitis just above the back of his knee. He hopes to play tonight or Thursday evening. ... Reliever **Michael Wuertz** threw what manager **Bob Geren** called a "semi-simulated" 20-pitch inning. The session went well, and Wuertz could go on a rehab assignment in three days. ... **Trevor Cahill** (left shoulder) threw a full side session, 40-plus pitches, according to Geren, and he'll do that once more before also heading on a rehab assignment. It's more than likely that Cahill then will stay with Triple-A Sacramento.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle, 4/14/2010

TV shift: Because of the Sharks' playoff games, the A's games tonight, Friday and Tuesday will move to CSN Plus, which is Comcast Channel 410, DirecTV 699, AT&T U-verse 768 and, on Dish Network, 474 tonight, 451 on Friday and 473 on Tuesday.

BOBBY CROSBY

2004 top rookie returns to Bay Area

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer 4/14/2010

the 10-year history of the Giants' ballpark, one oversized locker in the visiting clubhouse has been reserved for superstar hitters or players who have been around a long time: Albert Pujols, Ken Griffey Jr., Alex Rodriguez, Ichiro Suzuki, Derek Jeter, Jason Giambi, Nomar Garciaparra.

On Tuesday, that locker belonged to Bobby Crosby.

"On this team, I'm old," said Crosby, a onetime A's golden boy who turned 30 in January, a month after signing a free-agent deal with the Pirates.

Like much of last season in Oakland, Crosby is a backup infielder, but he's far more enthusiastic about his current role. He joined the Pirates knowing their infield was virtually set, but he's in the mix at shortstop, which he still considers his No. 1 position despite starting only two games there last year.

"I had a good feeling about coming here," Crosby said. "It's a good opportunity."

Crosby was the American League's top rookie in 2004, but he topped 100 games just once more. Injuries cost him time, as did his low batting average. By last season, he was a role player, appearing at five positions.

"I enjoyed myself in Oakland. They drafted me and gave me my chance to start every day in the big leagues," said Crosby, who admitted he was bothered by the diminished playing time, especially at shortstop. "Was I happy about it? No. Do I harbor any bad feelings? No. I have a lot of respect for Billy Beane and guys over there. You move on.

"All I can say is, I'm a lot happier at this point than last year."

Crosby has one start at short (2-for-4 at Dodger Stadium) as Ronny Cedeño's backup and entered at third on Sunday (two-run homer off Arizona's Bobby Howry). Crosby struck out as a pinch hitter in the ninth inning Tuesday night.

Crosby figured the end was near in Oakland before last season when the A's pursued shortstop Rafael Furcal and signed Orlando Cabrera. When Cabrera was dealt, Cliff Pennington became the starter.

"They've got talent," Crosby said of this year's A's. "I hope those guys do well and stay in first place."

Ziegler's command issues cost A's

Righty gives up three-run shot in eighth as Mariners prevail

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- When Brad Ziegler entered Tuesday's game against the Mariners, he made it no secret he was laboring with a rare lack of command.

Perhaps even less of a secret, though, was Milton Bradley's offensive struggles coming into his eighth-inning at-bat against the A's righty with runners on first and second in a scoreless contest.

Bradley, who carried with him a 2-for-25 funk to the plate, recently met with Seattle manager Don Wakamatsu to relay a sense of pressure he felt to guide a rather lackluster lineup.

Needless to say, the 18,000-plus fans in attendance knew he was due. Ziegler knew, too, so he went to throw him a fastball away.

Instead, the right-handed reliever watched it go down and in before being launched over the right-field wall, resulting in a 3-0 Mariners victory over the A's, who snapped a three-game winning streak.

"The biggest mistake was going 2-0 in that situation," explained Ziegler, who moved to 0-2 on the season. "I don't think it's a terrible matchup for me, but when he's ahead in the count, it's a really bad spot for me to be in."

Following a quick two outs in the seventh, the pitcher opened eighth by surrendering a base hit to Jose Lopez and a walk to Mike Sweeney.

"Giving up the hit to Lopez, I can tolerate that," he said. "But there's no excuse to walk Sweeney right after that. It's a good situation to get a guy who has an injury past and doesn't run well to get a double-play ball, but the fact that I couldn't even put the ball in play is pretty terrible.

"About 90 percent of the pitches I threw tonight were not where I wanted. I was working behind hitters. ... I don't know. It was just one of those nights I didn't have good command. I tried to go away on lefties and would throw it in, and I tried to go in on righties, but I'd go too far in."

As a result, A's starter Brett Anderson's six-inning shutout performance went for naught. The lefty gave up just six hits and walked two while fanning six in the no-decision. In the process, he became the first pitcher in Oakland history, among those who started the year with the A's, to not allow a run in his first two starts.

"Brett was pretty sharp," manager Bob Geren said. "I thought he had an outstanding breaking ball. They did get a couple hits off him, but each time he got in a jam, he got out of them. Obviously, to give up zero runs makes it an understatement to say he pitched well enough to win."

In his last six starts, Anderson is 4-1 with a 1.01 ERA and 35 strikeouts. He found himself out of several jams on Tuesday thanks to a reliable go-to slider, but he also found himself rather fatigued in the sixth, when he walked two, hit a batter and recorded a wild pitch -- the first of his career.

"I thought I did a good job of getting outs when I needed to and picking up key strikeouts in key situations," said Anderson, who threw 107 pitches. "Obviously, it was a little more of a grind than the last time I faced them, but you kind of expect that when you're facing the same team in your first two starts. They did a good job battling and getting my pitch count up."

Seattle starter Doug Fister matched Anderson inning for inning, but he did the A's lefty two better as a result of keeping his pitch count down. The right-hander improved to 1-1 on the season after limiting Oakland to just three hits and no walks while striking out four.

"He obviously overshadowed my performance. It wasn't even close," Anderson said. "He was unbelievable tonight. We really didn't have a chance."

Added Geren: "I haven't seen Fister a lot, but that was, by far, the best I've seen him. Hitters just seemed to say they didn't get much to hit. He used all of his pitches effectively."

Tuesday's affair marked the first time this season the A's didn't score a run. They entered the game ranking second in the Majors in runs scored with 43. However, it was the fifth time they had been shut out at Safeco Field, where they've lost 13 of their last 15 games played.

Suzuki's amazing play not lost in defeat

Athletics catcher adds to highlight reel in loss to Mariners

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

SEATTLE -- Despite wanting to quickly put to rest a rather dull offensive night that led to Tuesday's 3-0 loss, the A's couldn't easily forget a play made by catcher Kurt Suzuki in the seventh inning that brought to mind Oakland's ongoing string of impressive defensive ways.

With one out and the Mariners' Chone Figgins on second base, A's reliever Brad Ziegler threw a wide pitch to Suzuki, who flashed quick instincts while lunging at the ball before recovering to toss out Figgins at third.

"It was a really bad slider," Ziegler said. "I just jerked it real bad, and I don't even know how he caught it, then to have the wherewithal to get up and make the throw is incredible."

Oakland third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff planted himself perfectly at the bag in anticipation of the throw, which barely arrived in time to get the speedy Figgins.

"From my angle, I don't think there's another catcher in baseball who makes that play," manager Bob Geren said. "He literally dove for a ball that, 99 percent out of the time, is going toward the backstop. And then he recovered to throw a perfect strike to get Figgins. That was flat-out amazing.

"If we win the game, that was the game-winning play. But we didn't score any runs, so I don't know if you see that play in a highlight film or not, but it certainly should be."

The gem came just five days after Suzuki recorded an equally flashy out against the Mariners in Oakland, where the A's catcher chased a foul ball hit high in the air off the bat of Jose Lopez into the visiting dugout, landing on the steps with the ball in his glove.

"He continues to do amazing things athletically, acrobatically," Geren said. "He's revolutionizing that position. Guys don't do that. He's athletic as a catcher can get. It's really fun to watch."

Vargas looks to keep Mariners rolling

By Rhett Bollinger / MLB.com

After starting out the season with a 2-6 record, Mariners manager Don Wakamatsu called his first team meeting of the year before Tuesday's game.

The goal of the meeting was take some of the pressure off the club, which many expected to be a top contender in the American League West.

The meeting apparently worked, as the Mariners topped the American League West-leading A's, 3-0, on Tuesday, and they'll look to keep rolling with Jason Vargas on the mound against fellow left-hander Gio Gonzalez in Wednesday's series finale at Safeco Field.

"Basically, what we talked about is that I do feel everybody is putting a lot of pressure on themselves right now," Wakamatsu said. "Once you come in and fail to reach the expectations in the first eight games, people start to press a bit."

Vargas might have been guilty of pressing in his first start of the season. He entered his outing against the Rangers on Friday with his club riding a three-game losing streak. Vargas allowed five runs over 5 1/3 innings to get pegged with the loss.

But Vargas was actually sharp for the first five innings, allowing three singles aside from a Nelson Cruz home run while striking out four. In the sixth, however, it unraveled when he allowed four runs, so it'll be a key for him on Wednesday to maintain his stuff late into the game.

"Vargas looked pretty sharp for five innings," Wakamatsu said. "Then he left a couple of changeups up in the zone."

Gonzalez, meanwhile, was solid in his first outing of the season against the Angels on Friday, tossing six innings and allowing just two runs on six hits along with six strikeouts. The key was his control, as he walked just one batter.

"I felt like I was pounding the strike zone," Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez has also fared well against the Mariners in five career appearances, compiling a 1-1 record and a 3.96 ERA. He has also tallied 22 strikeouts and 13 walks through 25 innings against Seattle.

A's: The Oakland offense could receive a boost on Wednesday with the return of second baseman Mark Ellis, who strained his left hamstring during Sunday's game against the Angels. Ellis has been off to a hot start this season, recording a .345 batting average.

"I'll check with him [Wednesday]," manager Bob Geren said, "but he could be back in there. You want to be cautious, but the good news is that he's feeling better."

Mariners: Left-hander Cliff Lee, who is currently on the 15-day disabled list, is scheduled to have his appeal of a five-game suspension heard during a conference call on Wednesday morning. Lee was suspended after throwing over the head of D-backs catcher Chris Snyder on March 15 and has to serve his suspension while on the active list. Meanwhile, Lee had another pain-free bullpen session on Tuesday and is on track join the team in early May.

"It was outstanding," Wakamatsu said. "He was supposed to throw between 50-55 pitches, and he ended up throwing 63. We are going to look at the sim game scheduled for two to three innings and maybe see if we can bump it up to three or four innings because he feels so good.

Worth noting: Geren said on Tuesday that A's right-hander Joey Devine, rehabbing from the Tommy John surgery he underwent last year, "jumped ahead of his throwing program." Devine has been throwing bullpen sessions every couple of days in extended Spring Training on a program designed by bullpen coach Ron Romanick. The next step for the reliever will be facing hitters, which he'll hopefully do within the next week. ... Josh Outman -- also recovering from Tommy John surgery -- has suffered no setbacks and is still scheduled to rejoin the A's midseason. ... Mariners left-hander Erik Bedard continues to show positive signs. He played catch on Tuesday, will play long-toss on Wednesday and will throw a 60-pitch bullpen on Friday. Late May still appears to be the earliest Bedard could join the starting rotation, though no decision has been made.

Ellis on the mend

A's infielder may return Wednesday

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 4/14/2010

SEATTLE -- Mark Ellis brought a dose of positive news to an already wealthy 6-2 A's team on Tuesday in the form of a much improved left hamstring, which will likely sideline the second baseman just one more day.

"I'll check with him tomorrow," manager Bob Geren said, "but he could be back in there. You want to be cautious, but the good news is that he's feeling better."

Before the A's took on Seattle in the second of a three-game road set, Ellis proved he's on the mend by playing catch and taking batting practice at Safeco Field.

The A's infielder, who was slotted in the designated hitter's spot on Sunday afternoon against the Angels, suffered the hamstring injury in the eighth inning while running to first on a ground ball to third that resulted in a Brandon Wood throwing error. Ellis stayed in the game and reached base in the ninth on a single to left field but was immediately relieved by pinch-runner Travis Buck.

The 32-year-old Ellis, who experienced hamstring tightness for a handful of days during Spring Training, entered Tuesday's game against the host Mariners with the club's second-highest batting average (.345, behind Daric Barton's .348).

Adam Rosales has been fulfilling second-base duties while Ellis recovers. The A's backup infielder, acquired via trade from the Reds this offseason, hasn't missed a beat in Ellis' stead. In five games, Rosales has racked up three hits in five at-bats.

"I know my role with this club," Rosales said, "and I don't mind rooting on my teammates while waiting for my opportunity. But while I'm out there, hopefully I can contribute any way I can."

Cahill, Wuertz close to rehab

SEATTLE -- A pair of rehabbing Oakland pitchers could be hitting the road soon.

That's good news for the A's, who will soon ship right-handers Trevor Cahill (neck) and Michael Wuertz (shoulder) off to Minor League teams to make rehab appearances.

Wuertz, who appeared in just two spring games before being placed on the disabled list on April 3 with shoulder tendinitis, threw what manager Bob Geren deemed a "semi-simulated game" on Tuesday.

Wuertz went through a normal pregame routine, warming up as if he was going in a game and tossing eight warmup pitches before throwing a 20-pitch inning with A's pitching coach Curt Young standing in an invisible batter's box.

"It was as close as he can get to what it will actually be like when he returns," Geren said.

All reports came back positive, so Wuertz could potentially begin his Minor League stint as soon as Friday. Whether he'll undergo one more bullpen session before taking on the assignment, though, will be a decision made "in the next 24 to 36 hours," the A's skipper said.

Meanwhile, Cahill threw a full side session on Tuesday, racking up 40-plus pitches before the A's took on the Mariners. Geren said the young righty will likely throw one more bullpen before tackling a rehab assignment.

Cahill, who was determined to have a left scapula stress reaction just two days before Opening Day, made 32 starts as a rookie last season and was expected to have the edge for the fifth spot in the rotation entering camp. However, his injury -- coupled with a strong showing from Gio Gonzalez -- led the A's to go with Gonzalez.

It is unclear where Cahill will slide into the A's picture once given a clean bill of health. Entering Tuesday's contest, Oakland's rotation boasted a 4-0 record with a 2.94 ERA, good for second in the American League.

Pennington producing from nine-hole

SEATTLE -- Despite the surprise surrounding Cliff Pennington's current position as the A's home run leader, the Oakland shortstop says it's not the first time he's ever topped a team in the long-ball category.

"Back in college, I was the first one to hit a home run one year," Pennington said on Tuesday, "so I led the team in homers for a few days.

That being said, Pennington doesn't expect to wear the crown much longer in Oakland. He's already halfway to the home run total (4) he compiled in 96 games entering the season, but the switch-hitter is actually hoping to improve his swing in the coming days.

"I really haven't felt as good at the plate as I'd like," he said. "The last two hits I've had were homers, but other than that, I haven't really been doing much."

Pennington, who has started each of the A's eight games at shortstop and batting ninth, entered Tuesday's contest with a .269 mark while hitting from the left side of the plate the majority of the time. He's also reached base safely via a hit or walk in seven of those games.

"It's important for me to get on base because I'm the one turning it over to the top," he said. "Once the game gets going, it really doesn't matter where you are in the order, but I feel I need to be productive every at-bat."

Rookie Ross gets pranked

SEATTLE -- It took three days for Tyson Ross to make his Major League debut. Seven to notch his first career save. And just eight for the A's pitcher to fall victim to a rookie prank.

The newest member of Oakland's relief corps received quite the big league welcome on Sunday night while dining at Seattle's Benihana Japanese restaurant with more than a dozen teammates.

"We finished dinner," Ross explained, "and all of a sudden I realized that I was supposed to be picking up the tab because they had my card on top. I was looking around, trying to count how many people were at the table to guess how much it was going to be. I didn't think I had enough in my bank account."

Only a few minutes passed, though, before Coco Crisp gave him a pat on the back and let it be known he was off the hook.

"We had him good," said a smiling Rajai Davis. "Real good."

Worth noting

A's manager Bob Geren said on Tuesday that right-hander Joey Devine, rehabbing from the Tommy John surgery he underwent last year, "jumped ahead of his throwing program." Devine has been throwing bullpen sessions every couple of days in extended Spring Training on a program designed by bullpen coach Ron Romanick. The next step for the reliever will be facing hitters, which he'll hopefully do within the next week. ... Meanwhile, Josh Outman -- also recovering from Tommy John surgery -- has suffered no setbacks and is still scheduled to rejoin the team midseason. ... Daric Barton has reached base safely via hit or walk in all nine games. ... Ryan Sweeney is the only Oakland player to garner a hit in all nine games. ... Right-hander Vin Mazzaro has yet to allow a run in 10 1/3 innings of work for Triple-A Sacramento. He threw six innings of five-hit ball in the River Cats' 2-0 win over Tacoma on Tuesday. In the same game, first-base prospect Chris Carter went 2-for-4 with a double.

A's shut out in Seattle

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEATTLE — Milton Bradley got a much-needed boost for himself and the Seattle Mariners with one big swing Tuesday night.

Bradley hit a three-run homer in the eighth inning to power Seattle to a 3-0 victory over the Oakland Athletics.

Doug Fister (1-1) threw eight crisp innings for the Mariners, allowing three hits and walking one. It was the longest outing in the majors for the 26-year-old right-hander, who began last season as a Double-A reliever.

Jose Lopez started the decisive rally with his third hit. Then Brad Ziegler (0-2) walked Mike Sweeney. After showing bunt on the first pitch, Bradley golfed a low pitch five rows into the right-field bleachers.

Bradley began the day in a 1-for-22 rut. He was demoted from fourth to sixth in the batting order a few days earlier and had a sit-down with manager Don Wakamatsu. The mercurial slugger also flipped off heckling fans from the outfield during the fourth inning at Texas on Friday night.

As he stepped on home plate following his third homer of the season, Bradley raised both hands above his head. He pressed his palms together and jabbed them toward the sky.

David Aardsma finished the three-hitter for his third save in three chances, pushing the Mariners to 3-6 after they began the season with playoff expectations.

Brett Anderson struck out six in six innings for Oakland, allowing six hits and walking two. He hasn't allowed a run in 12 innings over two starts this season, both against Seattle.

The Mariners squandered a handful of scoring chances before Bradley came through against one of his seven former teams and ended Seattle's streak of 20 scoreless innings.

Seattle had two on and one out in the fourth after getting a double from Bradley, who went 2 for 4 to raise his average to .115.

But Anderson struck out Casey Kotchman on a slider low and away and Rob Johnson on a full-count pitch low and inside. Johnson was yelling at himself as he was swinging at the pitch out of the strike zone.

The Mariners also put runners in scoring position in the fifth, sixth and seventh, and came away with nothing each time.

Lopez struck out swinging with runners on the corners to end the fifth, and Jack Wilson bounced into a fielder's choice with men on first and second to finish the sixth. Chone Figgins hit a one-out double in the seventh and was thrown out trying to steal third on a nice play by catcher Kurt Suzuki.

NOTES: Mariners pitching coach Rick Adair said LHP Cliff Lee (strained abdomen) looked great during a 63-pitch bullpen session.

The 2008 AL Cy Young Award winner is expected to make his season debut May 1 or 2, pending Wednesday's hearing on his appeal of a five-game suspension for throwing over the head of Arizona's Chris Snyder in a spring game. ... A's manager Bob Geren said he was hopeful 2B Mark Ellis would play Wednesday. Ellis missed the first two games of the series with a hamstring strain from Sunday's game at the Los Angeles Angels.