

A's News Clips, Monday, April 19, 2010

A's update: Team set to enjoy rare day off

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

Team set to enjoy rare day off with Yankees on deck

At least before Sunday's rough afternoon against Baltimore, the A's were of a mind that 14 consecutive days of ballgames wasn't such a bad thing.

"We're playing well," said manager Bob Geren. "Sometimes when you're playing well it's nice not to have a day off. ... Just keep in the rhythm of playing."

That rhythm soured a bit by an 8-3 defeat, perhaps the A's will savor that first off day of the year today a little more, especially with the world champion New York Yankees coming into town Tuesday. Their 14-day run has been the longest stretch to open the season of any major league team, and the longest for Oakland since 1991.

"I'm going to spend time with my wife, since I don't get much time to do that with her at this time of year," said catcher Kurt Suzuki. "Then I'm going to do a whole lot of nothing."

"When you're going good, you do like to play every day," said outfielder Rajai Davis, one of four A's players who has appeared in every game. "But it helps with the body to have a day off and not think about baseball if you don't want to."

First baseman Daric Barton, third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff and shortstop Cliff Pennington also have played in every game, although Barton left Sunday's game with an elbow contusion after being hit by a Brian Matusz pitch in the fourth inning. Suzuki and Ryan Sweeney have played in all but one game.

"There are a few guys who definitely could use this," Geren admitted.

Second baseman Mark Ellis, who has missed the past seven games with a sore left hamstring, has targeted Tuesday night as his return date, but Geren noted, "That's definitely not in stone. That's what he's hoping for."

Right-handed reliever Michael Wuertz, on the disabled list with shoulder tendinitis, made his second rehab appearance with the Sacramento River Cats on Sunday and pitched a scoreless inning, although he gave up two hits and a walk while throwing 23 pitches.

The A's haven't decided when Wuertz will be activated to the major league roster.

Oakland A's take their lumps in 8-3 loss to Baltimore Orioles

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

It might have been tolerable for the A's had Brett Anderson been the only guy to take a bit of a beating against the Baltimore Orioles on Sunday.

Unfortunately, the host A's took a few more lumps than the stat line of their young ace left-hander in an 8-3 defeat at the Coliseum, and it remains to be seen just how severe the damage will be on the eve of the New York Yankees rolling into town Tuesday.

First baseman Daric Barton, shortstop Cliff Pennington and outfielder Ryan Sweeney all suffered physical nicks in the defeat, and while Pennington and Sweeney should be OK to face the 2009 World Series champs, the verdict is still out on Barton.

Barton was drilled in the right elbow by a pitch from Orioles starter Brian Matusz in the fourth inning and had to leave the game. Both Barton and Pennington, who was spiked on his right hand and wrist, had X-rays taken and while Pennington's were negative, Barton's were inconclusive due to the severe swelling around his elbow joint. He is scheduled for an MRI today.

The A's, still off to their best start since 1992 at 9-5 and leading the AL West, hardly need any more injuries. They already started the season with six players on the disabled list, and second baseman Mark Ellis has missed the past seven games with a sore left hamstring. They want a fair chance at showing what they can do against the Yankees, as well as everybody else.

"We're playing well, everybody's having fun and we're coming together nicely as a team," said catcher Kurt Suzuki.

So hold your breath. The A's, who had won six straight at home before Sunday, can deal with this latest result after taking three of four from Baltimore. They just don't want any residual setbacks in the training room.

The series finale offered a much-anticipated matchup between two of the best young left-handers in the game. Both 22 years old and 11 days apart in age, Anderson had opened the season with 12 consecutive scoreless innings, and Matusz, the fourth overall pick in the 2008 draft, had the only Orioles victory in their nightmarish 1-11 start.

Things started well for both pitchers. Anderson retired the first eight he faced, and Matusz gave up a scratch two-out single in his first two innings. But the Orioles struck for three runs with four straight hits in the third inning, added another run in the fourth and two more in the fifth against Anderson, making his first start after signing a four-year, \$12.5 million contract extension this week. He was gone after the fifth.

Suzuki maintained Anderson really didn't pitch poorly.

"They (the Orioles) were aggressive, they were swinging early in the counts," said Suzuki. "It wasn't as easy as it looked off Brett, but they did a good job of hitting. Sometimes you just tip your hat and move on."

Baltimore manager Dave Trembley lauded both pitchers but was elated that his man came out on top. Matusz pitched 61/3 innings, surrendering three runs on eight hits to get the Orioles off their nine-game skid.

"It's nice for the game that two young guys like that are in the big leagues pitching against each other," Trembley said. "It's good for both franchises and the fans of those franchises. But the predicament we've been in lately, it's important to get 'em against anybody. We've been facing Sandy Koufax and Don Drysdale ever since the start of the season. They've been reincarnated every time we've played."

The lone real highlight for the A's, who committed two errors as well as a costly baserunning blunder by Rajai Davis that erased a seventh-inning rally, was a brilliant over-the-shoulder diving catch in the ninth by right fielder Sweeney, who earlier had extended his hitting streak to 13 games.

But even Sweeney paid a price, scraping his chest and his right forearm and cutting his palm on some gravel.

"Every time I dive something happens," he said. "But I'll just wear something over it and it'll be fine."

Stay tuned, however, on Barton.

ORIOLES 8, A'S 3

A's and pains - Oakland has lots of dings after loss

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Brett Anderson's week was going so well. He had a 12-inning scoreless streak to start the season, and then the 22-year-old signed a multiyear contract that will pay him at least \$12.5 million and potentially as much as \$31 million.

On Sunday, Anderson's scoreless streak came to an end when he allowed three runs - all with two outs - in the third inning of Oakland's eventual 8-3 loss to the Orioles at the Coliseum. Anderson allowed six runs, five earned, in five innings, his worst outing since Aug. 14, and he said his slider was terrible.

"It was kind of the perfect storm," Anderson said. "I had the scoreless streak going, I just signed the contract and the Orioles are not off to the best start. I don't know if I was destined for failure or not, but that was not my best day."

While Anderson's ERA was bruised a bit, the A's also had some other more potentially problematic dings and dents. Daric Barton left the game with a contusion above his right elbow after being hit by a pitch from Baltimore's Brian Matusz in the fourth inning, and shortstop Cliff Pennington left four innings after diving back to first base and getting his right wrist stepped on.

X-rays on Barton's elbow were inconclusive and he'll get an MRI today; X-rays on Pennington's wrist were negative.

Should either player miss any time, the A's would have to consider using the disabled list Tuesday - second baseman Mark Ellis is already on the bench, nursing hamstring tendinitis, and while it's hoped he'll be back Tuesday against the Yankees, that's not a given, and Oakland certainly can't have two or three unavailable position players on the bench. Ellis said after Sunday's game that he believes he'll be ready to go.

Even some of the A's non-X-rayed players had some painful moments Sunday. Anderson stuck his left hand out for a ball off Ty Wigginton's bat in the first, knocking it to second baseman Adam Rosales for the out. Anderson said his hand is fine and the play had nothing to do with his poor outing, but he said, "It was probably not very smart."

Then there was Ryan Sweeney, who extended his major-league best hitting streak to 13 games with an infield single in the seventh and topped that with a tremendous catch on the warning track in the ninth - he raced back for a drive by Justin Turner and caught the ball over his shoulder while leaving his feet. He slammed onto the dirt, and he wound up with injuries to the palm of his left hand and his right forearm. He said rocks ripped up his hand, and the slide tore open his arm. Sweeney was wearing bandages on both, but he said he won't miss any time.

"With all the guys getting hit and getting hurt today, it's not a bad time for us to have a day off," said Anderson, who added that several of the A's are also coming down with a cold.

Fleet Davis gets caught off the bag

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Rajai Davis leads the majors in steals with seven, he's perfect on his stolen base attempts, and his aggressiveness on the bases has helped the A's get off to their best start in nearly two decades.

On Sunday, though, Davis was nabbed rounding second base too far on **Ryan Sweeney's** infield single to short, and he was easily thrown out. The A's already had scored one run in the inning on a sacrifice fly by **Eric Chavez**, but instead of two on and two outs, Davis' blunder ended the inning.

"Just a mistake," Davis said. "You can't make those mistakes down three runs, but it happens, and I have a whole day (off) to think about it. I can learn from it."

Chavez at first, etc.: With **Daric Barton** leaving after getting hit by a pitch, Chavez wound up at first base for the first time this season.

In the ninth, **Cesar Izturis** doubled down the first-base line and Chavez dived but couldn't come up with it - and both he and pitcher **Chad Gaudin** thought the ball was foul. "I was in foul territory when I dove," Chavez said.

Gaudin looked for a replay after the game, but there wasn't one. Two batters later, **Ty Wigginton** homered to left on a 3-2 slider from Gaudin, who was kicking himself for not throwing a fastball.

Briefly: **Gio Gonzalez** said his girlfriend, **Valerie Mathias**, continues to improve from a serious car accident, but she is scheduled for surgery today to address some issues she's having with blurry vision. ... **Michael Wuertz** threw another scoreless inning at Triple-A Sacramento, allowing two hits and a walk and striking out one. ... **Vin Mazzaro**, who didn't give up a run his first two times out at Triple-A Sacramento, allowed six runs, four earned, in four innings against Reno on Sunday. ... **Jack Cust** is batting .179 with no RBIs at Sacramento.

Bay Area baseball is back ... so far

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

It has been a while since interleague games between the Giants and A's were highly anticipated and legitimately meaningful for both sides of the bay. Could this year be different?

Two weeks into the season, despite the long odds and pessimistic prognosticating, the Bay Area is the hotbed of big-league baseball, Sunday's losses notwithstanding.

This is the latest in a season that both teams have been in first place since July 22, 2006. That year, the A's went on to the American League Championship Series. The Giants went on to lose nine straight and finish 11 1/2 games out of first place.

Either could happen again, for either team. For now, both appear to be a must-see, playing the game right (for the most part) and winning with a common formula based on tons of pitching and just enough hitting. Oakland's defense is well above average, and the Giants' isn't as bad as advertised.

While the Yankees are the only club in the three other two-team markets with a winning record, the Bay Area - with one team owning the lowest payroll in its league and the other without a championship in 56 years - has two division leaders and a dream it'll last.

Of course, it helps that the Dodgers and Angels aren't playing like defending division champs and the Rockies aren't playing .638 ball as they did last year under Jim Tracy and the Mariners aren't paying off as the sabermetricians' trendy pick.

Yet, anyway.

We'll know more shortly. In a nine-day stretch beginning Tuesday, the Yankees play in Oakland and the Cardinals and Phillies are in San Francisco.

Before Sunday, the A's hadn't started so hot since 1992, the Giants since 2003, and new guys are making a difference. Consider the impact of Ben Sheets on the A's young pitching staff and the impact of Aubrey Huff and Mark DeRosa on the Giants' lineup - even though Huff might run slower on inside-the-park homers than Adam Rosales on conventional homers.

We'll see if they can keep going until May 21, their first interleague meeting.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Slick: Second baseman Adam Rosales backhanded a grounder up the middle by Nolan Reimold and made a perfect jump throw to first. "I got rid of it as quick as I could," said Rosales, who practices the move.

Quick update from A's/O's pregame

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum

Not much happening in A's land this morning, although Michael Wuertz will be throwing an inning for Triple-A Sacramento today, potentially his last rehab outing before returning to the A's. (Vin Mazzaro, who hasn't allowed a run in two starts for the River Cats, also will be on the mound at Sacramento today).

Here's the lineup: Davis CF, Barton 1B, Sweeney RF, Kouzmanoff 3B, Suzuki C, Fox DH, Rosales 2B, Buck LF, Pennington SS, Anderson P. This is Anderson's first start since signing his new deal.

Mark Ellis is still hoping to be back in the A's lineup on Tuesday.

As expected, Baltimore third baseman Miguel Tejada is out today with a groin strain.

UPDATE: Baltimore reporters tell me the Orioles are now calling Tejada's injury a hip abductor strain. He is still only expected to miss a few games.

Anderson handed first loss by Orioles

Hurler struggles after extending shutout streak to 14 frames

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Oh, how the tables can turn.

A four-game sweep over the slumping Orioles appeared very much in reach for the A's, who on Sunday brought with them a division-best 9-4 record to join Brett Anderson on the mound for the series finale.

The A's lefty, just two days removed from life-changing news of a fresh deal worth up to \$31 million, entered the matchup having not given up a run in his first 12 innings this season.

The Orioles, meanwhile, entered having lost nine games in a row -- a time during which they also lost key players Felix Pie and Miguel Tejada to injury.

None of that mattered Sunday, though, as the A's got a taste of the O's woes in an 8-3 loss at the Oakland Coliseum. Anderson's scoreless streak was shut down after just two frames, and the A's also witnessed both Daric Barton and Cliff Pennington go down with injuries.

Anderson, who gave up six runs -- five earned -- in five frames, wasn't around to talk about any of it following the loss. But shortly after posting a Twitter message around 4 p.m. PT that read, "Time to shave and get a haircut!" he was reached by phone by a local reporter and apologized for not sticking around.

"It was kind of a perfect storm," said Anderson, who had vowed not to shave until his streak ended. "I had the scoreless streak going, I just signed the contract, and the Orioles are not off to the best start. I don't know if I was destined for failure or what, but it was not my best day."

The A's southpaw tossed back-to-back 1-2-3 frames before allowing three Baltimore runs to score in the third, two of which came on a double by Ty Wigginton. The Orioles added a run in the fourth and tacked on two more in the fifth courtesy of a two-run double off the bat of Nolan Reimold, ending Anderson's day after just 82 pitches.

"He usually locates the ball perfectly on both sides of the plate," manager Bob Geren said. "I wouldn't say he had bad command, but he just didn't locate as well as he usually does."

Added catcher Kurt Suzuki: "I don't think he had his best stuff out there, but he went out and competed. Some days, you just don't have it, but he kept us in the game, and that's all you can ask of him. They were aggressive at the plate against him.

For the 22-year-old Anderson, his struggles all rested on one pitch.

"My slider is my bread-and-butter pitch," he said, "and it was terrible. I don't know what the deal is. It's disappointing. Our starting pitching has given us a chance to win every time out until today, and that was me."

En route to halting his own streak, Anderson put to rest a winning streak developed by the entire starting staff, which entered Sunday's game 6-0. Still, A's starters head into a three-game home series against the Yankees on Tuesday boasting a 6-1 record and 2.66 ERA.

They'll have to bring out the bigger bats if they want to avoid a two-game losing streak, though. On Sunday, the A's could only muster three runs against Baltimore's own young phenom, Brian Matusz. The Orioles' southpaw surrendered eight hits in 6 1/3 innings while walking one and matching a career high with eight strikeouts.

Jake Fox collected an RBI single in the fourth, and Kevin Kouzmanoff drove in the A's second run in the sixth with a double, before the club managed one last run in the seventh courtesy of a sacrifice fly from Eric Chavez.

Matusz, who extended his winning streak to a career-high six games, accounts for both of Baltimore's victories this season. He impressed many around Oakland's clubhouse, but the A's knew they had their fair share of chances, including one in the seventh that resulted in a rare baserunning blunder by Rajai Davis.

The A's outfielder rounded second on a Ryan Sweeney single before easily being caught at the bag to end a potential run-scoring threat.

"It was just a mistake," Davis said, "a mistake you can't make when you're down by a few runs."

"There was no real excuse for the baserunning error," Geren said. "It was just a mistake."

It wasn't Oakland's only one, though. The A's received errors by Barton and Pennington, both of whom were visiting a doctor by game's end. In the fourth, Barton was hit by a pitch that resulted in a contusion above his right elbow and led the club to allow Chavez to make his 2010 first-base debut in the fifth. Following the game, the A's reported that Barton's X-rays were inconclusive, and he'll undergo an MRI exam on the team's off-day Monday.

Meanwhile, Pennington -- whose right hand was stepped on diving back to first base in the third -- was taken out of the game in the seventh. Second baseman Adam Rosales moved over to shortstop while Eric Patterson took Rosales' place, and Pennington's X-rays were negative.

All in all, Sunday's game provided losses in more than one way for the A's, who will gladly take their first off-day of the season Monday after playing 14 consecutive games.

"I think it came at the perfect time," Davis said. "It gives us a chance to regroup and come back in here feeling good."

Barton, Pennington leave early with injuries

First baseman has elbow contusion; shortstop hurts hand

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A pair of A's infielders kept each other company in the trainer's room Sunday afternoon, as first baseman Daric Barton and shortstop Cliff Pennington watched their team fall, 8-3, to the Orioles.

Barton, hit by a pitch by Baltimore starter Brian Matusz in the fourth inning, left by inning's end with what was announced by the club as a contusion above his right elbow.

The Oakland infielder, who was replaced by Eric Chavez at first base, underwent X-rays that were deemed inconclusive, and thus, will have an MRI exam done on the elbow Monday.

Pennington, meanwhile, underwent X-rays near the area of his right hand and wrist after being stepped on while diving back to first base in a third-inning play. Results showed that the X-rays were negative, and the A's don't consider either a serious injury at the moment.

Pennington was replaced at shortstop by Adam Rosales, who started the game at second in the stead of Mark Ellis -- sidelined with a sore left hamstring. Utility player Eric Patterson entered in the seventh at second base to fill Rosales' spot.

Both Barton and Pennington will have Monday's off-day to recover before potentially returning to the lineup for Tuesday's opener of a three-game series against the visiting Yankees.

Early success stories in A's, Yanks collide

By Jonathan Mayo / MLB.com

One team was expected to be in this position, the other, well, not so much.

That the Yankees sit atop the American League East should shock no one. They are, after all, the defending World Series champions. That their opponent on Tuesday, the A's, are in the same position in the AL West isn't exactly what people predicted, even this early in the season.

"When people don't talk too much about you, it's fun to fly under the radar," said A's outfielder Ryan Sweeney, whose game-winning hit on Saturday was the A's third walk-off victory of the season.

Both teams have been getting it done with starting pitching. A's starters went 6-0 through 13 games with an AL-leading 2.30 ERA before Brett Anderson gave up six runs -- five earned -- over five innings on Sunday. The Yankees aren't too far behind, with a 7-2 record for their starters and a 3.41 ERA.

The Yankees are coming off a sweep of the Rangers in which their staff allowed just six runs all weekend. One of the few who has not enjoyed early success gets the ball on Tuesday night. Javier Vazquez has lost each of his first two starts, allowing 12 runs on 14 hits over 11 innings of work. According to the right-hander, it's been about timing and rhythm. During his bullpen session on Saturday, he worked on that in the hopes that when the juices are flowing during the game, he'll be able to calm himself down.

"In the game, you get the adrenaline going and start rushing a bit," Vazquez said. "It's easily correctable."

The A's will send two lefties to the mound during the three-game series, starting with Gio Gonzalez on Tuesday. This will be Gonzalez's first start at home after two on the road against AL West opponents. He won his 2010 debut against the Angels and then battled to pitch into the fifth inning of an eventual A's loss to the Mariners. The often-combustible young lefty is still shaking off the impact of some personal loss and adversity.

"It's a tough pill to swallow," said Gonzalez, who lost a close friend in a car accident a few weeks ago and learned his girlfriend was involved in a different serious accident a week and a half ago. "I've been trying to bounce back. ... It's too much to deal with in a matter of two weeks."

Yankees: Thames ready for West Coast

As the part of the left-field platoon that faces left-handed pitching, Marcus Thames has picked up just 10 at-bats so far this year. He's acquitted himself well in that limited time, picking up five hits. But it's been Brett Gardner who's gotten most of the time, with 30 ABs.

Things should be a little more equitable during the Yankees' six-game swing out west. Two of the three games in Oakland will feature lefty starters for the A's, Gonzalez and Dallas Braden. He'll get one more start in Los Angeles against the Angels.

"I'm just trying to take one game at a time and have some good at-bats," Thames said. "I prepare myself like I play every day. That's the way I've always been. I always know my role, and whenever my name is on the lineup card, I'll be ready to play."

A's: Ellis expected back for Yankees

Second baseman Mark Ellis should be ready to go when the Yankees come to town. He's been out of the lineup for seven straight games with a sore left hamstring, but he tested it on Sunday and will receive treatment during Monday's off-day before a final determination for Tuesday is made.

"He's been getting better every day," manager Bob Geren said. "We're shooting for Tuesday."

Ellis, who experienced sore hamstrings during Spring Training as well, has been taking batting practice and doing agility drills to stay sharp. Adam Rosales has started in his place and hit .364 during that time heading into Sunday's finale against the Orioles.

Worth noting

The Yankees' 9-3 start is their best since 2003. They finished their first homestand 5-1. ... Yankees starting pitching went 5-1 with a 2.17 ERA during the recently completed six-game homestand. ... When Gardner got thrown out stealing on Sunday, it broke a streak of 15 straight successful steal attempts, going back to last season. ... The A's were also off to their best start in a long time. They were 9-4 heading into Sunday's game, their best record after 13 games since 1992. ... Oakland has had three walk-off wins this season, after having just five for all of 2009.

A's Ellis eyeing Tuesday as return date

Infielder has been out seven games with sore hamstring

Jane Lee, mlb.com

OAKLAND -- Mark Ellis was missing from the A's starting lineup for the seventh consecutive game Sunday, but manager Bob Geren said that the second baseman will "shoot for Tuesday," when Oakland hosts the Yankees.

Ellis, 32, has been bothered by a sore left hamstring for the past week, but has been keeping himself busy with plenty of baseball activity, including batting practice and agility work.

He was slated to test the hamstring Sunday before treating it during Monday's off-day to determine his availability for Tuesday's matchup, and Geren insisted there's been no talk of putting Ellis on the disabled list.

Ellis missed 55 games last year while on the DL from April 29 to June 27 with a strained left calf, and he has endured stints on the DL five times in the past seven seasons.

Meanwhile, Adam Rosales has started each of the past seven games at second base, and entered Sunday's series finale against the Orioles batting .364 during that time. Furthermore, he's batting .556 during day games.

A's ready to rest on elusive off-day

OAKLAND -- Having been part of six games decided in the last at-bat already, the A's have witnessed a fair share of unusual scenarios this season.

What they haven't seen yet, though, is a day of rest.

That will finally change Monday, when the club is scheduled to enjoy its first off-day after playing 14 consecutive games, the longest such streak in the Majors this year.

The last time the A's opened the season with a streak of at least 14 straight days with a game was in 1991, when they began the season with 16 consecutive contests.

Following Monday's off-day, Oakland will enjoy another trio of days off over a 21-day stretch from April 20 to May 10. Currently, the A's are in the midst of their longest homestand, which includes 10 games against the Orioles, Yankees and Indians.

The Yanks come to town on Tuesday for a three-game set, and former New York pitchers Chad Gaudin and Edwar Ramirez are expected to receive their 2010 World Series rings at some point during the series.

Orioles avoid sweep as Anderson struggles

Two days after signing four-year contract, pitcher retires first eight batters before losing command

By JANIE McCAULEY, ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Somehow, Dave Trembley has kept his wits about him through Baltimore's awful April start. The manager's mood got a big lift after the Orioles finally won again.

Everybody's did.

"This game today for everybody here feels like a playoff game," said third baseman Miguel Tejada, who didn't even take part as he nurses a sore right hip.

Ty Wigginton homered and drove in four runs, and the Orioles snapped a nine-game skid by beating the Oakland Athletics 8-3 on Sunday and spoiling Brett Anderson's first outing since receiving a hefty new contract.

"We've been facing Sandy Koufax and Don Drysdale since the start of the season. They've been reincarnated every time we've played," Trembley joked. "It's great for the fans and good for the team. Now we can go for the pennant drive."

The Orioles avoided their first four-game sweep in Oakland since Aug. 23-26, 2004, jumping on Anderson (1-1) two days after the A's gave the pitcher a \$12.5 million, four-year contract.

Brian Matusz (2-0), like Anderson a hard-throwing lefty, delivered a much-needed morale boost for the struggling Orioles in his first career outing against Oakland. He struck out eight, allowing three runs on eight hits and one walk in 6 1-3 innings.

"Oh, it's huge," Wigginton said of the win. "Hopefully now we can run a streak in the other direction."

Baltimore (2-11) had lost nine in a row since its lone previous victory at Tampa Bay on April 8, and is off to the franchise's worst start since beginning 0-21 in 1988. The Orioles also ended a nine-game losing streak at the Coliseum dating to July 22, 2007.

It doesn't get any easier as the Birds leave the Bay Area, either. The Orioles continue their 10-game trip with three games in Seattle followed by three at Fenway Park against Boston.

Anderson, an 11-game winner in his rookie campaign of 2009, needed only 25 pitches to get through the first two innings. He retired the first eight batters of the game before giving up consecutive two-out singles to Cesar Izturis and Adam Jones and then Wigginton's two-run double.

Nick Markakis followed with an RBI single to make it 3-0, Lou Montanez singled in a run in the fourth and Nolan Reimold hit his two-run double in the fifth.

Wigginton hit a two-run homer with two outs in the ninth off Chad Gaudin.

"We really needed a little boost," Matusz said. "We've been playing good baseball and can't get down on ourselves. We came in today with a lot of fight. We came out swinging and it didn't stop."

Anderson's scoreless streak to start the season ended at 14 innings.

The new deal he received Friday could be worth \$31 million over six seasons, with Oakland having club options to keep him for the 2014 and 2015 campaigns. Anderson was too busy to discuss his outing afterward, leaving before talking to reporters and tweeting, "Time to shave and get a haircut!"

Later, after a reporter called him, Anderson said: "It was kind of a perfect storm. I had the scoreless streak going, I just signed the contract, and the Orioles are not off to the best start. I don't know if I was destined for failure or what, but it was not my best day."

Anderson's offense couldn't do enough to back him in this one.

Jake Fox's RBI single in the fourth got Oakland on the board, then Kevin Kouzmanoff doubled in a run in the sixth and Eric Chavez added a seventh-inning sacrifice fly.

The A's have their first day off Monday, and it's good timing.

They host the defending World Series-champion New York Yankees for three games starting Tuesday night.

Two relievers who came to Oakland late in spring training, Gaudin and Edwar Ramirez, were with the Yankees last season and are yet to receive their World Series rings.

Perhaps on Tuesday? "That would be a very classy move if they did," A's manager Bob Geren said.

Oakland's Ryan Sweeney extended his season-opening hitting streak to 13 games with a seventh-inning single. He also made a great catch to rob Justin Turner of an extra-base hit in the ninth.

NOTES

* A's 1B Daric Barton left the game after the fourth with a contusion above his right elbow. Chavez, the regular DH, replaced him for his first appearance on defense this year. SS Cliff Pennington also played for several innings after getting his right hand stepped on.

* A's 2B Mark Ellis, nursing a left hamstring injury that has forced him to miss seven games, could return Tuesday.

* Oakland RHP reliever Michael Wuertz, on the DL with shoulder tendinitis, started a rehab outing for Triple-A Sacramento and allowed two hits with a strikeout and a walk. He likely will make at least one more appearance before he rejoins the A's.

Oakland A's Prospect Q&A: Max Stassi, C

David Malamut, OaklandClubhouse.com

Apr 18, 2010

Early on in spring training, the biggest buzz coming out of the Oakland A's spring training surrounded the youngest player in camp, catcher Max Stassi. The 19-year-old is continuing to make noise during the regular season with Low-A Kane County. He has an OPS above 900 with 10 RBIs through his first 10 games of the season. David Malamut caught-up with the talented backstop for a Q&A...

David Malamut: How was your spring training?

Max Stassi: It was awesome. I had a great time at spring training. It was a lot of fun. I learned a whole lot. It's just this past year since signing, going to Instructional League and stuff, it has been an absolute blast. It's been fun playing baseball everyday. It's kind of surreal that this is my job now, but I'm loving every minute of it, and working hard everyday.

DM: How was big league camp?

MS: Unbelievable, learning from [Kurt Suzuki](#) and [Landon Powell](#), it was definitely real fortunate to be able to go there. I learned from those guys and just had a real good time up there. I knew the chances of me making the club were about zero, so I was just going in there and having a good time, being all ears and learning from those guys.

DM: What do you think about all of the projections of the publications about you?

MS: I try not to follow all of that. Some of my buddies and some of my family members will say stuff about it. I'm just going out and playing hard every day and seeing where it takes me. You get caught up in that stuff and it you will drive yourself

crazy. If you're not here by a single point or there, it's out of my control, so all I'm doing is having fun and playing hard every day.

DM: What is your approach at the plate?

MS: Just look for something elevated and drive it. Right now, I'm focusing on plate discipline, and that the ball is in my zone, and not cheating myself, or helping out the pitcher. That's something I'm really working on right now, and it'll come a lot better with experience. It's just part of this game. The more you play, the better you get.

DM: What is your approach in calling the game behind the plate?

MS: You just got to go by their tendencies. I'm working really well with Jimmy Escalante [Kane County pitching coach]. He does a really great job with scouting reports and hitters tendencies, so it's been going well. It's just something that you have to pay attention to, their results and help yourself as a hitter. You got to go with the pitchers' strength, as well. If someone doesn't have their curveball one day, then you can rely [only] so much on that, so maybe you work on locating the fastball a little bit, so you just have to go to different stuff at different times. If all their stuff is working, it's just the more the better. You got to go by what their strengths are. Working together is the main thing, and being on the same page.

DM: How much has working with former catcher Aaron Nieckula helping you in your catching?

He has helped me a lot so far this year. He has helped with mechanical stuff and the mental aspects of it. Being a former catcher himself that's what I was really looking forward to coming here being with a manager that knows what it's like to be back there and that I can relate to him. I can talk to him about this isn't going so well, and he is, like, 'I remember in my career just certain instances like that,' and he can help me out with on the field and off the field stuff. He's helping during the games with pitch calling, and he will ask me about certain stuff and I will get back to him, he helps me out quite a bit.

DM: What are your goals for this season?

MS: Number one is just stay healthy. Last year I battled some tendonitis in my arm so I'm just trying to maintain and stay healthy and have a consistent year. It's going to be ups and downs over long periods of time. Me and another teammate were actually talking yesterday and we are 1/14th through the year, so really only a small, small fraction of the year is over. It's just a long year ahead. Take it day-by-day. You can't look at it as the big picture.

DM: How much of a break is it for you to DH, physically/mentally?

MS: It's nice to DH. You get kind of a mental break from being behind the plate and it gives you time to get scouting reports on their hitters making sure seeing what they have and seeing what their strengths and weakness are as hitters, and when my time comes along to catch being ready to go in there with full confidence and knowing what pitches to call.

Physically it's nice, taking a break off your legs and that's one thing I'm working on is maintaining strength in my lower half and making sure I'm strong throughout the entire year.

DM: Coming out of high school, looking back were you ready for pro ball?

MS: Yeah, I was ready for pro ball. In my mind, this summer really hit me playing every day. With the summer ball team before I signed, it was playing every day going to the yard, and just worrying about playing baseball, and that's something that I've always wanted to do. I've never wanted to become anything but a baseball player. I didn't really want to pursue anything else, just coming out to the yard every day and playing, it's not a bad deal, so I love my job.

DM: You could've gone to UCLA. What made your decision to go pro?

MS: College would've been a great experience. It would've been a lot of fun. [Baseball] is my job, playing this every day is something I love to do. Coming down to it, it was a decision, but I'm really happy with my choice. Things are going well so far, and hopefully we just keep on going from there.

DM: What did you learn last year while playing in Arizona and Vancouver?

MS: It was a short stint. Just learning how to take care of yourself every day, learning what baseball is like. Getting a small little taste, going down to Instructional League learning a lot, it's been a whirlwind year. Finally getting settled in, finally getting the hang of it, learning how professional baseball works, it has been a blast.

DM: How great did the first pro homer feel? Take me through the at-bat.

MS: It felt good. It was a left-handed pitcher, and I was battling and he was mixing it up pretty good. I fouled off a couple of pitches and then he came out with the fastball away, I stayed down on it and it carried out to right field and went over the fence. It was a pretty good feeling, first professional homerun, it was pretty special to me, it was awesome.

DM: Did you keep the ball?

MS: No, I didn't keep the ball.

DM: Have you ever played any where else besides catcher?

MS: In high school I played shortstop my freshman year. We didn't have a shortstop. It was fun, but catching is where my heart is and something I love to grind out every day. I just love the pitch-calling. It is one of my favorite things is out-smarting the hitter, and as a hitter, knowing when you get fooled by that pitch that was going through your thought process.

DM: You seemed to have struggled a little bit this season defensively. Is it getting to know the pitchers?

MS: You go through ups and downs in this game. I just kind of hit a low point, just kind of getting the hang of things, getting the jitters out and all of that. Things are getting a lot better. You go in and out of things, sometimes defensively you go into a little slump. I'm working my way out of it, just playing hard every day, working on my footwork and trying to get that worked out.

DM: What was draft day like?

MS: It was pretty fun. It was an up-and-down moment. It was a good time. I had some family and friends over, and once I got my name called and especially by the A's being a hometown team for me, it was really exciting that it was over. All the stuff leading up to it gets crazy. It was a blast. I had a great time. I listened to it online, and I heard my name called on the draft tracker.

DM: Top 5 artists in your iPod?

MS: Rise Against, Lil Wayne, Kid Cudi, Dave Matthews, Foo Fighters.

DM: If you had gone to college what would've been your major?

MS: I wouldn't have known, I would've been undecided until probably my junior year, and that's what made the decision so easy. [Being a baseball player] is what I want to become.

DM: Besides baseball, what else do you do?

MS: I like to fish, really just hang out, relaxing more than anything. I like to work-out a couple of hours in the off-season. I'm take up hunting next year, do a lot of hunting next year.

DM: You come from a baseball family. How has that helped you?

MS: My dad, a pro catcher, has helped me out. He made me who I am today. He has helped me out a lot. My grandpa and I never met my great, great uncle, but I've learned a lot from both of them. It has been a true blessing being from a baseball family. [My dad] told me everything and his experiences back in the 80's what it was like, he definitely helped me out quite a bit.