

A's News Clips, Wednesday, May 12, 2010

Resilient Oakland A's down Texas Rangers in 13 innings, tie for first in AL West

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Victory kept slipping from the A's grasp Tuesday night at Rangers Ballpark.

But all remained right in their world after Daric Barton's RBI single in the top of the 13th paved the way to a 7-6 victory over Texas.

The A's bullpen, which hadn't blown a save all season, coughed up three different leads. That included one by closer Andrew Bailey, who saw his streak of 27 straight converted saves end.

The 4-hour, 8-minute game included some bizarre moments, including A's reliever Tyson Ross hitting in the 12th inning after Oakland had lost its designated hitter.

The A's, carrying a nine-man bullpen, had no position players left on the bench when the pitcher's spot came up. So Ross, who struck out swinging for the third out, became the first A's pitcher to hit in a non-interleague game since Todd Stottlemyre on Aug. 16, 1995.

Ross wound up pitching the final three innings to collect his first major league victory.

The A's winning rally in the 13th was set up when Landon Powell, their not-so-fleet catcher, stole second base for his first career steal. He would score on Barton's single.

It was a wild follow-up act to Dallas Braden's perfect game Sunday.

The A's were off Monday, and Tuesday's victory pulled them into a first-place tie with Texas in the American League West.

"Definitely the offense picked us up today," Bailey said. "I didn't get my job done. "... But now we're going into the next two games trying to win the series."

The game was the longest played at Rangers Ballpark (by innings) since the A's beat the Rangers in 13 innings on Aug. 6, 2007.

Until the late-game madness started, the A's hero was shaping up to be Eric Chavez, who connected for a two-run homer in the fifth inning, his first long ball since June 17, 2008.

Chavez also scored the go-ahead run on Eric Patterson's RBI triple that gave Oakland a 3-2 lead in the seventh.

But Josh Hamilton's two-run homer off Brad Ziegler in the eighth gave Texas a 4-3 lead. The A's jumped back up 5-4 in the top of the ninth on run-scoring singles from Powell and Cliff Pennington.

But Bailey, who entered with a scoreless streak of 212/3 innings, walked Justin Smoak on four pitches to lead off the bottom of the ninth, and Elvis Andrus' two-out single tied it 5-5.

Barton scorched a solo homer to right in the 11th to give the A's another lead, but Julio Borbon's RBI single off Ross extended the game longer.

"We got the win, that's all that matters," Ross said.

A's manager Bob Geren could have kept his DH by having Jake Fox go to left field in the bottom of the ninth. But he elected to go with a better defender in Gabe Gross, who entered the game as a pinch runner for DH Chavez.

"I felt with (Bailey) coming in the game, I wanted the best defense out there," Geren said. "If they tie it, so be it. Sometimes you've got to make tough choices."

"I hadn't swung since high school," said Ross, a Bishop O'Dowd High product.

A's relievers were watching with amusement as Ross stepped to the plate in the 12th.

"Maybe he can be a pinch hitter," Bailey joked.

TODAY:

A's (Gio Gonzalez 3-2) at Rangers (Derek Holland 0-0), 5:05 p.m. TV: CSNCA. Radio: 860-AM; 1640-AM

A's notebook: Busy Dallas Braden lands on Sports Illustrated cover for perfect game

Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Busy Braden lands on SI cover for perfect game

ARLINGTON, Texas — Dallas Braden's world isn't slowing down much.

His perfect game Sunday landed him on the cover of this week's Sports Illustrated, which hits newsstands today.

The A's also held another news conference Tuesday at Rangers Ballpark for the assembled media that wanted to quiz Braden about his perfect game, the 19th in major league history.

Among the nuggets Braden shared: He claims he didn't know he ran the count to 3-1 against Tampa Bay's Gabe Kapler, his final batter Sunday. Braden thought it was 2-2, so he threw a fastball that Kapler grounded to short. Only after hearing a replay of the game did Braden find out he was wrong.

"I'm going, '3-1? Oh my God, I would have thrown the guy a changeup,' " Braden said.

Earlier Tuesday, he filmed a cameo for CBS-TV's "The Late Show with David Letterman," rattling off the "Top Ten Thoughts That Went Through Dallas Braden's Mind While He Threw His Perfect Game."

His busy schedule will continue today, as he and grandmother Peggy Lindsey are scheduled to appear on CBS' "The Early Show."

Braden said he's been surprised by the attention his perfect game has received.

Chicago White Sox pitcher Mark Buehrle, who threw a perfect game against the Rays in 2009, called to tell him, "Welcome to the club."

How does it feel being an SI cover boy?

"It's a magazine you grow up reading," Braden said. "Well, I didn't really read Sports Illustrated. I thumbed through the pictures, obviously. But it's pretty cool that my mug's gonna be on that magazine."

Justin Duchscherer will throw another bullpen session today, and manager Bob Geren said if all goes well the right-hander will come off the disabled list and start Saturday in Anaheim against the Los Angeles Angels. Duchscherer hasn't pitched since leaving an April 29 game at Toronto with a left hip injury.

Catcher Kurt Suzuki (strained rib cage) homered, doubled and had three RBIs in a rehab game for Triple-A Sacramento against Oklahoma City. If he feels good today, Suzuki will be activated from the DL.

XM Radio will rebroadcast Braden's perfect game today at 11 a.m. on Channel 178. It will be the A's feed, with Ken Korach and Vince Cotroneo on the call.

Dallas Braden's "Top Ten" list for David Letterman

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 5/11/2010 10:48PM

In case you're curious about Dallas Braden's performance from tonight's "Late Show with David Letterman," here's the "Top Ten" list he presented. It won't air for another hour or so on the West Coast, so don't read further if you want to watch it fresh. Enjoy!!

"Thoughts That Went Through Dallas Braden's Mind While He Threw His Perfect Game"

10. "Grandma's right. Stick it, A-Rod."
9. "I did it! Oh crap, it's only the 4th inning."
8. "Seriously, how cool a name is Dallas Braden?"
7. "Now maybe Justin Bieber will notice me."
6. "I must not tell the world I'm Iron Man."
5. "This is something they can never take away from me. But for \$50,000 you can have my glove."
4. "This next pitch, eyes closed."
3. "Even I've never heard of me."
2. "I should at least give up one hit so I don't have to do Letterman."
1. "Maybe I can give Kate Hudson a call."

Carl Steward 'In Our Backyard': Works of Berkeley photographer Doug McWilliams are headed to Baseball Hall of Fame

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

Doug McWilliams probably could open a Baseball Hall of Fame of his own with all the memorabilia he's collected and the thousands of photos he's shot dating back to the early 1950s.

As a youth growing up in Berkeley, McWilliams would venture to Oaks Park in Emeryville and take photos of the Oakland Oaks and other Pacific Coast League players visiting town. Now 70 and still living in Berkeley, he has been shooting ever since.

In 1971, McWilliams landed a job with the Topps Baseball Card Co., as its West Coast photographer, so if you own baseball cards from the 1970s through 1995, you undoubtedly have a substantial array of his work. McWilliams also shot tons of photos for the players themselves, many of them unseen by the general public.

Those photos — more than 10,000 of them, including rare posed shots of more than 600 Hall of Famers — soon will become part of baseball's national treasury in Cooperstown, N.Y. As McWilliams sees it, he is simply following up on an agreement that he made in the 1970s to donate his work to the Hall of Fame. But that was so long ago, even the museum curators had forgotten about it.

Four years ago, when Cooperstown archivists saw a few samples of McWilliams' non-Topps photos, they asked if he had more, noting they were lean on photos of players from the era he shot.

Long story short, McWilliams will be delivering the original negatives of his vast archive to the Hall of Fame in June, but he'll be doing it in an unusual way. He's driving to Cooperstown to present it because he's fearful of shipping so much of his life's work.

"I just couldn't bear to stick 10,000 negatives in the U.S. Mail or FedEx and watch it go away," he said. "What if they lost a box?"

To be sure, there are some one-of-a-kind shots the Hall of Fame is getting, including a posed photo of Rollie Fingers in a Boston Red Sox uniform. Fingers never played for the Red Sox, but he dressed up in a Boston uniform on June 15, 1976, when A's owner Charlie Finley angrily traded Fingers and Joe Rudi to the Red Sox on a night they were in Oakland to play the A's. The trade was voided by then-commissioner Bowie Kuhn, but not before McWilliams captured the event for posterity.

Most of the shots, though, are striking color photos of players by themselves, with teammates or members of their families. McWilliams befriended and became trusted by many players, and it's reflected in the intimacy of his work.

"I realized when I shot for Topps (which owns all of his baseball card work) that nobody was shooting good stuff for the players," he said. "They would get pictures from the newspaper and magazine photographers, but it was hit and miss. So that's what I started doing. It got to the point where I was doing their bar mitzvahs and weddings and family shots, along with good posed pictures of players."

McWilliams photographed Vida Blue's wedding on the mound in 1989, the culmination of a long association with the pitcher that helped him land his job with Topps. When Blue first came to the A's in 1970 and 1971, he asked McWilliams to shoot photos for his mother. Vida liked them so much that he asked the photographer if he could shoot more photos and print them up as postcards to send to his fans.

"I asked him how many he needed ... 100, 200?" McWilliams said. "He said, 'I'm getting 100 letters a day, and I need them in color. So I found a postcard manufacturer in L.A., and by the time we were through, 16,000 of them were made. They all had my name and address on the back. I got a call from Topps in Brooklyn and they said, 'We like your style. Would you like to shoot for us?' "

McWilliams accepted, even though he worked as the scientific industrial photographer at Cal. He was one of the first men to successfully capture lasers on film. He shot photos of Nobel laureates for "their fans," and three of them attended his retirement from Cal in 1983.

"The challenge at the lab was to make even nuts and bolts to look good," he said. "My baseball photography was really easy compared to what I did at Cal."

That's not to say McWilliams didn't take great care and pride at the ballpark. He said his primary goal was to make the players look good. A sharp, brightly colored photo of a smiling Ernie Banks with a bat in his hand and a bright blue sky serving as the only background is one of his favorites.

"When I was a kid, I got a subscription to Sport Magazine in 1948," he said. "I fell in love with Ozzie Sweet, a photographer who shot photographs of athletes and celebrities with brilliant colored backgrounds and they were more like portraits. I really liked what he did and I tried to emulate him throughout my career. That Ernie Banks shot was one of the few times I felt like I matched my idol."

McWilliams' son and son-in-law will accompany him on his Cooperstown journey, and along the way, he is taking a side trip to the University of Kansas, where he studied photojournalism in the late 1950s when Wilt Chamberlain was playing basketball at the school. Yes, he has rare shots of Wilt, too.

He'll arrive in Cooperstown a few days in advance of the Hall of Fame Classic old-timers game June 20, where he hopes to renew a number of old acquaintances.

And yes, like any great photographer, he's bringing his camera.

A's win in 13 innings

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Perfection was not in the offing Tuesday night at Rangers Ballpark. It was more often the opposite, with the A's bullpen blowing save after save after save.

And yet Oakland recovered from those surprising stumbles to move back into a tie atop the division - on the strength of Landon Powell's legs (what?) and Daric Barton's bat. Powell, the A's chunky backup catcher, stole his first career base in the 13th inning, and Barton drove him in with a two-out, two-strike single to right. That gave Oakland, at long last, the victory by a score of 7-6.

"I thought I was dreaming, really," Barton said of seeing Powell lumbering toward second as Rajai Davis failed to get down a bunt. "As long as the game was, that was definitely out of the ordinary - and it wound up being the winning run in the end."

Oakland's bullpen, unused since Saturday because of Dallas Braden's perfect game and Monday's off day, hadn't blown a save all season, but blew three opportunities Tuesday. Brad Ziegler gave up Josh Hamilton's two-run homer in the eighth. In

the ninth, closer Andrew Bailey was scored on for the first time in 2010, ending his consecutive saves streak at 27 and his scoreless streak at 21 2/3 innings. Finally, Tyson Ross surrendered a game-tying hit by Elvis Andrus in the 11th.

It was the first time Oakland had blown three saves in a game since July 17, 2000, at Colorado. The A's are the first team since Sept. 18, 1998 (Chicago, at Detroit), to win despite three blown saves.

The more positive spin, of course, was that the A's came back to take the lead in the ninth, then regained the lead twice more. Barton's two-out homer in the 11th gave the team one of those short-lived advantages. Powell had tied the game in the ninth with a single.

By the 10th, the A's, who have a nine-man bullpen, had no position players left, and Ross became the first Oakland pitcher to bat in an American League game since Todd Stottlemyre on Aug. 16, 1995, at Kansas City.

He struck out, swinging at an 0-2 slider from Darren O'Day. But Ross also recorded his first big-league win.

Eric Chavez, who has started off slowly in his new role as designated hitter, hit his first homer of the season, a two-run shot in the fifth off Colby Lewis.

Oakland has won five of six games, and the team will get a major piece back today: catcher Kurt Suzuki went 2-for-2 with a homer, a double, three RBIs and three runs scored for Triple-A Sacramento at Oklahoma City on Tuesday.

In addition, Justin Duchscherer said he expects to be able to come off the disabled list to start Saturday at Anaheim. Second baseman Mark Ellis and outfielder Coco Crisp should begin rehab assignments in the next week.

DALLAS BRADEN

Whirlwind goes on after perfect game

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Two days removed from his perfect game, Dallas Braden was still drawing microphones everywhere he went.

Before a pregame news conference Tuesday afternoon, Braden did the Top 10 list on "Late Night with David Letterman." He's on the cover of Sports Illustrated in the western half of the country. He'll be on "The Early Show" on CBS with his grandmother, Peggy Lindsey, this morning. He was the American League Player of the Week.

"It's been hectic, a rat race," Braden said, "I've been pulled every which way. But it's understandable. And so fun, and a great experience for my grandmother."

Lindsey is getting loads of attention, too. There's even a Dallas Braden's Grandmother page on Facebook.

Among the gems from Tuesday's media session at Rangers Ballpark was this: Braden didn't know the count on the final hitter Sunday. He went 3-1 on Gabe Kapler, then got him to ground out to short to end the game, putting Braden into the history books. But Braden actually thought the count was 2-2.

He'd thrown a pitch that was close on 2-1 and thought the outside fastball was a ball, it stuck in Braden's head that it was a strike.

"I didn't know until I heard the replay after the game," Braden said.

He threw Kapler a fastball, thinking it was 2-2. Otherwise, Braden said, he would have thrown Kapler a changeup. Who knows what might have happened then?

It was that kind of day though. Braden said he shook off catcher Landon Powell only twice, and both times it was for location reasons, not pitch selection.

Other tidbits: Braden said he admired crafty pitchers such as former Giants starter Kirk Rueter and 47-year-old Jamie Moyer of the Phillies. "Jamie Moyer played catch with Jesus, and he's still getting it done," Braden said.

With all the hoopla this week, will Braden have trouble focusing on his next start, Friday at Anaheim? Not at all, the left-hander responded. "We need wins over division opponents," he said.

Mark Buehrle, who threw a perfect game last year (also over Tampa Bay), called Braden. "He said, 'Welcome to the club, keep plugging along,'" Braden said.

Braden said that pitching the 19th perfect game in history hasn't sunk in, and it might not.

"It was never in the game plan," he said. "A guy with my approach, a contact pitcher - for no one to get on base, that's pretty cool."

Top 10

Dallas Braden appeared, via satellite, on "Late Show with David Letterman" on Tuesday night and read the top 10 list:

"Thoughts That Went Through Dallas Braden's Mind While He Threw His Perfect Game"

10. "Grandma's right. Stick it, A-Rod."
9. "I did it! Oh, crap, it's only the fourth inning."
8. "Seriously, how cool a name is Dallas Braden?"
7. "Now maybe Justin Bieber will notice me."
6. "I must not tell the world I'm Iron Man."
5. "This is something they can never take away from me. But for \$50,000 you can have my glove."
4. "This next pitch, eyes closed."
3. "Even I've never heard of me."
2. "I should at least give up one hit so I don't have to do Letterman."
1. "Maybe I can give Kate Hudson a call."

Source: "Late Show with David Letterman"

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Wednesday, May 12, 2010

Bar set high: Gio Gonzalez, who pitches tonight at Texas, said the A's starters took a step back after Dallas Braden's perfect game and said, "How do we top *that*? Even a no-hitter is nothing compared to that."

Dallas Braden, Day 3, including some Letterman items

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Rangers Ballpark

Dallas Braden went from doing the Top 10 on Letterman to yet another press conference here in Arlington, and I'm going to try to provide some highlight. He's a walking quote machine, though, so I'm sure I'll miss something. And hey, some actual A's news at the bottom of this, I swear.

SPOILER ALERT - if you want to watch the Top 10 fresh tonight without knowing any of the items, skip the next five paragraphs.

Braden will be on at about 11:50 p.m. on CBS, which was nice enough to release No.s 10-8. I saw them taping it and the whole thing was hilarious. Braden is just eating it up - he's the perfect (so to speak) guy for this kind of national attention, because he is so lively, honest and funny.

Here are the three we're allowed to print:

Number 10: "Grandma's right. Stick it, A-Rod."

Number 9: "I did it! Oh crap, it's only the 4th inning."

Number 8: "Seriously, how cool a name is Dallas Braden?"

Among the treats from his subsequent press conference, Braden said he thought he'd thrown a strike on his fourth pitch to Gabe Kapler, the final batter Sunday. He saw the ball called, but he knew the pitch was close and somehow had it in his head that it was 2-2 rather than 3-1, so he threw a fastball. Otherwise, he said, he'd have thrown a changeup, which of course might have had a different result than a game-ending grounder to shortstop, wrapping up the 19th perfect game in baseball history.

The New York Times is here doing a profile of Braden, and NYT baseball writer Tyler Kepner asked Braden about being drafted 24th and why he'd said that was the latest he'd go without just deciding to go back to school at Texas Tech.

"Manny Parra was drafted in the 25th round at my junior college as a draft and follow - and he got \$1.25 million," Braden said with a grin. Kepner said he assumed that Braden hadn't gotten quite the same sum, and Braden replied, "All my friends called me 'One-comma-five.' "

(He actually got \$15,000 to sign, but still....pretty far off Parra.)

Asked about pitchers he's looked up to, Braden mentioned Kirk Rueter and Jamie Moyer because they "both throw 88 mph on a good day."

Of Moyer, Braden added, "Jamie Moyer played catch with Jesus and he's still getting it done. He's very effective."

A's news: Justin Duchscherer is convinced that he'll be able to start Saturday at Anaheim after his bullpen session on Saturday; he'll throw another side session before then. He's on the DL with left hip inflammation that required a cortisone shot last week.

Manager Bob Geren said that Mark Ellis (hamstring) and Coco Crisp (fractured pinkie) could start rehab assignments in the next week.

A's persevere to down Rangers in 13th

Barton thrives in extras as Oakland pulls even with Texas

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- Perhaps the A's were spoiled a bit too much on Sunday.

In the midst of witnessing baseball's 19th perfect game, courtesy a dominant Dallas Braden, the club was afforded the opportunity to rest every member of its three-man bench and nine-man bullpen.

Tuesday, not so much.

Following a travel day, Oakland put to use all three of its bench players, along with six members of its relief corps, against the host Rangers. Three A's blown saves and 13 innings later, not to mention a handful of career firsts, the team walked away on the winning end of a 7-6 game -- one that Daric Barton appropriately deemed "long and crazy."

It took exactly four hours and eight minutes for the A's to garner their third consecutive win, and they have now claimed victory in four of their past five games after losing six of the previous seven. Unlike Sunday's historic affair, Tuesday's battle was far from perfect. Yet, in the end, it was a lot of fun.

"You knew it was going to be one of those games where the team [that] won was going to be feeling pretty good about it," manager Bob Geren said, "and the other team was going to be thinking about it for awhile."

The Rangers became the latter when Barton tallied his second go-ahead hit of the game -- an RBI single that scored Landon Powell -- in the top of the 14th. The A's first baseman went hitless in his first five at-bats before launching a go-ahead solo homer -- his second long ball of the year -- in the 11th.

Powell, who teamed up with Braden in Sunday's perfect game, endured quite another memorable night after leading off the frame with a walk against Texas' Dustin Nippert. With Rajai Davis at the plate and, according to Geren, a bunt-and-run sign on, Powell took off from first. Davis, though, didn't put down the bunt. And, miraculously, Powell made it safe and sound at second base -- a moment that marked the first stolen base of his two-year career.

"I thought I was dreaming," a smiling Barton said of witnessing Powell hitting the gas pedal. "It was a long game as it was, and that was definitely out of the ordinary. It turned out to be the winning run, though."

"There were about 10 of us watching the game in the clubhouse," Andrew Bailey said. "It was on about a 15-second tape delay, and Gabe Gross was in the other room going nuts watching the live game. He was screaming, saying, 'Wait 'til you see this!'"

"Besides Sunday, in my short-lived career, that's one of the more interesting games I've ever been a part of."

Bailey joined Brad Ziegler and Tyson Ross as the first A's pitchers to combine for three blown saves since a trio of Oakland pitchers did it July 17, 2000, at Colorado. The club entered Tuesday's contest as the only team in the Majors without a blown save.

Bailey, who was called upon in the ninth with the A's leading, 5-4, walked the leadoff batter before surrendering a game-tying RBI single to Elvis Andrus to snap a career-high streak of 21 2/3 scoreless innings. The blown lead came just one inning after Ziegler's two-run mistake that came in the form of a go-ahead two-run homer off the bat of Texas' Josh Hamilton.

"The offense and defense picked us up today," Bailey said. "I didn't get the job done. There's no excuse [for] walking the leadoff guy with four straight balls.

"But how we won today shows that we're resilient. It builds character."

Meanwhile, Ross not only tallied his first career blown save but also walked away with his first career at-bat and win. The A's rookie gave up the lead in the 11th but hung around for three innings to record the victory. During that time, he went to the plate in the 12th, as a result of an empty Oakland bench, and struck out looking -- marking the first time an A's pitcher was given an at-bat in a non-interleague game since Todd Stottlemyre struck out on Aug. 16, 1995, in Kansas City.

"That was terrible," Ross said with a half-smile. "I don't think I've hit since high school. I was just hoping to get something on it.

"We got the win; that's all that matters. We battled out there, and I'm just happy we got the victory. It was a good game, overall, as a team."

It was a game that began with righty Trevor Cahill on the mound for 5 2/3 innings. He allowed two runs on four hits and two walks, while fanning one, in the no-decision effort.

Cahill's line was all but forgotten more than two hours later. Also lost on the radar was Eric Chavez's first home run -- a two run shot in the fifth -- since June 17, 2008. That's what happens when 112 batters come to the plate and 14 pitchers take to the bump.

"It was fun seeing everyone contribute," Geren said. "That's a fun win for the team."

"We battled," said Barton. "We hung in there all game. In the end, we got guys on base and hit them in. You gotta give credit to the other guys, too. That's a well-played game."

Suzuki likely to be activated Wednesday

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- In his first Minor League rehab assignment with Triple-A Sacramento on Tuesday, A's catcher Kurt Suzuki proved he won't need another.

In five innings for the River Cats, Suzuki tallied a double and a home run, to go along with three runs and three RBIs. As a result, the club instructed Suzuki to immediately leave nearby Oklahoma City and join the team for Wednesday's contest against the Rangers.

The 26-year-old Suzuki was placed on the 15-day disabled list for the first time in his career April 30 -- retroactive to April 24 -- with an intercostal strain. It marked the first time over the last three years he had gone more than two consecutive games without starting at catcher.

The club has not officially announced a roster move, but Suzuki is expected to be in Wednesday's starting lineup, manager Bob Geren said following the A's 13-inning 7-6 victory over the Rangers on Tuesday.

Ellis, Crisp to make rehab appearances

ARLINGTON -- A pair of A's players may soon begin keeping each other company on Minor League rehab assignments.

Mark Ellis (hamstring) and Coco Crisp (pinkie finger) are quickly making progress with their respective rehab programs -- so much so that manager Bob Geren thinks the two could be playing in Minor League games "within a week."

Ellis has been stationed at home in Phoenix, rehabbing a strained left hamstring, which kept the A's second baseman off the field from April 12-18 and since April 20, when he left a game after just five innings.

Crisp, meanwhile, has yet to make his debut in green and gold. Signed as a free agent in December to a one-year contract, Crisp was placed on the disabled list on April 3, with a fractured left pinkie finger.

The 30-year-old Crisp took 30 swings off a tee on Sunday and planned on hitting inside the cage Tuesday. The next step, he said, will be taking part in batting practice Wednesday. His Minor League assignment will likely span four days, and he hopes to be on the field by the end of the month.

Duchscherer could return on Saturday

ARLINGTON -- Oakland manager Bob Geren on Tuesday deemed Justin Duchscherer the "leading candidate" to start Saturday's game in Anaheim.

That's good news for the right-hander, who received a cortisone shot last week for inflammation in his left hip, aggravation that surfaced at the beginning of the season and eventually led to Duchscherer's early exit from an April 29 start in Toronto.

Duchscherer was officially placed on the 15-day disabled list on May 7, retroactive to April 30. He threw a bullpen session on Monday, before the club hopped on its charter flight to Texas, and Geren reported that the righty "is doing very well." He'll toss another bullpen session on Wednesday to officially determine his readiness for Saturday's nod against the Angels.

The veteran pitcher, who also missed a chunk of time during Spring Training due to lower back pain and, subsequently, a nerve ablation procedure, was 2-1 with a 2.89 ERA in five starts for Oakland before exiting his last outing against the Blue Jays after just 3 1/3 innings.

The A's have had the luxury of sticking with a four-man rotation for the time being, thanks to an off-day Monday that took away the need for a fifth starter until Saturday. As a result, they've been lugging around nine relievers -- all of whom are well rested thanks to Dallas Braden's perfect game Sunday.

'Mr. Perfect' deals with media crush

Braden appears on Letterman, 'Early Show'

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ARLINGTON -- Two days removed from officially entering baseball lore, "**Mr. Perfect**," Dallas Braden, took a seat in the basement of Rangers Ballpark on Tuesday, his tired eyes staring back at a couple dozen media members.

Just minutes prior, he had delivered David Letterman's Top Ten List via satellite. Hours earlier, it was announced that this face would greet millions of readers on the cover of *Sports Illustrated*. On Wednesday, he'll wake up with CBS for "The Early Show."

Dallas Braden is in demand. He's losing his voice. And his phone can't take many more messages. But he'll manage -- all while sporting a smile.

"It's a rat race," Braden said. "I've been pulled every which way, but it's been fun. It's a great experience."

That's what happens when you throw the 19th perfect game in baseball history, as Braden did Sunday in a 4-0 victory over the visiting Rays in front of his grandmother, Peggy Lindsey, on Mother's Day.

Lindsey, who raised Braden after his mother passed away when he was in high school, has quickly become something of a media darling since her grandson achieved perfection. Much like Braden, she is brutally honest and ever so witty.

"To sit down and talk with her for five minutes is truly to be enlightened in more ways than one," Braden said.

The A's pitcher admitted that Sunday's perfect game had not yet sunk in. It may never. After all, he's just getting used to the notion of being a household name.

"I'm not really that cool," he said, "so you don't understand why everyone wants to talk to you. I understand now. I've grasped it. I get it."

Still, that doesn't take away from the wow factor that comes along with sharing a sentence with Letterman or with playing the role of cover boy for sports' most famed magazine.

"Those are pretty ridiculous," Braden said. "That's when they say you've made it, when you've done Letterman or Oprah. I'm not jumping on any couches any time soon, but that would be cool."

"Sports Illustrated is a magazine you grow up reading. Well, I didn't really read it, but I thumbed through the pictures. It's pretty cool."

So is sharing the feat with 24 guys who Braden has always deemed more than just teammates.

"Baseball's been my safe haven, and the clubhouse has been my physical sanctuary," he said. "When I'm there, I share things with my teammates because I spend a large part of my life with them. They know my background, and we've shared things with each other, so they know what that day means to me."

"They're all ecstatic for me, which is really nice. I'm so happy for them to be able to share this with me. These are guys I've come up with. Guys I've bled and [sweated] with for five or six years. So to be able to share that with them is awesome."

Braden said he has yet to watch Sunday's perfecto in its entirety, but the 26-year-old southpaw has seen the last out -- a Gabe Kapler grounder to shortstop Cliff Pennington -- quite a few times. As a result, he's now thinking he would have done things differently had he another go at it.

"The last at-bat, it was a 2-1 count," Braden explained. "I threw a pitch for a fastball on the outside part of the plate that I thought looked good. The umpire disagreed. It was a ball. I thought it looked so good that I just kind of told myself it was a strike. I thought the count was 2-2, to be totally honest.

"So I threw a fastball, and it worked out. I didn't know until I heard [A's broadcaster] Ken Korach's replay, 'And the count, 3-1, Braden comes set,' and then I'm going, '3-1? I would have thrown the guy a changeup.' "

Maybe next time. The lefty will take to the mound again in Anaheim on Friday. Two days later, he'll return home with the team and, once again, reunite with grandma in Stockton, Calif., where the two live just five blocks from one another and leave all talk of Alex Rodriguez and the like behind.

"That's why I live there," he said. "I can go home and be me there. I'm not really worried about what anyone else thinks of me, or their opinions. My teammates, the guys I compete with and against, those are the guys I want the respect of, and I try to earn that daily.

"When I go home and take off the costume and get to be Dallas, the rest of the world kind of stops for me. I get to be me, play with my dog, feed my fish and just be me."

That's exactly what he did to celebrate Sunday's unforgettable series of events, which Braden insists "wasn't so much in the game plan."

"It's pretty ridiculous, when you think about it, to be in that kind of company with some of the people that I share this with," he said. "It's unreal. It's just weird for me because of my kind of approach. I'm a contact pitcher, and for no one to get on base versus a contact pitcher is pretty cool. I enjoyed that."

Braden's decision to make a career out of pitching pretty much came into fruition when he was 4 years old.

"That was the game plan," he said. "It was either that or asking you if you wanted to super-size. I've stuck with this, so it's worked out."

It's not over, either. The perfect game, Braden hopes, is just one of a handful of achievements with which he'll eventually walk away from the diamond.

"It's a great accomplishment that I've extremely honored to fulfill, but my team is my focus," he said. "A perfect game doesn't get us into the playoffs, so we can sit here and talk about it all we want, but there's still work to be done."

Well, maybe after Oprah calls.

A's defeat Rangers 7-6 in 13 innings

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ARLINGTON, Texas — Daric Barton hit a two-out RBI single in the 13th inning after homering in the 11th, and the Oakland Athletics beat the Texas Rangers 7-6 on Tuesday night in the opener of a three-game series between the AL West's top teams.

Catcher Landon Powell drew a walk against Dustin Nippert (1-3) to start the Oakland 13th, then swiped second for his first career steal. He scored when Barton's hard grounder short-hopped off second baseman Ian Kinsler's glove and into right field.

Barton had been 0 for 5 before his two-out solo homer. But the Rangers tied it in the bottom half of the 11th when David Murphy hit a leadoff single and scored on Julio Borbon's base hit.

Tyson Ross (1-0), the sixth Oakland reliever, pitched the final three innings. He even batted, striking out to end the 12th because the A's had lost their designated hitter in a flurry of substitutions in the ninth.

The A's were back on the field for the first time since Dallas Braden's perfect game on Sunday. There were plenty of mistakes in this one, especially with the closers for both teams blowing leads in the ninth.

Rangers pinch-runner Andres Blanco was cut down at the plate for the final out of the 12th. Blanco tried to score from first when Kinsler's single took an awkward bounce away from right fielder Ryan Sweeney. But his throw to second baseman Adam Rosales and the double-clutch relay to Powell was still in plenty of time.

Oakland won for the fifth time in six games, ending Texas' four-game winning streak and matching the Rangers for the division lead at 18-15.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Oklahoma City wins battle of former Cats

In a battle of former River Cat greats, the Oklahoma City representatives came out on top Tuesday night.

Esteban German and Gregorio Petit combined for eight hits and seven runs in leading Oklahoma City to a 9-6 win over visiting Sacramento, which was led by a tremendous performance from Kurt Suzuki.

German, who played for the River Cats from 2001-04 and holds the franchise record for hits (401), at-bats (1,306), runs (231) and stolen bases 93), went 4-for-5 with three doubles, four runs and an RBI. Petit, who played for the River Cats from 2007-09 and ranks in the top 10 in games played (244), hits (235) and at-bats (900) and is tied for the franchise record in errors (42), went 4-for-5 with a double, home run, three runs and three RBIs for Oklahoma City. Petit hit eight home runs in his River Cats career.

For Sacramento, Suzuki went 2-for-2 with a lead-off home run, a double, three runs, three RBIs and a walk before being replaced by Anthony Recker. Suzuki, who starred for the River Cats during the 2007 season when he hit .280 in 55 games, will rejoin the Oakland A's after his rehab stint with the Triple-A club.

After his first-inning home run, Suzuki smashed a two-run double in the second inning and scored on Jack Cust's single for a 4-2 Sacramento lead. German (third base) and Petit (shortstop), who make up the left side of Oklahoma City's infield, hit back-to-back RBI doubles in the bottom of the inning to tie the game.

Suzuki, Petit and German each scored in the fourth inning as both teams scored twice, leaving the game knotted, 6-6, until the sixth inning. After German singled to right-center with one out in the sixth, Petit homered to left field to provide the game-changing blow. In 2008, Petit hit one home run in 308 at-bats for Sacramento. For good measure, Chris Davis hit a solo home run later in the inning for the final margin of victory.

Mickey Storey, who allowed three runs in his only inning of relief, took the loss for Sacramento. River Cats starter Graham Godfrey allowed six runs over 5.0 innings, striking out seven, walking three and allowing nine hits. Elizardo Ramirez picked up the win with 3.0 hitless innings of relief.

Hounds End Road Trip With Win

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

The RockHounds left something behind in Frisco: A 500-pound gorilla.

The 'Hounds broke a 5-game losing streak ... and snapped Frisco's 8-game win streak in the process ... with a 12-2 win over the RoughRiders Tuesday afternoon at Dr Pepper Ballpark.

The RockHounds exploded for six runs in the fifth inning, started by Steve Kleen's two-run double and capped by Alex Valdez' third home run on two games.

Archie Gilbert added a two-run laser in the sixth and Shane Peterson capped the scoring with a three-run shot to center in the seventh.

The other MVP's were the four relief pitchers ... the only four arms available ... who stepped in and stepped up with Carlos Hernandez unable to go (ankle). Justin Friend made just the second start of his pro career, going 3.2 shutout inings.

Jared Lansford got the win, facing and retiring four batters, with Derrick Gordon and Daniel Sattler closing the door. Gordon gave up one (unearned) run and Sattler gave up a run which was earned but hardly deserved, as a pop up fly, lost in the sun, dropped about 70 feet from home plate for an RBI single.

The 'Hounds now return home for their first stay of more than four games since the season-opening home stand, hosting San Antonio (May 13-16) and the RoughRiders (May 17-20) at Citibank Ballpark.

Ports end three game slide behind Spina's four hits

STOCKTON, Calif. - Banner Island Ballpark proved to be the remedy for Mike Spina and the rest of the Ports, as they defeated the Modesto Nuts 3-2 Tuesday night to end a three game losing streak.

Stockton returned home after a 1-4 road trip to Bakersfield that saw Spina go 0-19. The infielder had a career day Tuesday though, finishing 4-4 with a pair of doubles and a triple.

In spite of the offensive outburst, the Ports would be forced to endure a rough start to the ballgame. Modesto's Jimmy Cesario led off the game with a single off of Ports' starter Murphy Smith and advanced to third when Scott Robinson's grounder slipped under the glove of second baseman Tyler Ladendorf for an error. After Tim Wheeler popped out, Jordan Pacheco singled home Cesario. Robinson advanced to third on the play, and scored on Ben Paulsen's sacrifice fly to center field to give Modesto a 2-0 lead. Smith (3-2) locked down the Nuts' lineup the rest of the way. The right-hander allowed only the two runs (one earned) on five hits in six innings. He walked none and struck out four.

Stockton's offense got going in the bottom of the second inning. Spina led off with a double down the right field line, and advanced to third on Petey Paramore's single. Spina would come across on Jeremy Barfield's sacrifice fly to cut the deficit to 2-1.

Spina would score the tying run after hitting a two-out triple off the top of the right field wall in the fourth. Paramore brought him home on the next pitch with a single to center field.

The Ports recorded the deciding run in the sixth. Matt Whitney, just added to the roster from Extended Spring Training, led off with a single. Spina followed with a single of his own to put runners on first and second base. Paramore hit a grounder to the first baseman Paulsen, whose only play was to step on the bag. With runners on second and third, Jeremy Barfield hit his second sacrifice fly of the night to give the Ports a 3-2 lead they would not relinquish.

Fautino De Los Santos, making his first appearance of 2010 after recovering from Tommy John surgery, threw two perfect frames to set up closer Paul Smyth, who set down the Nuts in order in the ninth for his fourth save. Smith, De Los Santos, and Smyth combined to retire the last thirteen Nuts batters in a row. Dan Houston (2-3) took the loss for Modesto after surrendering three runs (all earned) on seven hits in 5.2 innings. He walked one and struck out three.

The Ports (14-19) and Nuts (17-13) clash again Wednesday at Banner Island Ballpark at 11:05am. Right-hander Kenny Smalley (2-2, 4.78) gets the nod for Stockton, while Modesto will hand the ball to right-hander Juan Nicasio (1-2, 5.01). The game can be heard live on KWSX 1280am and online at stockonports.com.

Straily Gets Cougars Even in Beloit

Kane County wins in Wisconsin behind more solid starting pitching

BELOIT, Wisc. – Dan Straily posted his second straight quality start, Leonardo Gil was a homer shy of the cycle and Nino Leyja and Max Stassi each had two hits as the Kane County Cougars rolled to a 5-1 victory Tuesday night against the Beloit Snappers at Pohlman Field. The Cougars evened the three-game set and climbed back above the .500 mark.

For the second night in a row, the Cougars grabbed an early lead, and this time did not relinquish it. Leyja and Franklin Hernandez each had an RBI single in the second, and Leyja also singled home Anthony Aliotti in the third to make it 3-0. Gil tripled in Tyreece House in the fifth and Stassi belted his sixth homer with a two-out solo shot in the seventh to account for the Cougars' final run.

Straily (4-1), who tossed six shutout innings last Thursday in a win in Burlington, gave up one unearned run on three hits

over six innings in the victory. He walked one and fanned six, contributing the Cougars' sixth quality start in eight games. Connor Hoehn worked two hitless innings, and Josh Lansford faced the minimum in the ninth to wrap it up.

The Cougars (17-16) and Snappers (19-13) continue the three-game set Wednesday night at 6:30 CT. Kyle Christensen (0-1, 13.50) will oppose Miguel Munoz (0-1, 4.03). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at www.kccougars.com, with pregame coverage starting at 6:15 p.m.