

A's News Clips, Saturday, May 15, 2010

Braden's imperfect sequel results in loss

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Dallas Braden was fashioning a pretty impressive encore Friday to the history he made in his previous start. Then it changed on a dime.

More specifically, Braden's outing changed on a 1-0 pitch to Los Angeles Angels designated hitter Hideki Matsui in the sixth inning. Braden hung a curve that Matsui belted for a three-run homer, changing the complexion of the game and lifting the Angeles over the A's 4-0 in the opener of a three-game series at Angel Stadium.

Braden, who threw the 19th perfect game in major league history Sunday against Tampa Bay, went eight innings in the losing effort and earned credit for his second straight complete game after failing to toss one in his first 52 career starts.

But with Angels lefty Joe Saunders dealing the way he was, Braden (4-3) had no margin for error. Saunders (2-5) threw a four-hitter, looking nothing like a pitcher who entered the game with a 6.19 ERA.

Erase the sixth inning, when the Angels scored all four of their runs, and Braden was excellent. Not that he took that as any consolation.

"Poor," Braden said in evaluating his night. "We lost. I didn't make the pitch I needed to make to get the boys back in the dugout. I left them stranded out there."

The A's didn't advance a runner past second base in losing their third straight. They won the opener of this six-game road trip at Texas but have scored a total of two runs in the three games since then.

"The only pattern is we saw three very tough lefties in (Derek) Holland, C.J. Wilson and (Saunders)," A's manager Bob Geren said. "They all pitched real well."

Braden allowed seven hits with five strikeouts and one walk. He is just the second pitcher to follow up a perfect game with a complete game of the 15 perfectos thrown since 1922. (Cleveland's Len Barker threw an eight-hitter and lost to Seattle 3-1 in 1981.) Braden also became the first A's pitcher to toss back-to-back complete games since Mark Mulder had three straight from May 9-21, 2004.

Braden gave up a two-out double to Bobby Abreu in the first, ending his string of 29 consecutive batters retired. He tied Catfish Hunter's mark from 1968 for the longest such streak in Oakland history. He then retired 13 of his next 15 hitters, keeping the Angels off-balance with his changeup and mixing in an effective fastball.

But things got rocky in the sixth.

Erick Aybar led off by pushing a bunt single to the right side, and Howie Kendrick bunted him to second. Braden walked Abreu but struck out Torii Hunter for the second out. Kendry Morales then broke the scoreless tie with an RBI single to left, scoring one and snapping Braden's 16-inning scoreless streak.

Up stepped Matsui, who beat the A's 4-3 with a walk-off hit April 10. He entered Friday in a 6-for-56 slump and was dropped to sixth in the order. But he crushed a 1-0 curve into the right-field seats, turning a 1-0 A's deficit into 4-0.

That was more than enough for Saunders, who threw his second career shutout.

"When you've got a guy throwing his pitches where he wants to, it's going to be a long night," A's left fielder Jake Fox said. "It's not often you see a lefty with that much movement on his fastball."

Athletics report

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Duchscherer ready to go, makes change on mound

ANAHEIM — Justin Duchscherer will be activated from the disabled list tonight and start on the mound against the Los Angeles Angels.

The right-hander put his 15-day stay on the DL to good use. Duchscherer said he tweaked his delivery just a bit. His left foot is landing a couple inches more to the left, opening his body more as he pitches.

He said that adjustment will help take pressure off his left hip — the trouble area that landed him on the DL — and he also believes he'll benefit from a pitching standpoint.

"I've been having trouble (pitching) away to righties and in to lefties," Duchscherer said. "I felt like I was a little closed off when I was landing. I think that was putting a little extra stress on my hip. Landing a little more open, it frees up my hip and allows my body to get through."

The A's are just happy to welcome back Duchscherer to their rotation. They've been operating without two of their regular starters; Brett Anderson is expected to miss at least two more weeks with a forearm injury.

Right fielder Ryan Sweeney sat for a second straight game because of illness, although Geren said Sweeney was available if needed. Sweeney also battles tendinitis in both knees and had large ice packs strapped to each knee before the game.

After hitting his first homer of the season Tuesday, designated hitter Eric Chavez was out of the lineup for the third straight game. But Geren said Chavez would start tonight against right-hander Ervin Santana.

Catcher Kurt Suzuki (strained rib cage) was scheduled to play for Triple-A Sacramento on Friday. If he's able to play back-to-back games, he'll be activated very soon, Geren said. "... Outfielder Coco Crisp (fractured pinkie) will play in an extended spring game Monday in Phoenix, then start a rehab stint with Single-A Stockton on Tuesday. ... Second baseman Mark Ellis (strained hamstring) will join Stockton either Tuesday or Wednesday.

Chin Music: Jack Cust reportedly set to rejoin A's

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 5/15/2010 2:10AM

Is it insane to be blogging this late? Yes, but such is the nature of round-the-clock journalism these days ...

Multiple outlets are reporting that Jack Cust will be called up from Triple-A Sacramento and join the A's for Saturday's game against the Angels. CSN Bay Area's Mychael Urban was first to break the news. The A's offense is starting to resemble the punchless unit we've seen for much of the past few seasons, so some sort of shake-up is needed. Cust's stats were decent for Sacramento — not great. He hit .273 with four homers and 19 RBIs in 110 at-bats. He had 33 walks and 33 strikeouts and a strong .444 on-base percentage.

Where does Cust fit in considering that Eric Chavez is already on the roster as a left-handed DH option? I don't see the A's releasing Chavez at this point and eating his contract. I'd expect to see Cust get time in the outfield. He's played right field the past few days for Sacramento, but he'd probably fit best in left field for the A's. He's not a very good defensive option out there, we all know. But right now the A's will sacrifice the defense to get some power in the lineup. They'll have to clear a spot to get him on the 40-man roster, and they'll have to clear two spots on the 25-man roster for him and right-hander Justin Duchscherer, who will be activated to start Saturday's game. With nine relievers currently on the roster, it seems logical that two would be sent out to open spots.

I know Cust was a popular punching bag the past couple of seasons for people frustrated with the A's offensive woes. I'm curious how his return would strike you now. Do you expect him to have a positive impact?

Inman: Bay Area vs. Chicago? We're not a Second City

By Cam Inman, Oakland Tribune columnist

Los Angeles, New York and Dallas make for storied rivals to the Bay Area. Chicago? Not so much.

A running feud can't take place when you rarely meet in high-stakes games such as the playoffs. Or, for that matter, when Bay Area squads routinely crush Chicago's on those stages. Such as:

The 49ers eliminating the Bears three times (1984, '88, '94 seasons) en route to Super Bowl titles. That postseason trifecta came by a combined score of 95-18, including a 28-3 rout in "Bear Weather" (a below-freezing Soldier Field) at the 1988 season's NFC final.

The Warriors' rallying against the Bulls (and double-digit deficits in Games 6 and 7 of the Western Conference finals) en route to the 1975 NBA championship.

The Will Clark-led Giants further cursing the Cubs in the 1989 National League Championship Series. Clark's Game 1 grand slam off Greg Maddux at Wrigley Field set the tone for a 4-1 series romp.

Yes, even a San Jose franchise has trampled Chicago's challenger: The Earthquakes won the 2003 MLS Cup over the Fire 4-2.

In honor of the Sharks' first postseason series with the Blackhawks — the Western Conference finals start Sunday at HP Pavilion — let's add fuel to a Bay Area-vs.-Chicago rivalry in tale-of-the-tape fashion:

Wrigley Field vs. AT&T Park: Wrigley is a must-see sports cathedral nearing its 100th birthday. AT&T Park, with a decade under its belt, officially can be recognized as baseball's better venue. Edge: Bay Area.

"Let's Play Two" vs. "Just Win Baby": Surely, Ernie Banks knew the object was not just to "play" but to "win." Good thing Al Davis' Raiders haven't played doubleheaders in recent years. Edge: Bay Area.

Frank Sinatra vs. Dionne Warwick: Sinatra answers why Chicago is "My Kind of Town." Warwick asks in Grammy-winning fashion: "Do You Know the Way to San Jose?" Edge: Chicago.

Linebacker Singletary vs. coach Singletary: If not for Mike Singletary's eye-popping career as a Bears middle linebacker, he might not be motivating, er, coaching the 49ers. Edge: Chicago.

John Madden vs. John Madden: One is a retired coaching and broadcasting icon. The other is a Blackhawks forward who doesn't have a top-selling video game named after him. Edge: Bay Area.

Black Sox vs. BALCO: One scandal ruined a World Series (see: 1919), the other helped bring down an entire baseball era. Say it ain't so? Wait, isn't that what got Barry Bonds indicted. Edge: Chicago.

Magnificent Mile vs. 49-Mile Drive: Chicago's downtown strip of upscale stores, skyscrapers and hotels is nothing compared with San Francisco's scenic route. Edge: Bay Area.

Mark Buehrle vs. Dallas Braden: Whose perfect game vs. Tampa Bay was more, um, perfect? Buehrle's came last July 23 for the White Sox before a home crowd of 28,036; Braden dominated for the 12,228 who showed for the A's Mother's Day brunch. Crowd counts don't mean as much as 27 up, 27 down. Edge: Push.

Deep-dish pizza vs. crab sandwich: You can go broke dropping \$15 on the crab sando at AT&T Park. You can go into cardiac arrest with a Gino's East pie. Edge: Chicago.

Billy Goat Tavern vs. Original Joe's: As legendary as the Billy Goat's "cheezeborgors" are in the gallows of downtown Chicago (and via "Saturday Night Live" fame), Original Joe's is a downtown San Jose landmark. Edge: Push.

Dustiny 2002 vs. Dustiny 2003: One year, Dusty Baker "jinxed" the Giants' in the World Series by handing Russ Ortiz the ball in Game 6. The following year, he managed the Cubs out of a 3-1 lead in the National League Championship Series. Edge: Bay Area.

Navy Pier vs. Pier 39: Waterfront tourist traps. Edge: Push.

"Black Hawk Down" vs. "Jaws": In terms of mascot-related movies for this Blackhawks-Sharks series, both plots prey on unsuspecting victims. Edge: Bay Area.

Jordan vs. Jordan: One (Michael) won six rings with the Bulls. One (LaMont) led the Raiders in rushing during a 4-12 season. Edge: Chicago.

Sears/Willis Tower vs. Transamerica Pyramid: One is where tourists go to take pictures of the surrounding skyline. The other defines the skyline in tourists' pictures. Edge: Bay Area.

Billy Beane vs. Kenny Williams: The A's and White Sox's general managers swap players as if they were baseball cards. See "Moneyball" for more insight. Edge: Bay Area.

Defenseman Wilson vs. GM Wilson: Doug Wilson had a fabulous 14-year run as a Blackhawks' defenseman. He stands to win a Stanley Cup in half that time as the Sharks general manager. Edge: Bay Area (Sharks in five this series).

Editorial: Oakland needs to ramp up effort to keep A's

MediaNews editorial

A STUDY, commissioned by a local nonprofit group and released late last month, tells us how a new waterfront ballpark for the A's in Oakland will deliver millions of dollars to the city's coffers and billions to the local economy. So what took so long?

With a Major League Baseball commission set anytime now to release findings that could pave the way for the A's to move to San Jose, it took Let's Go Oakland — and not the city of Oakland — to discover that the local economy will gain, among other things, \$2.6 billion and 1,661 new construction jobs if a \$500 million baseball-only ballpark is built at one of three proposed locations in the Jack London Square area.

With so much at stake, the city should have jumped into the fray with San Jose much earlier and fought much harder to keep the A's. Having monthly meetings doesn't cut it.

If the recent study is correct, there are some good reasons to fight. For instance, the study says 885 jobs related to baseball operations in Oakland would be saved; property values would soar; local agencies will see \$930 million in additional property tax and Alameda County would receive \$79 million more in property taxes.

Oakland may want to conduct a similar study with the Raiders, since Santa Clara is dropping hints of building a dual-use stadium with the 49ers.

The study, however, does not answer some important questions, such as who will pay for the stadium, how much it would cost the city to purchase the land and relocate businesses or the impacts on traffic.

The timing is also problematic. Considering the city's budget woes, we must wonder whether Oakland can justify the costs. Had the city done its homework much sooner, it might have answers for these questions today.

San Jose can make similar economic claims; anywhere a new stadium is built will bring new jobs and additional revenue.

Oakland fans aren't helping their cause either. As of last week, the A's were in the hunt in the American League West, yet they have the third worst attendance in baseball. That includes one game, with first place on the line against the Rangers, where only 8,874 fans showed up. Even the Warriors per game attendance figure (18,027) is better than the A's (16,415). This is embarrassing. What message is that sending to MLB?

Meanwhile, San Jose city officials are getting aggressive. They have a firm site in mind for a new stadium and the City Council sold two parking lots for \$20 million to help with costs.

A's owner Lew Wolff has noticed. "They are making things happen," he said about San Jose. But it's not smooth sailing. The city will have to make road improvements and relocate some businesses. In that event, the last estimate for the city's cost is an additional \$70 million. This for a city with a \$116 million budget deficit.

Nevertheless, it looks like everything comes down to Major League Baseball and where the Giants' territorial rights in the South Bay stand as well as how the Giants would be compensated if they lose revenue while the A's occupy San Jose.

We also wonder what is taking the MLB's commission so long to make a recommendation to Commissioner Bud Selig, who, by the way, is a fraternity brother to Wolff, who badly wants a change of venue.

Oakland dragged its feet too long and now the fans are either disgusted or apathetic. If Oakland loses the A's, these are two good reasons why. For the Oakland fans who care about the A's, you better keep your fingers crossed.

No perfect sequel for Braden

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Dallas Braden didn't keep a perfect game intact very long Friday night at Angel Stadium.

Bobby Abreu ended Braden's string of batters retired at 29 with a two-out double in the first. "I thought, 'Well, that's out of the way, let's go,' " said Braden, who continued to mostly baffle hitters through the fifth inning.

Then, in the sixth, Braden's scoreless streak came to a close, too. Kendry Morales delivered an RBI single and Hideki Matsui a three-run homer, and the struggling Angels took the first game of the series 4-0 behind Joe Saunders' second career shutout.

"Coming into tonight, with Dallas off that perfect game, I knew I had to bring my A game," Saunders said.

The A's have dropped three in a row and have scored two runs total in those games. The Angels had lost 10 of their previous 13.

Never before had the Angels faced a starter coming off a perfect game. Saunders outpitched Braden, allowing a career-low four hits.

Braden did become the first A's pitcher to throw consecutive complete games since Mark Mulder (three in a row) in 2004. Braden is also the second man since 1922 to follow a perfect game with a complete game; Len Barker did so in 1981, and he also lost that second game.

"Dallas pitched well," A's manager Bob Geren said. "Their guy obviously pitched better."

The 29 consecutive batters retired by Braden tied the Oakland record held by Catfish Hunter, who had retired the last two batters of his previous start before throwing a perfect game May 8, 1968.

After Abreu's first-inning double, Braden handled the next 11 hitters, making it 40 of 41 men retired. His scoreless streak hit 16 innings.

In the sixth, though, Erick Aybar bunted for a leadoff single, and Howie Kendrick moved him to second with a sacrifice. Braden walked Abreu, and after striking out Torii Hunter, he allowed a base hit to left by Morales that sent in Aybar.

That brought up Matsui, who clubbed a 1-0 breaking pitch to right.

"It was up and in the middle of the plate, and he Godzilla-ed it right out of the ballpark," Braden said.

Told that Matsui had been in a slump entering the game, Braden said, "Cool, awesome, not so much anymore. Tell him to send me a check."

Oakland didn't get a man past second base against Saunders. Rookie Josh Donaldson had two of the hits.

Ryan Sweeney missed his second consecutive game because of an illness that had prevented him from eating for two days. Gabe Gross was in the lineup, though he'd needed an IV at Texas the day before because of the heat.

Braden's crazy week now comes to a close and he doesn't need to respond to nonstop questions about the perfect game.

"Mother's Day is 360 days away," he said. "Until then, if I pitch then, and if I do it then, we'll talk about it then."

Nobody's perfect - a second time

How Dallas Braden and the previous five pitchers to throw perfect games fared in their next outings:

| Pitcher, Year | Opp | IP | H | R | ER | SO | BB | Dec |
|---------------------|-----|-------|---|---|----|----|----|-----|
| Dallas Braden, 2010 | LAA | 8 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 1 | L |
| Mark Buehrle, 2009 | Min | 6 1/3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 1 | L |
| Randy Johnson, 2008 | Fla | 7 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 1 | W |
| David Cone, 1999 | Cle | 4 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 7 | 4 | ND |
| David Wells, 1998 | Bos | 7 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 1 | W |
| Kenny Rogers, 1994 | ChW | 5 1/3 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 3 | L |

Chavez sits against lefties

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

In some years, three straight games out of the starting lineup for **Eric Chavez** might indicate some sort of physical problem.

Not this year. Chavez's health is fine. He's simply not in the lineup these days against left-handers, and the A's have faced lefties the past three games.

But in his last start, Chavez hit his first homer of the season, and he singled and scored. Will sitting make him lose any rhythm he'd found?

"I look at the big picture," he said. "It's not about putting up the biggest numbers; it's about being here the whole year and getting better. But if I'm not making progress, there's going to be an adjustment. They told me at the beginning of the year I'd get an opportunity, but I know **Jack Cust** is at Triple-A.

"I don't want to be a below-average player. As long as I feel like I'm continuing to get better, OK, but over time, we need an offensive guy, and I need to be an offensive guy. Like **Mark Mulder** said (when he decided to stop pitching), do I really want to be a below-average guy after being an elite player? I feel like I'm getting better, though, and I know I've been a slow starter my whole career."

Briefly: Justin Duchscherer was confirmed as tonight's starter; he'll come off the disabled list (left hip inflammation), and an extra reliever (**Edwar Ramirez?**) is likely to be sent down. ... **Kurt Suzuki** (ribcage strain) went 0-for-3 with a walk for Triple-A Sacramento. He'll play at least one more game with the River Cats before rejoining the A's. ... **Coco Crisp** (fractured pinkie) will play a game at extended spring training in Phoenix on Monday before starting a rehab assignment at Class A Stockton on Tuesday; **Mark Ellis** (hamstring) is scheduled to go Stockton that day, too. ... **Brett Anderson** (forearm strain) is throwing long toss at a distance of 120 feet and is throwing his breaking ball on flat ground.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Farm hands: Catcher Josh Donaldson competed in a pregame cow-milking contest and lost to the Angels' Trevor Bell. Dallas Braden wanted to take part but couldn't because he was starting.

Drumbeat: Cust confirms he's on his way back to A's

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Anaheim, 5/15/2010 12:11AM

Jack Cust confirms via text that he's returning to the A's today - Saturday - as first reported by CSN Bay Area's Mychael Urban via Twitter.

Cust texted me that he's on Southwest from Oklahoma City "bright and early," and he said, "I know this: I am excited to get things going and to be happy again."

I'd had a feeling this might happen....I'd heard a few days ago that Cust was going to give up his apartment in San Francisco and get a place in Sacramento for his family. That was a reverse jinx waiting to happen. It seems so often that players buy places or rent places in one spot and immediately go elsewhere, but in this case, Cust winds up moving back to where he wants to be.

There was also an idea floating around that May 15 might be a good date to look for Cust to return - give Eric Chavez six weeks to DH and see what happens, that kind of thing. And before the game in Anaheim on Friday, Chavez brought up Cust's name to me. That's not unusual: Chavez has said frequently that he's aware that Cust is at Sacramento and that he'd led the A's in homers the past three years.

No, I don't think Chavez is hanging it up. I talked with him about that idea Friday evening and he feels he's getting better. He did, however, invoke Mark Mulder and his decision to stop pitching last winter, saying Mulder didn't want to be a below-average pitcher after being an elite one. Chavez doesn't want to be below average, either, but I don't think he or anyone with the team believes that that issue has been decided yet. As Chavez noted Friday, he's always been a slow starter. The A's gave Jason Giambi into the middle of the summer, I'd find it hard to believe that Chavez's chance ends in mid-May, unless he's somehow come to the conclusion that he's done, which wasn't what he indicated to me just eight hours ago, and I think most of you know how brutally honest Chavez is.

I think this might have less to do with Chavez or any particular date or apartment-moving jinx than it does with these facts:

**The A's have scored a grand total of two runs the past three games.

**They've been short on the bench with a nine-man bullpen - and with Ryan Sweeney out sick the past two games, it's been essentially a two-man bench.

**The run of three lefty opposing starters in a row is over, although the A's do get another, Seattle's Ryan Rowland-Smith, on Monday night. Tonight and tomorrow at Anaheim, they can use lots of left-handed hitters.

With Cust coming back, the A's will need to make a 40-man roster move. They'll have to send two players down today (unless someone gets designated for assignment as a means to clear a 40-man spot). The best bet is that two relievers will get sent down because Justin Duchschere is getting activated to start today, so the four-man rotation is over, plus the bullpen is better rested after Dallas Braden's complete game tonight. Edwar Ramirez seems one fairly obvious candidate to get sent out; Chad Gaudin might be a possibility because he has been inconsistent (and allowed three homers in a game this week), and Tyson Ross can handle going more than an inning or two if needed. Henry Rodriguez - he's definitely a possibility. I'd forgotten about him, so thanks for prodding, readers/posters.

Josh Donaldson is another potential candidate for demotion, but the A's might wait until Kurt Suzuki is back rather than having Jake Fox be the primary backup catcher for a day or two. Plus, the A's need more bodies on the bench right now, not fewer.

Braden tagged for four runs in loss

Left-hander goes distance in follow up to perfect game

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- This time around, Grandma Peggy had her feet up at home.

Her grandson, Dal -- as she affectionately calls him -- stood more than 300 miles away on a mound at Angel Stadium, looking to become the first pitcher in the history of baseball to throw back-to-back perfect games.

The newly famous Dallas Braden was up for the challenge five days removed from recording just the 19th Major League perfecto in front of his grandmother on Mother's Day.

"I use that as a preparation method every game," Braden said. "Be perfect, be perfect."

On Friday, he was -- for two more batters, at least. Braden's streak of 29 consecutive batters retired -- a mark that tied Catfish Hunter for the A's record -- came to a halt when Los Angeles' Bobby Abreu lashed a two-out double to left field in the first frame.

"When he got the first hit," Braden said, "I thought, 'Well that's out of the way. Here we go. Keep filling up the zone.'"

Eight innings later, Braden stood on the losing end of a 4-0 game to the Angels. He had given up seven hits and a walk in an eight-inning complete game effort. For Braden, who is his toughest critic, it really wasn't a complete game, despite what the box score said.

"It was below average," Braden said. "I just didn't get it done. It's not a complete game. I just pitched the whole game.

"It was poor. We lost."

Still, in the midst of saving a tired A's bullpen, Braden joined Len Barker as the only two pitchers since 1922 to follow a perfecto with another complete game. Barker, too, lost in 1981.

Braden retired 15 of the first 18 batters he faced on Friday, before watching his streak of 16 scoreless innings end when Kendry Morales hit a two-out RBI single to drive in Erick Aybar, whose bunt single opened the sixth. Hideki Matsui -- with only six hits in his previous 58 at-bats -- followed with a blast into the right-field bleachers, his first homer since April 22 and fifth of the season.

When reminded of Matsui's recent struggling ways, Braden smiled and threw out a casual, "Cool."

"Awesome," he added. "Tell him to send me a check."

"I was still waiting for a fastball," Matsui said through translator Roger Kahlon. "The slider came up in the zone, and I was able to react. Not limiting it to him, but after a couple times [at the plate] you do get a little more comfortable, in terms of facing a guy."

Oakland's offense really can't say the same about Angels starter Joe Saunders, who tossed a four-hitter on Friday after entering the contest with a 6.19 ERA. Saunders gave up four earned runs or more in four of his seven starts to start the season.

"I'm 2-for-2 on guys who, apparently, were struggling before we ran into them," said Braden, whose last loss against Texas on May 3 resulted in a win for the inconsistent Rich Harden. "Harden really struggled, and Saunders really battled out there today."

Braden's sarcasm, though always entertaining, couldn't mask the lackluster presence that has been the A's offense, which came into the game having tallied just two runs over its past two games. Manager Bob Geren, however, chalked it all up to "phenomenal pitching."

"He really controlled the outside corner of the plate and had great command of his two-seamer," the A's skipper said of Saunders. "He also used the inside corner enough, but the big thing was he was able to pound the outside corner with two different pitches."

"He was always ahead of us," said Adam Rosales, who went 0-for-2 but managed two walks. "He kept changing speeds and keeping the ball down."

With the win, Saunders has now claimed victory in six of his last eight starts against Oakland. He walked one and struck out five, while also notching four 1-2-3 innings, en route to garnering just his second win of the season.

Meanwhile, Braden moved to 4-3 and was forced to field questions left and right about an event five days old. Braden politely answered the questions while making it known that he's living in the present and no longer coming off a perfect game but, rather, a 4-0 loss to a division opponent.

"If you're going to use a measuring stick to compare it to the last start," Braden said, "the walk was there. The hit was there. Well, the hits were there."

"He threw the ball well," Geren said. "He just obviously had the one inning with the big hits. He settled in after that. Their guy just pitched better. Dallas is going to give us a chance to win every night -- there was just no offense. It's like the old adage says, good pitching beats good hitting."

Santana tries to continue magic against A's

By Evan Drellich / MLB.com

Justin Duchscherer on Saturday makes his first start since he went on the disabled list with inflammation in his left hip on April 30.

Duchscherer, 2-1 with a 2.89 ERA, took his only loss the day before, in his last outing, when he just couldn't work through the pain in a 6-3 loss in Toronto. He was pulled with one out in the fourth inning and charged with four runs, two on homers.

The A's know well that injuries can hurt their chances: They've put 75 players on the disabled list since 2007, including 11 players already this season. It's not the first time Duchscherer had to deal with missing time, either. He missed all of 2009 because of elbow surgery and a bout with clinical depression.

A's manager Bob Geren, trying to break a three-game losing streak against the Angels' Ervin Santana, said that Duchscherer's return was a positive.

"He says he's ready to go," Geren said. "It's always nice to get guys off the DL. He's an important guy to our club."

Geren said that Duchscherer will be limited to 100 pitches or fewer, "depending on how he feels and how it's going," Geren said.

Santana, coming off a loss to the Mariners, is facing an A's offense that's managed just two runs in its last three games. Santana has dominated the A's in his career, with a 1.41 ERA and .203 batting average against in 17 outings.

Santana's best outing of the season came nearly a month ago, when he allowed four hits and one run in a complete-game win over the Blue Jays. The Angels, 4-10 in their last 14 games, are still struggling despite Joe Saunders' four-hitter on Friday night in a 4-0 win. Had the Angels lost on Friday, it would have been their worst start to a month since they went 3-11 in September 1996.

A's: Chavez back against right-hander

Eric Chavez, who sat two of the last three games against left-handed starting pitching, is expected to start at designated hitter on Saturday. Chavez, batting .247 with one home run on the season, is just 1-for-9 against left-handers.

Angels: When he connects, he connects big

Catcher Mike Napoli went 1-for-3 with a double Friday night, giving him 10 hits in May, seven of them for extra bases (two home runs, five doubles). Napoli had just one extra-base hit in 42 at-bats in April. ... Two other hot Angels hitters cooled on Friday night. Howie Kendrick was 6-for-11 on the homestand, but went 0-for-3. Torii Hunter, 13 RBIs in his last 12 games, was 0-for-4 without an RBI.

Worth noting

The A's, the most second most successful team at stealing bases in the American League entering Friday night, had a baserunner caught stealing for just the fifth time in 25 attempts. Cliff Pennington was thrown out by Angels catcher Mike Napoli at third base in the second inning. ... Fernando Rodney has allowed just one run over his last 15 appearances for the Angels.

A's promote slugger Cust from Triple-A

By Dan Mennella / MLB.com

In search of pop for their scuffling lineup, the A's have recalled Jack Cust from Triple-A Sacramento, according to CSNBayArea.com.

The A's had not confirmed the transaction early on Saturday, but the club will need to clear a space on the 40-man roster to make room for Cust.

Cust re-signed with Oakland during the offseason but was designated for assignment after struggling during Spring Training. The left-handed-hitting slugger then cleared waivers and chose to accept an assignment to Sacramento rather than become a free agent.

"I'm so excited," Cust told the website. "I can't wait to try to help the guys. They've been playing great baseball, but they're having some problems scoring runs, and hopefully I can change that a little bit. I've been feeling really good about the way I've been swinging the bat the past couple of weeks."

Cust's recall comes on the heels of a forgettable offensive stretch for the A's. They've scored just two combined runs in their past three games, including a 4-0 defeat at the hands of the Angels on Friday.

Cust has enjoyed the majority of his success in the big leagues with Oakland. Of his 89 career homers, all but five of them have come in an A's uniform. In three seasons with the A's, Cust averaged 28 long balls, 76 RBIs, 103 walks and 182 strikeouts.

At the time of his recall, Cust was hitting .273 with four homers and an .881 OPS in 33 games with Sacramento.

Crisp will begin rehab assignment Monday

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- The rehabbing Coco Crisp, nursing a fractured left pinkie finger, has accompanied the A's to every game this season.

All that will change on Sunday -- and for good reason.

While the team wraps up a three-game set in Anaheim that day, Crisp will be sent to Phoenix, where he'll take part in an extended spring training game on Monday. From there, the A's outfielder will join Class-A Stockton on Tuesday in Lake Elsinore, for a Minor League rehab assignment.

Crisp, who has yet to make his A's debut since signing a one-year contract in December, will likely be joined in Lake Elsinore by Mark Ellis. The Oakland second baseman has been stationed in Phoenix for a couple weeks nursing a strained left hamstring.

The pair of veterans is expected to play in a handful of Minor League games before returning to Oakland.

Duchscherer will start for A's on Saturday

ANAHEIM -- Not much has gone according to plan during the past couple of years for the injury-prone Justin Duchscherer.

So even though the A's right-hander insisted all week that he'd be able to make his scheduled start Saturday, the club refused to announce anything until Friday -- if, by chance, Duchscherer suffered a setback to derail those plans.

The plan, though, was officially given the green light on Friday, and Duchscherer will take to the mound in Anaheim for Saturday evening's AL West contest against the Angels. It will mark the righty's first start since April 29, when he left after just 3 1/3 innings in Toronto with what was deemed a left hip strain.

After a MRI and a visit with Nashville-based Dr. Thomas Byrd, Duchscherer learned that there was inflammation in his hip -- a problem that could be fixed with a cortisone shot. Since the procedure, Duchscherer has thrown two bullpen sessions, the last of which "went great" Thursday.

Thus, the A's decided to activate him from the disabled list on Saturday, a move which likely means the club's nine-man bullpen will lose a member.

"He's ready to go," manager Bob Geren said Friday. "It's nice to get guys off the DL. He's an important guy to our club."

Worth noting

With lefty Joe Saunders on the mound for Anaheim, the left-handed hitting Eric Chavez was not in the starting lineup for the third straight game on Friday, but A's manager Bob Geren said the veteran was available to pinch hit, as he did Thursday in Texas. Geren said that Chavez will start Saturday's game. ... Ryan Sweeney did not start for the second consecutive day due to an illness. ... Brett Anderson (forearm/elbow) has been throwing long-toss as part of his rehab program in Phoenix. The A's left-hander has also been throwing his breaking ball from flat ground, Geren said. ... Before Friday's game, Josh Donaldson competed against the Angels' Trevor Bell in a cow-milking contest on the field. Bell beat out the A's catcher.

Hometown Report: Grandma called about Braden, and ARC listened

Jon Davidson, Sacramento Bee, 5/15/2010

Doug Jumelet was in the American River College baseball office one sweltering summer day in 2001 poring over prospects.

The phone rang, and talk about a stroke of good fortune. Community college coaches generally work communication in the reverse, feverishly tracking down players to offer a pitch as to why their program might just be the ideal fit.

On the other end of that call was Peggy Lindsey. She informed Jumelet of her grandson, Dallas Braden, a talented if not a bit troubled teen. He needed a place to play, to grow. He needed to get away from Stockton most of all, she said.

"I'd like to say we recruited Dallas hard, but that's not what happened," said Jumelet, an assistant coach when he fielded that inquiry and now the head man at ARC. "We'd never heard of him, but when his grandmother mentioned that he was a left-handed pitcher, I perked up."

ARC became the bridge from Braden's troubled past to stability and success:

- With a changeup as his money pitch, Braden responded to the ARC coaching staff's "three strikes or you're out" policy of accountability.
- He produced two all-conference seasons with ARC, going 12-4.

- He landed a scholarship to Texas Tech.
- He was drafted by the A's in the 24th round in 2004.
- He had a stint with the River Cats, then the promotion to the A's.
- And he tossed that perfect-game Sunday that still has everyone buzzing.

Braden has said without baseball and the guidance of his grandmother, he would have wound up in jail. He got into fights during his time at Stagg High School in Stockton. He skipped school for days at a time. He lost his mother to cancer during his senior year, in 2001.

"Dallas used to tell me that if it wasn't for baseball here, he'd be pumping gas the rest of his life, and he meant it," Jumelet said. "He told me that he needed to get out of Stockton, that he was constantly reminded of his mother – a park they went to, a store. He was determined."

So much so that Braden sometimes would be found early mornings in an ARC parking lot, sleeping in his clunker of a ride. Braden explained then he didn't want to be late for school or baseball workouts.

"When I saw Dallas hugging his grandmother after that perfect game, it brought tears to my eyes," Jumelet said. "Gave me chills. She's been everything for him. And sometimes, you get calls from a parent or grandparent talking about a player, and you wonder because you hear it all. Anytime we get a call, I listen, because you never know."

Around the region

At 77, with the zest and zeal of someone half his age, Guy Anderson won his 850th game as the Cordova baseball coach, over Union Mine with a lineup of underclassmen.

- Bella Vista junior basketball star Kelly Logue showed she can throw her weight around in an oval, too. She put the shot 34 feet, 2 inches and won the Capital Athletic League title in just her second attempt all season.

Grandfather Dan Logue won shot and discus events at Santa Rosa Junior College in the 1950s. Kelly's sophomore brother, KJ, won the CAL varsity high jump.

- Mike Wall, the superb basketball coach at Folsom who steered two Division I section title basketball teams, has stepped down for a year to regroup and spend time with his young family.

- Sacramento High graduate Mike McGinty, a goalkeeper who played with DC United of Major League Soccer in 2002, has been hired as men's soccer coach at Saint Louis.

Braden Was Perfect; Beane Was Busy

By [TYLER KEPNER](#), New York Times blog, 5/15/2010 1:31PM

Billy Beane has a son named Brayden. He also has a newly famous pitcher named Braden, as in Dallas Braden, who threw baseball's 19th perfect game last Sunday for Beane's Oakland Athletics.

"I got more e-mails congratulating me on Dallas Braden's perfect game than I got on the birth of my son, Brayden," said Beane, Oakland's general manager. "I'm getting e-mails from people all over the world, and I didn't even do anything. I just watched."

To be accurate, Beane did not do much of that. He loathes sitting and watching his team play for fear that he will react emotionally and make rash decisions based on something he sees. So, as usual, while Braden was buzzing through the Tampa Bay Rays, Beane was working out in the players' weight room at the Coliseum.

Beane listened to his iPod and not the game broadcast. But the game was playing on a television in the room, and he noticed enough visual clues to suspect that something special was happening. Late in the game, the cameras showed Catfish Hunter's retired number, 27.

"Then it dawned on me," Beane said. "If they're showing that, he might not just have a no-hitter. He might have a perfect game."

Hunter had thrown the Athletics' only other perfect game, on May 8, 1968, just after the club moved from Kansas City, Mo. Beane asked Farhan Zaidi, his director of baseball operations, who confirmed that Braden was indeed perfect. By then, there was one out to go, and Beane watched his left-hander make history.

Beane is famous for his belief that truths can be uncovered through objective statistical analysis. A perfect game is so rare as to be mathematically insignificant. If Braden had allowed one dribbler for a base hit, his game would have been largely forgotten, but the result would have been the same: a well-pitched game and a victory for the Athletics.

And although Beane said he understood the human-interest dynamic to Braden's achievement — a Mother's Day gem by a pitcher whose mother died of cancer when he was in high school — he did not get caught up in the magic of the moment.

"If you do the job long enough, I think you're most excited about the win," Beane said.

Beane had reason to be excited about something as mundane as a victory in May. In a sluggish American League West, the Athletics may be legitimate contenders, at least when starters Brett Anderson and Justin Duchscherer return from the disabled list.

"For us to remain in the thick of it, we're going to have to get healthy," said Beane, ever the realist. "But this division is resembling a stadium-board dot race right now. It might not reveal itself until the very end, and it might be the team people least expect."

For Dallas Braden, this moment is just perfect

The Oakland A's pitcher surprised himself and everyone else when he threw a perfect game Sunday. He's still relishing the spotlight as he prepares to face the Angels on Friday.

By Mike DiGiovanna, LA Times, 5/14/2010

He did the "Late Show with David Letterman" and "The Early Show" on CBS, he is on the cover of this week's Sports Illustrated and he has done so many interviews it would "take all the fingers and toes I have" to count them, Oakland pitcher Dallas Braden said.

A burden for the Athletics left-hander, whose start at Angel Stadium on Friday night will be his first since he pitched the 19th perfect game in major league history Sunday against the Tampa Bay Rays? Hardly. Braden has loved every second of it.

"No one question has been the same, so you tell the story, but you keep coming up with a different aspect of it," Braden said on a conference call Thursday. "It's allowed me to relive the moment, because I really didn't feel like I was there for it. It hasn't sunk in."

With a fastball-changeup repertoire that is less than overpowering, a modest 17-23 career record entering Sunday and zero complete games in his 52 previous big league starts, Braden seemed the least likely candidate to pitch a perfect game.

That might explain why the 26-year-old from Stockton, a 24th-round pick of the A's in the 2004 draft, felt as if someone or something else was pulling some strings for him during his gem at the Oakland Coliseum.

"I kind of relinquished it to my higher power," said Braden, who struck out six in his 109-pitch masterpiece. "All the balls were hit to the right guys at the right time. I just continued to throw strikes."

That it happened on Mother's Day made it extra special for Braden, whose mother, Jodie Atwood, died of cancer when Braden was in high school.

The grandmother who helped raise Braden, Peggy Lindsey, was at the game and exchanged a warm embrace with the pitcher on the field afterward.

Lindsey has also become a media darling, first telling Alex Rodriguez to "stick it" -- a shot at the New York Yankees star who had a verbal spat with Braden after Rodriguez ran across the mound on his way back to first base after a foul ball during an April 22 game against the A's -- and then joining Braden for much of his media tour.

"It started with the surreal day that was Mother's Day -- that was an absolute roller coaster, and I was just glad I was tall enough for the ride," Braden said. "You always dream of being in that kind of spotlight."

"The most important part was that my grandma was able to come along and have as much fun as me. Putting a smile on her face for the whole week was the best part. ... I'm going to have to grease the walls to get her in the house, because she's loving life right now."

Braden said he won't feel like a different pitcher when he takes the mound against the Angels on Friday night.

"One game is not going to change how I approach the remainder of the season," he said. "I've done the homework I usually do before a start. Everything should go as planned. One thing I told myself I wouldn't do is sacrifice a week's worth of preparation for one day."

Nor does he think opponents will look at him much differently.

"Because of how rare the feat is, everyone understands I'm not going to rattle off four or five in a row," Braden said. "If anything, there will probably be a fight at the bat rack for guys to get to my fastball. They'll be ready to play."

Did the perfect game give Braden, the No. 2 starter on the Oakland staff behind ace Ben Sheets, a confidence boost?

"All it does is confirm that I can get outs at the big league level," Braden said. "I just happened to get a few in a row this time."

Sure, but the folks at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and at the Stockton Hall of Fame don't call asking for mementos from a game in which you retire a few guys in a row.

Braden plans to keep several baseballs from the perfect game, which ended when Gabe Kapler grounded out to shortstop on a 3-and-1 pitch. The hat, glove and jersey he wore went to his hometown museum. His cleats went to Cooperstown.

"To have something of mine taking up space in that beautiful hall is pretty nice," said Braden, who visited Cooperstown a few years ago.

Braden hasn't seen a copy of this week's Sports Illustrated, but he did see a couple of proofs of the cover, in which he is pumping his fist above the headline "Perfect Storm: Why you couldn't script a better story than Dallas Braden's Mother's Day masterpiece."

He is the first A's player to appear on an SI cover since Jason Giambi in 2000.

"My ugly mug slapped on a magazine on newsstands all across America is scary for some readers," Braden said, "but it's pretty cool for me."