

Duchscherer injured again, A's routed by Angels

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The news was grim for the A's on Saturday night, and that was before the Los Angeles Angels gave them a 12-3 shellacking.

Right-hander Justin Duchscherer, fresh from the disabled list and primed to make his return to the rotation, was scratched from his start with more pain in his troublesome left hip.

Manager Bob Geren said it's very likely Duchscherer will return to the DL, leaving heavy doubt as to when, or if, the A's will get him back.

Consider that salt in the wound for an A's team that has dropped four straight on a six-game trip that wraps up today.

Duchscherer first felt discomfort while jogging to get loose before the game, telling pitching coach Curt Young that something didn't feel right. The problems continued as he tried throwing in the bullpen.

"I was in the bullpen and couldn't find a way to land without having pain," Duchscherer said. "I threw a little in the windup and a little in the stretch and told Curt, 'I can't throw like this.'"

Duchscherer went on the DL shortly after leaving an April 29 game in Toronto with hip pain. He reported feeling good both times that he threw off the mound while rehabbing.

There's no such optimism now. Duchscherer has had two surgeries on his right hip and reiterated that the pain in his left hip feels similar to what he experienced on the right side.

"I'll go see a doctor again and see if there's any options, because if I have to have surgery I'm done for the year," he said. "Obviously that's not an option I want to explore unless it's absolutely necessary."

Duchscherer, who missed all of last season, is staring at the possibility of his seventh career trip to the DL. A two-time All-Star, he said the constant rehab from injuries is draining.

"Having gone through elbow (surgery), the hip twice, it gets frustrating because I feel after each surgery I come back and it's like I have to deal with something else," he said. "(But) I'm a baseball player, so if that's what have to do, I'll do it."

Geren had talked encouragingly in recent days about the expected return of Duchscherer, as well as that of catcher Kurt Suzuki, center fielder Coco Crisp and second baseman Mark Ellis, all of whom appear close to coming off the DL.

But losing Duchscherer on a long-term basis would be a big setback.

"We still have a lot of healthy bodies soon to return to the team," Geren said.

The A's fell a game below .500 with the defeat but remained two games back of the first-place Texas Rangers. The suddenness of Duchscherer's injury pressed rookie reliever Tyson Ross into the first start of his brief career. He retired his first 11 hitters as the A's gave him an early 2-0 lead, thanks in part to Eric Patterson's homer in the third.

But Ross encountered trouble with two outs in the fourth. Bobby Abreu and Torii Hunter singled, prompting Geren to visit the mound. Two pitches later, Kendry Morales launched a three-run homer to put the Angels on top for good, 3-2. Morales homered twice and drove in five runs.

The Angels teed off on Oakland's bullpen, particularly Chad Gaudin, who got hammered for the second straight outing.

Ross earned praise from Geren for his work on short notice. But Geren said he prefers Ross in the bullpen and wouldn't consider him a potential replacement for Duchscherer.

TODAY: A's (Trevor Cahill 1-1) at Angels (Joel Pineiro 2-4), 12:35 p.m. TV: CSNCA. Radio: 860-AM; 1640-AM

Athletics report

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Cust in the outfield, as he makes return appearance

ANAHEIM — The A's called up Jack Cust from Triple-A Sacramento on Saturday, hoping he can give their slumbering offense a jolt.

Cust started in left field and went 0 for 3 with a walk in a 12-3 loss to the Los Angeles Angels.

Manager Bob Geren said he plans to play Cust regularly in the outfield, which indicates that Eric Chavez will continue to start at DH against right-handed hitters, as he did against the Angels.

"We feel he can help us," Geren said of Cust.

The A's, who entered the night averaging just 3.2 runs per game in May, can use Cust, their home run leader each of the last three years. But he let a routine fly ball glance off his glove for a two-base error against the Angels, showing it's a risk to run him out defensively every day.

Cost was upset when the A's designated him for assignment two days before Opening Night. Now he's just happy to be back in the bags, not only for his career but for his family.

He and his wife, Jennifer, rented an apartment in San Francisco before the season. But commuting regularly to Sacramento, and traveling on road trips, kept Cust away from daughters Ava and Sophia, the latter of whom was born in February. The routine took a toll on his wife, Cust said.

"She said she felt like she had a car lifted off her chest (when he was promoted)," he said. "She's been struggling with it. I only got to spend a couple hours with the kids a day. It was just good to hear the excitement in her voice."

To make room for Cust on the 25- and 40-man rosters, the A's designated reliever Edwar Ramirez for assignment. Reliever Henry Rodriguez was optioned to Sacramento to make room for right-hander Justin Duchscherer, who was activated from the DL but wound up being scratched from Saturday's start.

Catcher Kurt Suzuki (strained rib cage) has played the past two days for Sacramento, but no word when he'll be activated from the DL.

Second baseman Mark Ellis (strained hamstring) will begin a rehab stint with Single-A Stockton on Monday at High Desert. He'll be joined Tuesday by outfielder Coco Crisp (fractured pinkie). Both players are scheduled to proceed to Sacramento on Thursday.

Chin Music: Just announced: A's scratch Justin Duchscherer from tonight's start

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune 5/15/2010 6:18PM

It was announced in the top of the first that Justin Duchscherer won't pitch tonight for the A's. Left hip inflammation was the reason given. Tyson Ross gets the emergency call to start.

That's the same ailment that landed Duchscherer on the DL. As recently as yesterday, he told me he felt great. And he seemed in good spirits earlier today in the clubhouse. That's all the information I've got for you now. ...

Chin Music: Jack Cust back in A's lineup, playing left field; Edwar Ramirez designated for assignment; Henry Rodriguez sent down

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 5/15/2010 6:04PM

A familiar face returned to the A's clubhouse today, as Jack Cust was promoted from Triple-A Sacramento. He's starting in left field tonight and hitting sixth, and manager Bob Geren said Cust would play regularly, mostly in the outfield. We can take that to mean that Eric Chavez will continue getting time at DH against right-handers. (Chavez is hitting fifth tonight against Angels righty Ervin Santana). "We were at three position players," Geren said. "We feel like (Cust) can help us. He had a nice start down there. He's swinging the bat well."

The thought of Cust patrolling the outfield on a daily basis probably doesn't fill A's fans with confidence. But as I blogged last night, this team needs an offensive jolt. That's the priority right now, even if the outfield defense takes a hit. I think the A's brass still wants to give Chavez time to find his stroke at DH, so Cust's best fit is in left.

I'll have more on Cust in tomorrow's notebook. But suffice it to say that this guy is very relieved to be back up here, primarily because it eases the burden on his wife, Jennifer. She's been caring for their two young daughters in their new home in San Francisco, while Cust had to commute to and from Sacramento. "She said she felt like she had a car lifted off of her chest," Cust said. "She's been struggling with it."

—The A's designated reliever Edwar Ramirez for assignment to clear a spot for Cust on the 40-man and 25-man rosters. Reliever Henry Rodriguez was optioned to Sacramento to make room on the 25-man roster for right-hander Justin Duchscherer, who returns from the DL and starts tonight.

—Ryan Sweeney is back in right field, though he still doesn't have his full strength back after battling a nasty stomach bug. Earlier today, he ate some toast, some rice, and a banana, but that's about it. Doesn't sound fun to me ...

Tonight's lineups

A's: Pennington SS, Barton 1B, Sweeney RF, Kouzmanoff 3B, Chavez DH, Cust LF, Rosales 2B, Patterson CF, Powell C; Duchscherer RHP.

Angels: Aybar SS, Kendrick 2B, Abreu RF, Hunter CF, Morales 1B, Matsui DH, Rivera LF, Napoli C, Wood 3B; Santana RHP.

ANGELS 12, A'S 3

Duchscherer's hip not ready - DL likely again

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Justin Duchscherer left little doubt Saturday night that his season is probably over, and that also might mean the end of his A's career.

Duchscherer couldn't pitch in Oakland's 12-3 loss to the Angels because of the same left hip inflammation that required a cortisone shot last week; the last time Duchscherer had a similar injury, to his right hip in 2007, the next step was surgery.

"It's very similar to the other time, when I had to have the surgery," said Duchscherer, who felt discomfort in the hip again when running to center field to get loose and then couldn't land without pain during his warm-up.

"If I have to have surgery, I'm done for the year, and obviously that's not an option I want to explore unless absolutely necessary."

Rookie right-hander Tyson Ross, 23, took Duchscherer's place, the first big-league start of Ross' career, and he retired the first 11 batters he faced until allowing three hits in a row with two outs in the fourth, capped by a three-run homer by Kendry Morales.

"Luckily, I've been in the 'pen the last two months," Ross said. "Getting loose is second nature. I just left one pitch up."

Oakland has lost four in a row and dipped under .500, at 18-19. Morales drove in five runs Saturday, adding a two-run homer off Chad Gaudin in the seventh.

Duchscherer has made six trips to the disabled list since his big-league career started in 2001, and he was just taken off the DL on Saturday. Oakland manager Bob Geren said it is "probable" that Duchscherer will go right back on it.

Duchscherer needed two surgeries on his right hip, but the second was merely a cleanup, and he pitched well afterward. There's no reason to think he couldn't continue to be an effective major-league pitcher if the left hip needed surgery; it's merely a matter of whether he wants to go through it again.

"I don't want to do it - it's not fun," said Duchscherer, who has been told he has a congenital abnormality where the femur meets the joint. "It's mentally draining, because I'm a good pitcher, I understand pitching, and now I'm finally healthy and then it's something else. But I'm a baseball player and if it's what I have to do ... hopefully I can hook on with someone next year."

The A's signed Duchscherer to a one-year, \$2 million contract this winter. The deal was incentives-heavy, with an additional \$3.5 million possible if he reached 30 starts and 200 innings.

There is a strong chance that Vin Mazzaro will resume Duchscherer's place in the rotation; he went seven innings at New Orleans on Saturday, allowing six hits and five runs, four earned. Geren said Ross would not be an option because the team likes what he's doing where he is.

Eric Patterson hit a solo homer in the third, tying him with Kurt Suzuki for the team lead with four.

A'S BEAT

Cust happy to be back

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Jack Cust didn't get much sleep, if any, Friday night, after getting a call after midnight in Oklahoma City that he'd be joining the A's.

He was on the bus to the airport at 6 a.m., and in Anaheim in plenty of time, raring to go after nearly six weeks with Triple-A Sacramento.

"It's good to be back," said Cust, who was stunned and furious when he was designated for assignment before the season began.

Cust, who led Oakland in homers each of the past three years, will be in the lineup regularly, mostly in the outfield, according to manager **Bob Geren**.

Cust went 0-for-3 with a walk and he also made an error in the seventh, dropping a flyball by **Brandon Wood** that was right to him.

On the move: Geren said that second baseman **Mark Ellis** (hamstring tendinitis) will start his rehab assignment Monday with Class A Stockton. Ellis said by phone that he's flying today, but he doesn't anticipate playing in a game with the Ports until Tuesday.

Ellis said he's feeling good after going 0-for-2 with a walk in an extended-spring game Saturday, his first game action since April 20.

Outfielder **Coco Crisp** also will play for Stockton on Tuesday after an extended-spring game Monday. Crisp (fractured pinkie) said he used full force in batting practice for the first time and it went fine.

Both men are slated to play at Sacramento on Friday, but it's possible they'll rejoin the A's before that if all goes well.

Briefly: Kurt Suzuki (ribcage strain) went 1-for-3 with a two-run double for Sacramento on Saturday, and he could rejoin the A's today in Anaheim or Monday in Oakland. ... **Josh Donaldson** is likely to be sent down to make room for Suzuki. ... The moves for Ellis and Crisp could be intriguing; backup catcher **Landon Powell** is playing well, and **Eric Patterson** hit his fourth homer Saturday. The team will stick with seven relievers.

A'S LEADING OFF

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Out(field) sick: Ryan Sweeney was back from a stomach flu that caused him to lose a good 5 pounds, he said, finally managing to eat a little bit Saturday. Gabe Gross was still feeling under the weather. He needed an IV on Thursday.

Drumbeat: Today's moves - updated with Duchscherer scratch

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Angel Stadium 5/15/2010, 5:14PM

UPDATE: Justin Duchscherer has been scratched from tonight's start with a recurrence of the left hip inflammation that landed him on the DL. Tyson Ross will fill in, making his first-ever big-league start. I'd imagine he'll be limited to three innings, possibly four, with someone such as Chad Gaudin going after that.

If the cortisone shot that Duchscherer got last week hasn't resolved the problem, that does not bode well for Duchscherer's season. When Duchscherer had his right hip trouble, the cortisone shot was a band-aid, really, until Duchscherer had surgery - and he had two right hip surgeries in all, eventually.

Duchscherer had thought the mechanical changes he made would take some pressure off the hip and also improve his cutter, but the hip trouble seems to remain an ongoing issue. That's a shame, because the next step is generally surgery, which likely would put Duchscherer on the DL the rest of the season.

Duchscherer has been fopen about not wanting to go through yet another round of extensive rehab - if that happens, he has suggested, he'd have to consider calling it a day. I hope that's not the case, because when healthy, Duchscherer is a very effective big-league pitcher, but it's understandable after six trips to the DL.

ORIGINAL POST

Jack Cust is in left tonight and batting sixth; manager Bob Geren said he'll be in the lineup regularly, and mostly in the outfield. Cust, as you'd imagine, is ecstatic to be back; he didn't sleep last night after finding out after midnight he was coming up. The team bus to the airport was at 6 a.m., so he just stayed up. He's definitely not tired, though. He's too pumped up.

To get Cust on the 40-man, reliever Edwar Ramirez was designated for assignment, and another reliever, Henry Rodriguez, was optioned out to make room for tonight's starter Justin Duchscherer.

Ryan Sweeney is feeling better, though he still hasn't had much to eat because of a stomach flu - he said had a little bit of breakfast and half a Jamba Juice. He has a lot more color back in his face, though, and he's in the lineup. Another outfielder, Gabe Gross, required an IV at Texas on Thursday and he is still feeling a little under the weather.

Geren said that Mark Ellis' rehab assignment will actually start Monday with Class-A Stockton, and Coco Crisp will be there the next day after an extended spring training game Monday in Phoenix.

Geren said that outfielder Travis Buck continues to make slow progress with his oblique strain; he's now up to swinging at 75 percent effort level with a fungo bat. Josh Outman, who is coming back from Tommy John surgery, had a little biceps issue that sidelined him a day or two, Geren said, but he's still doing well at extended spring training.

Kurt Suzuki is playing at New Orleans with Triple-A Sacramento tonight; there's still a chance he'd join the A's tomorrow in Anaheim. UPDATE: He's o-for-1 to start off with; he reached on an error by onetime A's infielder Donnie Murphy.

Josh Donaldson is the obvious candidate to be sent out when Suzuki gets back. This has been a nice experience for Donaldson, getting a taste of the big-leagues, and the A's believe he has a very bright future. What the beat writers have enjoyed, along with Donaldson's quotability, is that - as first noticed by Joe Stiglich of the Contra Costa Times - Donaldson sounds exactly like Bill Clinton. Same pitch, tone, accent, it's uncanny. Donaldson said he's heard that a lot lately. It's true, though. It's really amazing.

Also, for those of you who don't do the Twitter thing, Donaldson lost in the on-field cow-milking contest to Trevor Bell of the Angels last night; I mentioned the contest in the paper, but not the outcome. Donaldson got two pounds of milk, Bell six pounds, making us wonder if there was some sort of home-field advantage or if Donaldson got a cow that was, as Geren put it pre-game, "running on empty." Donaldson hasn't milked a cow before, and he thinks perhaps Bell was a ringer. Plus, Donaldson said, his cow kept moving around.

Getting demolished in the cow milking didn't bother Donaldson any last night; he had two of the A's four hits off Joe Saunders.

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 Duchscherer 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.

Angels take advantage of scrambling A's

Oakland forced to scratch righty Duchscherer at last minute

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- A night that had potential to add an ounce of hope to a struggling A's team instead took away from the little it had.

The club activated right-hander Justin Duchscherer from the disabled list -- a move that was expected to restock its rotation -- only to scratch him from his start at the last minute due to ongoing left hip troubles.

And Jack Cust, selected from Triple-A Sacramento to join Duchscherer back on the roster on Saturday, was supposed to boost a lifeless lineup. He went 0-for-3 with a walk and also committed a run-scoring error in left field.

The A's, subsequently, were left on the losing end of a 12-3 game to the Angels. It marked the club's fourth straight loss and had manager Bob Geren at an even greater loss for words.

Much of them, though, centered on the lone bright spot that was Tyson Ross, who was called upon to make a spot start -- the first start of his six-week-old Major League career -- in place of the injured Duchscherer, who is likely headed for his seventh career stint on the DL.

Ross, who represented a surprise roster choice at the beginning of the season because of a rather short resume, was told just minutes before game time of his start. Coming off three days' rest, the 23-year-old rookie insisted he felt no nerves but, rather, a sense of comfort back in the starting role, where he was stationed throughout his Minor League career.

"It's something I'm used to," Ross said. "It was nice to have that familiar feeling."

Said feeling showed, as the hard-throwing right-hander retired the first 11 batters he faced. Fatigue and a blister took over in the fourth, though, when Kendry Morales tagged him for a three-run homer to put an end to his 62-pitch night.

"You're preparing all afternoon seeing video of a starter," Angels manager Mike Scioscia said. "But we've seen [Ross] before. It wasn't like he came up from Triple-A. We looked at a different arm angle, different stuff. It wasn't that much of an adjustment."

Ross exited with three hits, three runs, no walks and three strikeouts attached to his name en route to garnering his first career loss. Considering the circumstances, though, the youngster was pretty proud of his go at one of baseball's best lineups.

"I thought I did pretty well," Ross said. "The one bad pitch I made was to Morales. It was a sinker that just didn't sink enough."

"Tyson threw great, he really did," said Geren, who mentioned after the game he plans on keeping Ross in the bullpen for the time being. "Aside from that one mistake, he put together a nice string of outs."

What followed was an impressive string of hits from a feisty Angels lineup, which collected 15 hits on the night -- 12 of which came against a battered A's bullpen.

Relievers Jerry Blevins and Chad Gaudin combined to give up 11 hits and nine runs (eight earned) through the next 3 1/3 innings. The latter, who was left to battle for 2 2/3 innings, has now surrendered at least two runs in six of his 12 outings -- the last which had him tagged for three homers in 1 2/3 innings in Texas.

"It's hard to put a finger on it," Geren said of Gaudin's struggles. "He's leaving balls up. He's been hit hard the last couple of times out."

Lefty Craig Breslow pitched a one-hit eighth inning to calm the storm, but the A's offense didn't put a run on the board in the final three frames.

The club managed seven hits and three runs (two earned) off Los Angeles starter Ervin Santana, who walked three and fanned six through six solid innings of work. After the A's posted a run in the first frame, Eric Patterson collected his fourth homer of the season in the third and Landon Powell drove in the club's final run with a two-out single in the sixth.

With the loss, the A's fell to 18-19 on the season, marking just the third day of the season they have been under .500. Furthermore, they've lost 11 of their last 13 road games -- the majority of which have been played without the likes of key players Kurt Suzuki and Mark Ellis, but the former could be back with the club any day now.

That notion, said Geren, slightly eases some of the team's other woes, including Duchscherer's most recent setback.

"We're still going to get players back," he said. "We still have a lot of healthy bodies. We'll be fine."

Angels' lineup shuffle paying dividends

By Kyle Maistri / MLB.com

Thanks to a lineup shuffle by manager Mike Scioscia, the Angels will have a chance to sweep the American League West-rival A's on Sunday.

After scoring 11 runs over the previous four games, Scioscia decided to move Howard Kendrick into the No. 2 spot in the batting order before Friday's contest, shifting Bobby Abreu and Torii Hunter down a spot and into the No. 3 and No. 4 spots, respectively.

The team responded with only four runs on Friday, but exploded for 12 on Saturday, marking the first time the Angels have scored more than eight runs this season.

"If we get everybody swinging the bat well, it's a lineup we can stick with," Scioscia said. "Those groupings are pretty good. The whole idea with the new lineup is to get more baserunners in front of Bobby and Torii, the middle of the lineup."

Los Angeles would pull to within a half-game of Oakland in the second spot in the AL West with a win, and 2 1/2 back of first-place Texas.

The A's will try to avoid being swept in a full series for the first time this season, though the Rays took both games of a two-game set from them April 27-28.

Angels: Finding the right mix

The Angels were 60-35 last season with Abreu batting third, and 26-24 when he was in the No. 2 spot. ... They were 27-19 with Hunter batting cleanup. ... Joel Pineiro will be charged with closing out the sweep. He is 8-8 with a 4.68 ERA in 17 starts (21 appearances) against Oakland.

A's: Suzuki nearing return

Catcher Kurt Suzuki has been rehabbing with Triple-A Sacramento and could be activated off the disabled list as soon as Sunday. ... Manager Bob Geren said he expects Jack Cust, who went 0-for-3 with a walk on Saturday, to be a regular in left field now that he has been recalled from Sacramento. ... Trevor Cahill will make his fourth start of the season on Sunday. He has allowed just two earned runs in his last two outings.

Worth noting

The A's are 10-5 in day games this season, while the Angels are 6-7.

Duchscherer scratched in return from DL

Athletics right-hander still bothered by hip inflammation

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- Justin Duchscherer entered the 2010 season healthy of body and mind.

Now, the A's right-hander, who missed all of last season due to elbow surgery and a bout with clinical depression, is finding that said body to be giving out -- again.

The 31-year-old Duchscherer, reinstated from the 15-day disabled list on Saturday to start against the Angels, was scratched from the outing with left hip inflammation.

Trouble with that hip is what landed him on the DL on May 7, retroactive to April 30. Duchscherer received a cortisone shot on May 5 for the inflammation that surfaced at the beginning of the season and eventually led to the pitcher's early exit in his April 29 start in Toronto. He was initially worried the hip would require surgery, as was the case with his right hip that was operated on twice.

Two weeks later, he's worried again.

"It's very similar to what I felt in my other hip," said Duchscherer, who first experienced the pain Saturday during a pregame jog. "I'll go see the doctor again and figure out my options."

Nashville-based physician Thomas Byrd administered the righty's cortisone shot at the beginning of the month and warned Duchscherer it could potentially mask the pain instead of completely taking it away. The A's veteran, though, is still hopeful of non-surgical options.

"If I have to have surgery, I'm done for the year," he said.

Manager Bob Geren confirmed on Saturday night that another trip to the DL -- which would mark the seventh of Duchscherer's career -- is "probable." Calling it quits on a career that includes two trips to the All-Star Game isn't as likely, even if an operation is required.

"I don't want to do it," he said. "I've obviously done it a few times before, and it's very mentally draining. It's frustrating because I feel like I'm a good pitcher. ... My body is just not cooperating."

"But I'm a baseball player. If [surgery] is what I have to do, I'll do it."

Still, frustration has become apparent in the pitcher who has missed parts of each of the last four seasons.

"Both my pitching coaches have told me I have the best mechanics they've ever seen," he said. "It's just genetic. There's an issue with the size of the head of my femur. It's the same thing in my right hip. I can't really control any of it."

Duchscherer was 2-1 with a 2.89 ERA in five starts -- three of which didn't include any earned runs -- for the A's before being placed on the DL at the beginning of the month. In his stead Saturday, rookie reliever Tyson Ross made a spot start and gave up three runs in 3 2/3 innings on three days' rest in an eventual 12-3 loss to the Angels.

A's promote slugger Cust from Triple-A

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ANAHEIM -- Jack Cust didn't quite understand the A's reasoning for designating him for assignment just two days prior to Opening Day.

Six weeks and a large handful of Triple-A games later, he still doesn't.

That's OK, Cust says. He has to stay focused on the task at hand.

And on Saturday, that task officially involved a Major League uniform again, as Cust was selected from Triple-A Sacramento to lend a rather lackluster A's lineup some offensive pop.

"I knew in my heart this is where I'm supposed to be," said Cust, who reunited with teammates in Anaheim on Saturday as the club prepared to take on the Angels.

The 31-year-old Cust was designated on April 3 but cleared waivers and immediately began his stint with Sacramento, where he was batting .273 with four homers and 19 RBIs in 33 games for the River Cats. Appearing in 19 games as a designated hitter and 13 in the outfield, Cust also tallied 33 walks and 33 strikeouts in the midst of posting a .444 on-base percentage.

Cust made the three-hour commute each way from his new home in San Francisco to Sacramento on a daily basis. It was a drive that created a constant mental battle, not to mention a strain on his relationship with wife, Jennifer, and their young daughters Ava and Sophia.

"The main thing in all this is my family," he said. "When you get to my age and you've played the game as long as I have, it makes it even harder. You go through your ups and downs, and it's really just been a disaster for all of us trying to deal with it, especially with a new kid.

"My wife's excited. She said it feels like a car has been lifted off her chest. I know she's been struggling just as much as I have with everything."

The A's wasted no time getting Cust in the lineup on Saturday, as he was penciled in batting sixth while playing left field -- a position manager Bob Geren sees Cust spending the majority of his time. Last year, while leading the team in home runs (25) and on-base percentage (.356), Cust played 50 games in right field and 96 as designated hitter -- a spot primarily being occupied by fellow left-handed hitter Eric Chavez these days.

"We feel like he can help us," Geren said. "He's had a nice start down in Triple-A. He's been swinging the bat real well."

To make room for Cust on the 40-man roster, the A's designated Edwar Ramirez for assignment. The right-handed reliever, recalled from Sacramento on May 7 for his second stint with the A's this year, made his only appearance Wednesday in Texas, allowing a run on two hits and two walks in one inning. Overall, Ramirez was 1-0 with a 4.91 ERA in seven relief appearances -- during which he compiled 10 walks in 11 innings.

The transaction, along with the club's decision to option Henry Rodriguez to Triple-A, gave the A's back their typical seven-man bullpen and three-man bench. It's also given Cust reason to smile again.

"It's been a long day," said the veteran slugger, who didn't sleep at all before an early 6 a.m. flight out of Oklahoma City. "I'm just excited to be back and gain that appreciation of being here. I've never taken it for granted.

Injuries plague Oakland

Associated Press

ANAHEIM -- A last-minute change in pitchers by the Oakland Athletics didn't bother the Los Angeles Angels for very long. They eventually got to emergency starter Tyson Ross and reached double digits in runs for the first time this season.

Kendry Morales drove in five runs with a pair of homers, including a go-ahead shot off Ross, and Los Angeles beat the A's 12-3 on Saturday night.

"This is what everybody's been expecting this ballclub to be doing -- hitting the ball hard and everybody contributing," Torii Hunter said. "It was awesome. The total game was played tonight."

Hunter doubled during a four-run seventh inning against Chad Gaudin for his 900th career RBI, and Morales followed with his ninth homer of the season to make it 11-3.

It was the sixth career multihomer game for Morales, who has 28 home runs since last year's All-Star break -- more than any other player during that stretch.

"I'm not surprised. I mean, have you ever touched this guy? He's like a brick house," Hunter said. "He's hard. He's strong. I think the organization knew what they were doing when they brought him up to play first base and let Mark Teixeira go. They knew what they could do and they had faith in him to do what he's doing right now."

Ervin Santana (2-3) earned his first win since April 18, allowing three runs -- two earned -- and seven hits over six innings with six strikeouts and three walks. The right-hander is 11-2 with a 1.50 ERA in 18 career appearances against the A's, including 16 starts.

Justin Duchscherer was scheduled to start for Oakland after being activated from the disabled list. But he was scratched just before game time due to a recurrence of inflammation in his troublesome left hip, which had sidelined him since his previous start April 29.

A's manager Bob Geren said it was "probable" that Duchscherer would go back on the disabled list for the seventh time in his career. But no move was made after the game.

"For my warmup, I usually run to center field and back just to jog, and I felt something in my hip," said Duchscherer, who has had two operations on his other hip. "I came in and told Curtis (pitching coach Curt Young) that something didn't feel quite right. I let him know early just in case he needed to get somebody going.

"As I was throwing (on flat ground), my hip felt OK, but it just got kind of achy," he added. "Then when I was in the bullpen, I just couldn't find a way to land without having pain. I started throwing from the stretch, and then I told Curt: 'I can't throw like this.'"

Geren replaced Duchscherer with Ross, who threw 62 pitches over 3 2-3 innings in his first big league start. He allowed three runs and three hits, fighting off a blister that developed on his index finger during the third inning.

"I was just trying to get out to the 'pen as quick as possible and make sure I had enough time to get loose," said Ross, who was informed of the switch while he was still in the clubhouse. "I think I did pretty well. I just made one bad pitch to Morales and he made me pay."

Ross has made 11 relief appearances this season. The only other time he faced the Angels was April 11 at Anaheim, when he pitched three innings for his first big league save in Dallas Braden's 9-4 win.

"I didn't even remember him," Hunter said. "I saw somebody throwing down there and I said, 'That's not Duchscherer.' So it was kind of a surprise. And for three innings or so, he was dealing. He had a perfect game going. We just didn't know what his ball was doing. But the second time around, we got a little better at seeing his pitches and figuring him out."

Ross (1-1) retired his first 11 batters before everything unraveled for the 23-year-old right-hander. Bobby Abreu reached on an infield hit and Hunter's single put runners at the corners, bringing Geren to the mound for a long chat with Ross.

Two pitches later, Morales drove his eighth homer to left-center for a 3-2 lead, chasing Ross. When he returned to the dugout, all his teammates were waiting to greet him and pat him on the back.

The Angels increased the margin to 7-2 with a four-run fifth that included RBI singles by Brandon Wood, Howie Kendrick and Abreu. Kendrick was on the front end of a double steal with Abreu and continued home on a throwing error to second by catcher Landon Powell.

Eric Patterson homered for Oakland and Powell had three hits, including an RBI single. Eric Chavez had a double and a single, giving him 2,287 total bases and tying Reggie Jackson for third place on the Oakland list.

Jack Cust returned to the A's after his contract was purchased from Triple-A Sacramento. He went 0 for 3 and committed an error in left field when he dropped a lazy sacrifice fly by Wood.