

A's Dallas Braden outdueled for second time in a row since perfect game

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

It's tough to say whether opposing hitters have cranked up the intensity since A's left-hander Dallas Braden threw his perfect game.

But opposing pitchers are sure rising to the occasion.

Detroit Tigers ace Justin Verlander went the distance and limited the A's to four hits in a 5-1 Tigers victory Wednesday to open this two-game series at the Oakland Coliseum.

Braden was up for the challenge despite battling a lingering illness that had sent him to the hospital Tuesday. He received an IV at the hospital and had blood work done, but he hadn't received the results as of Wednesday night.

Braden allowed just four hits through the first six innings, but he surrendered a leadoff homer to Brandon Inge in the seventh that broke a scoreless tie. Gerald Laird followed with a bunt single to the first-base side that Braden couldn't field cleanly.

Braden was removed after that — leaving in the company of A's head trainer Steve Sayles — and Michael Wuertz relieved him and let in three more runs (one charged to Braden) to give Detroit a 4-0 lead.

"You know you've got to keep up with that guy," Braden said of Verlander. "You want to give your team a chance and fight through whatever you're feeling, to stick around and see if we can scratch (some runs)."

A's manager Bob Geren said he could tell from Braden's effort at fielding Laird's bunt that the lefty's energy was zapped.

"He's so quick on his feet," Geren said. "When I saw that play, I ran out there."

Verlander's gem comes after Los Angeles Angels lefty Joe Saunders threw a four-hit shutout at the A's on Friday in Braden's first start since his May 9 perfect game.

Verlander (5-2) struck out five and walked one, facing three batters over the minimum.

Braden received a second IV after the game and said he's lost 7 pounds.

"And I don't have that much to give away," he said.

A's right fielder Ryan Sweeney recently was hit with a stomach bug, but Braden isn't sure how to classify his ailment.

"It's just something that's kind of lingered since before the Anaheim start," he said. "I thought it was going to be the flu and be done with it. The other day I thought it was food poisoning because it was kind of isolated. But we'll figure it out one of these days."

A's catcher Kurt Suzuki said he could tell by about the fifth inning that Braden was fatigued.

"That's the definition of a gamer," Suzuki said. "You go six scoreless against that team with those circumstances. That's impressive."

Verlander came into the game 3-1 with a 1.35 ERA over his previous four starts.

"The guy throws three above-average pitches," Suzuki said. "It was pretty hard to muster up anything with the way he was throwing."

Wuertz hadn't allowed a run over his first four outings since coming off the DL with shoulder tendinitis. Before Wednesday's game, Wuertz said he had no idea why he hadn't been used over the previous five games.

In the seventh, he allowed Austin Jackson's RBI single (charged to Braden). Then he allowed a two-run double to Casper Wells, who only started because Magglio Ordonez was scratched. Wells recorded his first career hit earlier in the game.

Geren said after the game that Wuertz had dealt with a mild leg injury in recent days but was still available during that time. Wuertz wasn't available for comment after the game.

A's update: Kurt Suzuki's improvement in throwing a work in progress for A's

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Suzuki's improvement hits bump in the road

Kurt Suzuki wasn't fretting over two throws he bounced to second base Tuesday on stolen-base attempts by the Seattle Mariners.

But the A's catcher is working on his throwing, and his recent stint on the disabled list temporarily interrupted that process.

"I just try to be too quick sometimes," said Suzuki, who missed 19 games with a rib cage injury. "I was feeling really good right before I got injured, and I was working on it down in Sacramento (during his rehab assignment). I guess it's just being in sync with my feet and hands."

The A's have done well controlling the running game. Entering Wednesday's game against Detroit, opponents were successful on just 22 of 35 stolen base attempts (62.9 percent), the second-lowest percentage in the American League.

A's pitchers rank second in the AL with 10 pickoffs.

But Suzuki had thrown out just 2 of 12 base stealers (16.6 percent), after throwing out just 17.3 percent last year.

"There were a couple he had a bad grip on (Tuesday)," manager Bob Geren said. "His arm feels good. His fundamentals and footwork, everything's right. And his arm strength is good."

- Rookie Tyson Ross has never faced the Tigers, but he'll see a familiar face when he takes the mound against them this afternoon. He and Detroit rookie outfielder Brennan Boesch were teammates at Cal in 2006, when Ross was a freshman and Boesch was a junior.

Boesch led AL rookies with 19 RBIs coming into Wednesday. Ross will be making his second start for the A's in place of the injured Justin Duchscherer.

"Every time I look at the highlights, it seems like he's getting two hits," Ross said.

- Brett Anderson (strained forearm) threw a 41-pitch side session, and he could pitch in a minor league game as soon as Monday. It's possible Anderson could be activated after one game, though he'd likely be on a limited pitch count. "...
- Coco Crisp (fractured pinkie) and Mark Ellis (strained hamstring) each played their second games for Single-A Stockton on Wednesday. Crisp went 4-for-4 with a homer Tuesday. Both are expected to join Triple-A Sacramento by Friday.
- The June 26 game against Pittsburgh will start at 7:05 p.m. instead of 6:05 and be televised by Comcast SportsNet California.

Chin Music: A's pregame notes — Braden's odd gift, Sweeney's highlight play and Brett Anderson update

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 5/19/2010 6:46PM

You never know what you'll see at the ballpark ... There's a large table in the middle of the A's clubhouse where players congregate. Typically, the table is filled with snacks for guys to enjoy before the game. Before BP today, there was a samurai sword sitting on it. Yes, a real sword, with a blade extending about three feet. Dallas Braden received the gift from Mizuno, his shoe and glove company, in recognition of his perfect game. Sounds dangerous, I know. But the sword was in a protective sleeve, and it's not like players were picking the thing up and swinging it like "Clash of the Titans" or anything.

Braden's start tonight is his first at the Coliseum since his May 9 perfecto. It'll be fun to hear his thoughts after the game about owning a sword. ... Pregame stat of the day: Braden has a 7.34 ERA in six career starts against the Tigers.

- Ryan Sweeney had a big offensive night Tuesday with four hits, but I was shaking my head at the play he made in right field in the sixth. Seattle's Casey Kotchman drilled a ball off the out-of-town scoreboard, and Sweeney caught the ball on the deflection (bare-handed) and threw to second to nail Kotchman, who tried for a double. Sweeney said the ball kicked

back to him harder than if it had hit the padded outfield wall. "If I didn't (bare-hand) it, it would have hit me in the face," he said. "The wall is soft, but (the scoreboard) is like steel out there."

Believe it or not, manager Bob Geren said the A's did a pregame outfield drill yesterday working on balls that hit off the wall. "It's funny how you work on something and it comes into play," Geren said.

- Brett Anderson (strained forearm) threw a 41-pitch side session today in Phoenix with a hitter standing in. All went well, and pitching coach Curt Young told me Anderson could pitch in a minor league game Sunday if there are no complications from today.
- Coco Crisp (fractured pinkie) went 4-for-4 with a homer and three RBIs in his first rehab game with Single-A Stockton last night. Mark Ellis (strained hamstring) went 0-for-2 with a walk and RBI. Both should join Triple-A Sacramento in the next couple of days, and you would think they'd be activated a few days after that if they're healthy. Geren was asked what Crisp's addition would mean for Rajai Davis and/or Jack Cust in the outfield rotation. Geren basically said they'd cross that bridge when they come to it. ... Davis has rebounded at the plate over the past couple days, but the A's could use Cust's power too. First thing's first — Crisp has to prove he's healthy. But I'd expect him to take over the leadoff spot when he returns.

Tonight's lineups:

A's: Pennington SS, Barton 1B, Sweeney RF, Suzuki C, Cust LF, Kouzmanoff 3B, Chavez DH, Rosales 2B, Davis CF; Braden LHP.

Tigers: Jackson CF, Damon DH, Wells LF, Cabrera 1B, Boesch RF, Inge 3B, Laird C, Worth 2B, Everett SS; Verlander RHP.

Planning panel approves stadium report

By Tracy Seipel, Mercury News

San Jose's plans for a major league baseball stadium in downtown San Jose got a boost Wednesday night after the city's Planning Commission approved a revised environmental impact report related to the project.

In a 4-1 vote, with Commissioner Chris Platten opposed and commissioners Xavier Campos and Hope Cahan absent, the other commissioners said they felt staff had adequately answered their questions and those from the public.

Many of the dozen speakers expressed concerns about how the proposed ballpark, which would seat 32,000 to 36,000, would affect traffic, parking and noise.

"The S-EIR (report) identifies the 6 to 7 p.m. time period during which the vast majority of traffic will be generated by the stadium, but the report declines to address this," said Todd Smith, an attorney for the San Francisco Giants-backed group called Stand For San Jose.

The coalition opposes public funds or subsidies that would bring the Oakland A's to San Jose. The San Francisco team owns the territorial rights to Santa Clara County.

"I think the parking analysis lowballs the available spaces in the parking garages," said Eloy Wouters, a resident of St. Leo's neighborhood and member of the Diridon Station Area Good Neighbor Committee. The group has been meeting since last year to hash out development concerns in the area, including the 14-acre ballpark site near Diridon Station.

The revised report acknowledges that Highway 87 and interstates 280, 680 and 880 all would see significant traffic increases on game days. Among proposed steps to lessen those impacts are preferential parking for carpoolers, increased parking fees and other measures to encourage use of public transit.

And the report currently recommends no new parking structures be built, citing 13,847 parking spaces that would be available in downtown lots and garages on evenings and weekends.

San Jose began studying and acquiring land for a major league park in 2006 when A's owner Lew Wolff said he was considering moving the team. However, all this is moot unless Major League Baseball team owners remove the San Francisco Giants' territorial claim.

Tigers' Verlander shuts down A's

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Though he definitely didn't feel perfect on Wednesday at the Coliseum, Dallas Braden fought through the flu and pitched well for six innings against the Tigers.

Then Brandon Inge led off the seventh with a homer, and Braden made an unsuccessful stab at trying to field Gerald Laird's bunt. That was it for his night.

"That probably put me over the edge," Braden said after a 5-1 loss to the Tigers.

Braden needed IV fluids after he came out, having taken a trip to the hospital the day before because he was vomiting. While there, he got blood work done and also received fluids.

Oakland's offense was on the poorly side, too. Detroit starter Justin Verlander sent the A's right back into the scoring doldrums they experienced at Anaheim last weekend. Oakland, which had rebounded from that lifeless Angels series with 31 hits in two games against Seattle, managed just four on Wednesday, and Verlander recorded his first complete game of the season.

It made for an interesting matchup - Verlander also has thrown a no-hitter, though not a perfect game like Braden's 11 days ago. Braden threw 79 pitches, a season-low, and while he didn't allow a run through six, he called his just-out-of-the-hospital effort, "Marginal. OK. You've got to keep up with that guy, and that complete game told the story."

The zero runs of support while Braden was working probably didn't make the left-hander feel much better, but at least he's used to it: In each of his past three losses, his teammates have provided him with no runs. He is 1-20 in 25 career starts when given no more than one run of support, and he is 16-5 with two runs or more.

Verlander faced only one batter over the minimum through the first seven innings. The A's only run came in the eighth on a sacrifice fly by Adam Rosales.

"The last pitch of the game, he was still throwing 96 to 97 mph," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He certainly didn't lose any gas."

The same could not be said for Braden, who had felt ill before his last start, too, though he thought Tuesday's stomach problem was related to some Chinese food he had eaten. He lost 7 pounds, Braden said, "and I don't have much to give."

Geren was aware how sick Braden was, and he said he knew when Braden didn't field the bunt, it was time to get him out because he's usually such a good defensive player. "He said something like, 'I'm not doing too well,' " Geren said.

Two runs were charged to Braden on Wednesday. Michael Wuertz took over and allowed two two-out hits, including a two-run double by rookie Casper Wells, who was a late addition to the lineup when Magglio Ordoñez was scratched with a sore heel. Wells recorded his first big-league hit in the third, a single off Braden.

A's Anderson could be back by month's end

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Left-hander **Brett Anderson** could be back in the A's rotation by the end of the month, or very close to that, if he continues to make the kind of progress he did Wednesday.

Anderson, who has been out with a forearm strain for more than three weeks, threw 41 pitches off the mound with a batter standing in the box, and everything went extremely well. Anderson said in a text that he threw all his pitches.

The A's are planning to send Anderson out on a rehab assignment Monday. That means Oakland could look to slot him back into the rotation as early as May 29 at Detroit.

If that happens, today's start could be a brief fill-in for rookie **Tyson Ross**, who is taking **Justin Duchscherer's** turn. Because of the off day Monday, the A's could skip Ross next time around and slot Anderson in for the fifth game of a five-game stretch.

Duchscherer is scheduled to see a local doctor about his left hip inflammation today, and it's likely he will receive an injection of Synvisc, a substance that cushions joints, as a potential measure to avoid or delay season-ending hip surgery.

Briefly: Coco Crisp, who went 4-for-4 with a homer and three RBIs in the first game of his rehab assignment with Class A Stockton, followed that with a walk and a triple in three plate appearances Wednesday. **Mark Ellis** was 1-for-5 with a walk in the same two games. Both are expected to play at Triple-A Sacramento on Friday. ... Reliever **Michael Wuertz** had been unavailable with right leg soreness the past couple of days, but he worked one inning Wednesday and allowed two hits and two runs. It was his first appearance in six days. ... Outfielder **Travis Buck** (oblique) said in a text that he's hitting off a tee and believes he'll be ready to return to Oakland in three or four weeks. ... Reliever **Joey Devine** (tendinitis) has progressed to long toss and is hopeful that he'll be throwing off the mound by Sunday.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Time changes: The June 26 game vs. the Pirates will start at 7:05 p.m., not 6:05. Friday's game vs. the Giants is at 7:17 because of the Dallas Braden pregame ceremony. His grandmother, Peggy Lindsey, will throw out the first pitch.

Drumbeat: Brett Anderson's making good progress, Wuertz is OK

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 5/19/2010 5:48PM

Brett Anderson threw 41 pitches off the mound today with a batter standing in, and all went well, according to A's manager Bob Geren. Anderson is working out at the team's complex in Phoenix, and if he comes out of today's activity well, he could be looking at rejoining the A's in about two weeks, give or take. That puts him right on the original timeline of about five weeks. Anderson has been on the DL since April 25 with a forearm strain.

That means it could be a short stint for Tyson Ross starting in place of Justin Duchscherer, but I am glad the team decided to give Ross a shot there, at least. He's been very good in the bullpen, and he also was great in his emergency start at Anaheim until he got past his previous high for pitches this season. He didn't allow a baserunner for 3 2/3 innings. That's intriguing enough to deserve another opportunity.

Michael Wuertz has been unavailable the past couple of days because of upper right leg soreness, but he's fine now and he is available tonight.

Mark Ellis and Coco Crisp continue their rehab assignments with Class-A Stockton tonight, then they might work out with the A's tomorrow before playing at Triple-A Sacramento on Friday. There's always a slim chance they'll just hang onto one or both tomorrow if convinced they're ready after tonight's game, but the plan has been at least one game at Sacramento.

Here's Oakland's lineup: Pennington SS, Barton 1B, Sweeney RF, Suzuki C, Cust LF, Kouzmanoff 3B, Chavez DH, Rosales 2B, Davis CF. Magglio Ordonez was a scratch for Detroit tonight because of a heel problem.

As you know, I'm sure, it's the no-no men going tonight, Dallas Braden of the perfect game for the A's and Justin Verlander, a no-hitter tosser, for the Tigers.

Braden outdueled by Verlander in A's loss

Lefty pitches into seventh inning despite ongoing illness

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Dallas Braden's undeniable mental strength was showcased nationwide the day he threw a perfect game.

On Wednesday, exactly 10 days after the historic feat, Braden gave all he had and more -- again.

This time, though, he was tagged for six hits and two runs in the A's 5-1 loss to the visiting Tigers. He could only muster six-plus innings of work. And that mental strength, the one that's guided his entire career, faded before he even reached the 80-pitch mark.

However, considering the circumstances -- he's been battling a mystery illness for about a week -- Braden appeared rather strong in the effort. He didn't feel that way, though. And Oakland's bats didn't lend him much help in the meantime.

Braden, who returned to the same mound on which he tossed his perfect game May 9, quickly entered a pitcher's duel with Detroit's Justin Verlander. Both teams failed to get a runner past second base through the first six frames, which saw just six hits total.

In the seventh, the A's lefty gave up a leadoff homer to Brandon Inge before putting Gerald Laird on base with a bunt single -- one Braden couldn't quite get a grasp on as Laird passed him down the first-base line.

"When he didn't make that play," manager Bob Geren said, "I knew he wasn't feeling well. He's such a good defensive player."

Thus, Geren and trainer Steve Sayles made a visit to the mound, where Sayles accompanied Braden away to the clubhouse following 79 pitches.

"After the fifth, I kind of had an idea he wasn't feeling well," catcher Kurt Suzuki said. "You could tell he was running out of gas and losing some steam. But he kept battling. That's the definition of a gamer right there.

"For him to go six scoreless innings against a team like that, that's impressive. He's the type of guy who makes you want to come out and battle."

However, Suzuki and Co. could only score after the exit of Braden, who has received no run support in each of his last three losses and has two runs of support in his combined four losses this year. The A's were coming off two straight wins in which they combined for 31 hits, but Verlander limited them to just four on Wednesday.

The Detroit right-hander, who entered the game with a 1.35 ERA over his last four starts, lowered that already impressive mark to 1.26 thanks to his first complete game of the season. He walked one while fanning five en route to shutting down the A's.

"He's one of the best pitchers in baseball," Geren said. "He was tough. He certainly didn't run out of gas there at the end. After 110 pitches, he was still throwing 96, 97 [mph]. A lot of pitchers can keep it up when they start to smell the finish line."

"He has three above-average pitches," Suzuki said. "His fastball is above above-average. And he mixes everything up, which makes him even tougher. He's one of those guys you have to tip your hat to and move forward."

Verlander faced just three batters over the minimum en route to garnering his fifth win of the season for Detroit -- an accomplishment Tigers manager Jim Leyland said could partially be attributed to Braden's own successful ways.

"I think their guy pitching good helped our guy, really," the Detroit skipper offered. "Braden was good -- we weren't doing too much with him. It was kind of in-and-out, in-and-out. Both pitchers had a really good tempo going."

Following Braden's early departure, Michael Wuertz -- who Geren said had been battling a leg strain the past couple of days -- took over and quickly surrendered two hits and two runs to the Tigers in the inning. The two-run outing snapped a career-high 17-inning scoreless streak dating back to last season for the right-handed reliever.

Detroit's final run came in the eighth off Oakland's Cedrick Bowers courtesy of an RBI bloop single off the bat of Danny Worth, who enjoyed a 3-for-3 day at the plate.

Meanwhile, the A's lone run came in the eighth on a sacrifice fly from Adam Rosales, who brought home Jack Cust. The A's slugger joined Suzuki, Eric Chavez and Kevin Kouzmanoff as the only Oakland players to tally hits off Verlander, who made Braden's already tough battle even harder.

"I don't feel too hot," Braden said after the game. "I feel beat up ... beat down, dragged down. I already lost seven pounds, and I don't have much to give away."

The A's pitcher was sent to the hospital Tuesday to undergo blood work and receive an IV, which he also got before Wednesday's start. Braden has yet to receive any type of results, but assumes he'll "figure it out one of these days."

"I was marginal tonight," Braden said. "Just OK. You know you gotta keep up with that guy. You have to fight through."

Anderson on track to return to A's

Young lefty throws 41 pitches at Phoenix complex

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Sometimes no news is good news regarding the A's injury front, but on Wednesday manager Bob Geren provided an uplifting update on lefty Brett Anderson.

The A's pitcher, who signed a four-year contract extension just days before exiting an outing early and subsequently being placed on the 15-day disabled list with a combination of a forearm strain and elbow inflammation, threw 41 pitches on the side at the A's Minor League complex in Phoenix on Wednesday.

Anderson, who was placed on the DL on April 27, endured the session with hitters standing in -- a situation which Geren said the recovering pitcher handled "very well."

"He's happy with the way it went," the A's skipper said. "He's coming along nicely."

Anderson was projected to miss four to five weeks, a timetable that seemingly appears to be on track. The A's, who are currently owners of a four-man rotation with Justin Duchscherer (left hip) out of the mix, could potentially see Anderson back in Oakland by the end of the month.

A's Davis back in swing of things

OAKLAND -- Rajai Davis insists his most recent struggles at the plate were not resolved with a mechanical tweak or any other change of the sort.

"It's nothing a coach could fix," the A's outfielder said Wednesday before the club took on the visiting Tigers. "It's something I had to figure out for myself."

Davis' magic marker came in the form of a mental makeover, one that put his "spiritual well-being" back in place and, subsequently, led to a .538 average over his last four games following a 29-game stretch of batting .184.

"When I'm in the Lord's presence," Davis said, "I'm more relaxed. I'm more comfortable. I'm confident. I have a different attitude."

The 29-year-old Davis was plugged in the leadoff spot at the beginning of the season, but only managed to build a .253 on-base percentage through 18 starts there. Since moving down to the bottom of the order, he has compiled a .347 OBP.

"Raj is having better at-bats," manager Bob Geren said. "We have a lot of guys like that who go through their good days and their bad days. He's been swinging the bat well."

"It's all mental," Davis said. "Everyone who gets to this level has already shown that they can play at this level. After that, it's about staying focused."

Crisp, Ellis could return this weekend

OAKLAND -- Mark Ellis and Coco Crisp continued their rehab assignments with Class A Stockton on Wednesday night and will possibly work out with the A's on Thursday before joining Triple-A Sacramento on Friday.

Ellis, who was placed on the disabled list April 21 with a strained left hamstring, joined Crisp in a rehab assignment with Stockton at Lake Elsinore on Wednesday and went 1-for-3 while playing second base. The A's second baseman is now 1-for-5 through two starts with the Ports.

Crisp, meanwhile, went 1-for-2 with a triple and a walk after enjoying a perfect 4-for-4 day with a home run and three RBIs in a start at center field Tuesday. The 30-year-old outfielder, sidelined all season with a fractured left pinkie finger, has yet to make his A's debut since signing a one-year contract with Oakland in December.

The veteran duo is slated to play with Sacramento on Friday and, depending on the results of that game, both could be back on the A's 25-man roster by the weekend.

Tough act for Bonderman to follow

By Alex DiFilippo / MLB.com

Jeremy Bonderman and Justin Verlander have lockers side-by-side in the Tigers' clubhouse at Comerica Park.

Yes, the Tigers are on the road for a two-game set in Oakland, but Bonderman will certainly try to channel some of Verlander's success. The Tigers ace pitched an absolute gem on Wednesday, surrendering one run off four hits en route to a 5-1 victory against the Athletics. The win upped his record to 4-0 in May.

Bonderman (1-2), on the other hand, hasn't seen the same success. His only win of the season came way back on April 10, in the Tigers' fifth game of the season. Since then, he's started five games, earning three no-decisions to go along with his two losses.

Bonderman was expected to start on Tuesday to kick off the series against the White Sox after a rainout Monday, but his start was pushed back to keep Verlander on schedule. He pitched one inning against the Red Sox on Sunday to stay fresh and didn't allow a run.

In his last start, Bonderman threw well, but was unable to garner any run support from his teammates. He allowed only two runs on five hits in seven innings, but took the loss to the Yankees.

"I just thought he mixed stuff pretty good," Tigers manager Jim Leyland said after Bonderman's last start. "I thought he had some movement on it. I thought he was rested. I think that probably helped him. But I just thought overall, he pitched very, very well."

For the Athletics, right-hander Tyson Ross (1-1) will be making only his second career start. He's never faced the Tigers, who have been on a roll of late, posting 19 runs in their last four games.

Ross was a spot starter in his first career start, and Athletics manager Bob Geren planned on putting him back in the bullpen after taking the loss. Not due to a poor performance, just to give the 23-year-old rookie some time to find his bearings.

But Ross will again start on Thursday and he's comfortable with it. He's been a starting pitcher his whole career before reaching the Majors.

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

Geren didn't mention an exact pitch count for Ross, but he said, "We'll see how it goes and go from there."

Athletics: Braden battles through

After throwing a perfect game two starts ago in Oakland, expectations for Athletics starting pitcher Dallas Braden were sky-high entering Wednesday's bout against the Tigers.

Braden (4-4) looked strong on the evening, before allowing two runs in the seventh inning. He exited the game early with flu-like symptoms and took the loss.

His perfect game on May 9 against the Tampa Bay Rays made him an instant celebrity. Mayor Ron Dellums even announced that Friday will be "Dallas Braden Day."

Tigers: Young guns still rolling

The Tigers have had five players make their Major League debut this season -- the most since 1922.

And on Wednesday, the rookies were the key to the Tigers' victory. Four of them were in the starting lineup.

Outfielder Brennan Boesch, who has been red-hot in 21 starts, went 0-for-3. The other three rookies combined to go 7-for-13 on the night.

Outfielder Casper Wells, who was a late addition due to a foot injury to Magglio Ordonez, recorded his first big league hit. But one wasn't enough, as he also recorded a second hit and tallied two RBIs.

Second baseman Danny Worth went 3-for-3 on the night and also tacked on his first RBI.

Worth noting

Boesch will face Ross for the first time on Wednesday. The two played together at the University of California. ... Tigers rookie Austin Jackson has recorded a hit in 19 of 20 road games this season.

Verlander stymies A's

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Justin Verlander pitched a four-hitter, late lineup addition Casper Wells drove in two runs and the Detroit Tigers beat the Oakland Athletics 5-1 on Wednesday night, spoiling Dallas Braden's first appearance at home since throwing the majors first perfect game this season.

Verlander struck out five and walked one while winning his fourth straight start. Detroit's ace, who struggled over the first month of the season, retired 14 of 15 batters during one stretch and carried a shutout into the eighth inning before settling for the easy win.

Braden was almost as impressive until leaving with flu-like symptoms after giving up a leadoff home run to Brandon Inge in the seventh followed by a single to Gerald Laird.

It was the perfect start to a seven-game road trip for the Tigers, who pulled within a game of first-place Minnesota in the AL Central.

Verlander (5-2) — who last pitched a complete game on July 24, 2009 — kept the A's offense quiet while Detroit's lineup waited patiently until scoring four times in the seventh. Most of the damage came against Oakland reliever Michael Wuertz, who carried a 17-inning scoreless streak into the game before melting down after replacing Braden.

Since beginning the season 1-2 with a 5.53 ERA, Verlander has been stellar over the past month while winning four straight starts for the first time since July 2008. He is 4-1 with a 1.26 ERA over his last five starts, with his last three wins coming after Detroit losses.

The A's managed only four singles off Verlander after piling up 31 hits while sweeping a two-game series from Seattle.

The Tigers, coming off a 6-2 loss to the Chicago White Sox, scored twice against Wuertz to break the game open then added another run off Cedrick Bowers in the eighth.

Wells, a late addition to Detroit's lineup when right fielder Magglio Ordonez was scratched due to a sore right heel, had the biggest blow with a two-run double off Wuertz. He also singled off Braden in the third for his first major league hit.

That spoiled what was already a big day for Braden, who was making his first start at the Oakland Coliseum since his perfect game against Tampa Bay on Mother's Day. The gem turned the A's lefty into an instant star, and he even made an appearance on the Late Show with David Letterman, delivering the Top 10 List.

The honors kept coming when Braden returned home, too. Before the game against Detroit, he was honored by Oakland mayor Ron Dellums, who proclaimed this Friday as 'Dallas Braden Day.'

For most of the night Braden, who gave up four earned runs in a 4-0 loss to the Los Angeles Angels in his most recent start, didn't disappoint the 19,284 fans who cheered his every pitch. He pitched out of jams in the first three innings and carried a shutout into the seventh before Inge led off with his solo homer to left-center.

One batter later, after Laird reached on an infield single that Braden (4-4) failed to field cleanly. The A's pitcher — who has been ill in recent days — called it a night because of flu-like symptoms. He met briefly on the mound with manager Bob Geren and trainer Steve Sayles before being replaced by Wuertz.

Wuertz retired the first two batters he faced but gave up an RBI single to Austin Jackson before Wells' big hit.

Verlander was impressive all game while shutting down an A's offense that most recently pounded out 31 hits in a two-game sweep of Seattle.

NOTES

*Ordonez told reporters in the Tigers clubhouse that he is day to day.

*Braden had thrown consecutive complete games before his night against Detroit ended early.

*Austin Jackson has hit safely in 19 of 20 road games this season.

On the Field With the Oakland A's: 10 Highlights For True Baseball Fans

Andrew Brining, Bleacher Report, 5/20/2010

One of the greatest things about receiving a press pass is the on-field access that comes with it.

Since I'm not allowed in the clubhouse—the Oakland Athletics were extremely gracious to extend the credential to Bleacher Report and (indirectly) me in the first place, but they didn't take COMPLETE leave of their senses—the time on the field before the game is my only chance to soak in a perspective of Major League Baseball that most aficionados never get.

The press box is definitely cool, but it's not all that different than watching a game with some of your most critical/passionate buddies.

In truth, I actually think the pre-game field experience is preferable to the locker room—that is the team's territory and I never like trespassing where I don't belong even when invited.

Plus, it's kind of like a zoo where the attractions are on display and they know it.

Even the most genuine interaction feels a bit artificial and the responses carefully calculated.

Granted, my exposure is limited to my first visit at the Oakland Coliseum when the powers-that-be forgot to eliminate my clubhouse access and I wandered through it accidentally (that might sound preposterous, but the tunnels all look the same and it was my maiden voyage—I walked up some stairs and was suddenly in a carpeted locker room).

By comparison, the diamond is more of a middle ground.

Yes, it belongs to the men in uniform, but there are enough interlopers roaming the grounds that ownership can't be considered exclusive (until the first pitch, that is).

More importantly, the field is like a safari—the stars still know they're on display, but the remoteness of the observation allows for a more comfortable and organic experience.

And it reminds me of all the reasons I absolutely love Major League Baseball.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

'Hounds Break Out Against Frisco

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

The sport of hockey has a wonderful tradition known as the "three stars of the game." The three players judged to have had the most outstanding performances in that night's contest are introduced and skate back on to the ice for a quick salute.

It was 90-degrees at game time, and still 83 just two hours, 10 minutes later, when the RockHounds completed a 9-1 win over the division-leading Frisco RoughRiders. Tough "skating" weather, but perfect for baseball. And, had this been a hockey game, the three stars would have been easily selected:

Josh Horton went 3-for-4, including two triples. The 'Hounds shortstop scored three runs and drove in another.

Carlos Hernandez returned to the starting rotation, and pitched the first five innings. Five perfect innings. The lefty faced and retired 15 batters, was really threatened only twice on two hard outs, and struck out five. Carlos had missed a start due to an ankle injury, and had made one appearance in relief, so his pitch count limited him to those five, outstanding innings, enough to earn him the win (3-0, 1.96).

Archie Gilbert went 2-for-3, and both of his hits left the ballpark. Archie's 3-run home run in the last of the first inning was huge, coming just one pitch after Frisco starter Martin Perez struck Jeff Baisley out on a laser of a fastball at the knees. The whiff was the second out of the inning, and the 'Hounds have struggled to get that "one big swing of the bat" over the last week or two. This time, on Perez' first pitch, Gilbert delivered a towering fly over the left center field wall. After adding a walk and a stolen base in the third inning, Archie capped the 'Hounds scoring with a line shot over the left field wall in the seventh.

Gilbert took over the team lead in home runs (7) and RBI (28) with the big night at the plate.

J.C. Holt also provided a key hit. The RockHounds led, 4-0, in the fourth, with runners at second and third. Perez got a strike out and promptly went 0-2 on Holt, whom he had struck out in the first and second innings. J.C., who joined the club two days ago as a free agent, fouled off five, 2-strike pitches and ran the count full. On the 11th pitch of the at bat, he delivered a 2-run single up the middle. The lead was 6-0 and that was largely the ballgame.

The first seven runs came against Perez, the Texas Rangers' # 3 prospect. The outstanding lefty, just 19, saw his ERA jump more than a half-point (from 3.34 to 4.91). Ben Hornbeck came out of the bullpen to relieve Hernandez, pitching the last four innings to earn the save in his first relief appearance of the season.

The RockHounds close the current home stand with a "Thirsty Thursday" match-up against Frisco before traveling to Corpus Christi for a 4-game series with the Hooks.

Decker's Blast Lifts Storm Past Ports 5-3

LAKE ELSINORE, Calif. - On Wednesday night, it was one swing of the bat that doomed the Stockton Ports. Cody Decker's three-run homer with two down in the bottom of the third proved to be the difference maker as the Lake Elsinore Storm evened their series with the Boys of Banner Island as the Ports fell by a final of 5-3.

After going 4-for-4 on Tuesday night, it was Coco Crisp who started a Stockton rally right off the bat by drawing a walk to start the ballgame. Mark Ellis followed with a single to right to put runners at the corners, and Grant Green drove in Stockton's first run with a sac-fly to right. Storm starter Jorge Reyes (5-2) would bear down, however, and strike out Stephen Parker and Mike Spina back-to-back to end the inning.

Ports starter Justin Murray (2-3) struck out four through the first two innings including striking out the side in the second. It was the third inning, though, that would prove to be the difference in the game. Blake Tekotte started the inning with a single to center and stole second. After a strikeout of Ali Solis, Drew Cumberland walked and, on a double-steal, went to second as Tekotte took third. Cole Figueroa followed with an infield RBI single to tie the game at one. Two batters later, with two on, two down and two strikes in the count, Decker hit a three-run blast to left to put the Storm up 4-1.

Outside of the home run ball that Decker hit, Murray pitched very well. He would wind up with his third loss of the year, however, going five innings and allowing four runs on seven hits while striking out a season-high seven. Murray finished his night on a strong note, escaping a bases-loaded, one-out jam by getting Jaff Decker to ground into a 4-6-3 double-play.

Reyes would pick up the win for Lake Elsinore, going six innings and allowing a run on five hits while matching a season-high with six strikeouts.

Trailing 4-1, the Ports would creep closer in the eighth facing Storm reliever Colt Hynes. Ryan Ortiz started a rally with a leadoff single and Michael Richard (who came on in the eighth to replace Crisp) followed with an infield knock to put runners at first and second. Shane Keough (who replaced Ellis in the eighth) singled to center to drive in Ortiz. The throw from the center fielder Tekotte came into third as Richard tried to reach third base, and the ball wound up out of play. An error was charged to Tekotte and Richard scored while Keough was awarded second, cutting the Storm lead to 4-3 with the possible tying run in scoring position.

Lake Elsinore called upon league saves leader Brad Brach (SV, 17) from the bullpen. Brach escaped the eighth with the Storm lead intact, striking out Green, getting Parker to ground out and striking out Spina to end the inning.

The Storm added an insurance run in the eighth. After retiring the first two batters of the inning, Fautino De Los Santos yielded a single to Daniel Robertson who stole second. Allan Dykstra brought Robertson home with a single down the left field line to make it a 5-3 ballgame. It was the only run allowed by De Los Santos in his lone inning of work.

Brach would go on to record his league-leading 17th save of the season, though he had to battle in the ninth. Todd Johnson singled to start the inning. Two batters later, Tyler Ladendorf reached on an error made by Figueroa at second. Brach would then get pinch-hitter Petey Paramore to fly to center on a sliding catch made by Tekotte, and pinch-hitter Matt Whitney to pop to second on a running catch made by Figueroa down the right-field line to end the ballgame.

In their second rehab appearances, Crisp went 1-for-2 with a walk, triple and a run scored, and Ellis went 1-for-3 with a single and two groundouts. Overall in their two rehab stints with Stockton, Crisp went 5-for-6 with a home run, triple, three singles, a walk, three RBI and two runs scored. Ellis went 1-for-5 with a single, a walk and an RBI.

Stockton and Lake Elsinore will play the rubber match of their three-game set on Thursday night at The Diamond. Shawn Haviland (3-1, 3.07 ERA) will head to the bump for the Ports, opposed by fellow right-hander Anthony Bass (2-2, 3.64 ERA) for the Storm. First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

Gilliam, Cougars Fall in Beloit **Kane County drops Game 3 to Snappers, now 4 games out of 1st place**

BELOIT, Wisc. – After posting a quality start six times in eight outings and three times in a row entering play Wednesday night, Kane County Cougars right-hander Rob Gilliam got touched for four runs in five innings as the Cougars fell, 4-2, against the Beloit Snappers at Pohlman Field. The Cougars never enjoyed a lead. They rallied to tie it in the fifth before quickly falling behind again and eventually losing the game. They now trail the Snappers by four games in the Western Division.

Gilliam (3-2), who had won each of his last two performances, never had a 1-2-3 frame. He battled through three innings of one-hit ball before yielding two runs in the fourth. The Cougars answered against Brad Stillings (3-2) in the fifth with three straight doubles. Myrio Richard nailed a one-out double, and Franklin Hernandez and Mike Gilmartin followed with RBI

connections to make it 2-2. The Cougars had runners at first and third with one out as they looked for the lead, but Tyreace House bunted into a double play trying to squeeze home Gilmartin.

The Snappers responded with two runs in the fifth against Gilliam and never looked back. The Cougars' starter gave up four runs on six hits, walked three and fanned one in the loss, and Bo Schultz notched three innings of one-hit shutout relief. The Cougars left the bases loaded in the sixth and also squandered a leadoff walk in the eighth. Matt Tone handled the ninth for Beloit for his first save.

The four-game set concludes Thursday night at 6:30 CT. The Cougars (20-20) will send Naperville native Ian Krol (2-1, 2.37) to the mound, and the Snappers (24-16) will counter with B.J. Hermsen (0-0, 1.80). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at www.kccougars.com, with pregame coverage starting at 6:15 p.m.