

Scoreboard numbers only ones that count for A's in win

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Some cold, hard stats existed Friday night that didn't point to an A's victory.

Right now, the A's will gladly take those numbers and tell you where to shove them. They overcame three home runs from Miguel Cabrera, not to mention their own ineptitude with runners in scoring position, and beat the Detroit Tigers 5-4 in front of 40,210 fans at Comerica Park.

"At the end of the day, (Cabrera) had a great day, but we still won," A's right-hander Ben Sheets said. "That's all that matters."

The A's are 3-1 to start this 10-game road trip, and they have won six of their past seven overall to move within a half-game of the AL West-leading Texas Rangers.

While Cabrera was a one-man wrecking crew for Detroit, the A's got offensive contributions from an ensemble cast. They stranded 13 runners, their season high for a nine-inning game, and went 3 for 15 with runners in scoring position.

But they mustered some late-inning magic for the second straight night.

"We're a scrappy team that never quits," A's manager Bob Geren said. "That's how we've been winning games, with contributions from everybody."

The A's broke a 3-3 tie with two runs in the top of the ninth, and the rally began, not surprisingly, on a hustle play from Adam Rosales.

With one out, Rosales legged out a double on a bloop to right that dropped in front of Magglio Ordonez. Pinch-hitter Ryan Sweeney was walked intentionally, and Mark Ellis was hit by a pitch to load the bases for Gabe Gross.

Detroit manager Jim Leyland called upon left-hander Fu-Te Ni to face Gross, who was 0 for 3 to that point. Gross hit a dribbler to the right side of the mound that Ni couldn't field cleanly on the dead run, and the infield single gave the A's a 4-3 lead.

Landon Powell, who had homered in the fourth, added a sacrifice fly against Detroit's Joel Zumaya that proved to be crucial when Cabrera homered off A's closer Andrew Bailey to lead off the bottom of the ninth.

But Bailey retired Brennan Boesch, Carlos Guillen and Brandon Inge to close out his second save in as many nights and 10th of the season.

"I'm glad we were able to outscore him tonight," Powell said of Cabrera, whose three homers tied the Tigers franchise record.

The A's received another terrific effort from Sheets, who pitched a season-high seven innings and allowed five hits. He allowed Cabrera's two-run shot in the first and a solo shot in the fourth. Sheets was still hitting 95 mph on the stadium radar gun in the seventh.

"Hopefully I can get through the seventh inning a lot easier next time and go back out for eight," Sheets said. "You keep seeing the velocity climb, the breaking ball gets sharper."

Sheets' recent improvement surely will catch the attention of contending teams as the July 31 trade deadline approaches. How well the A's continue playing on this road trip and in the weeks leading up to the deadline will help determine whether Sheets is wearing green and gold come August.

Tigers starter Dontrelle Willis, from Alameda, battled control problems throughout his 5 1/3 innings, but the A's couldn't fully cash in. Willis allowed nine hits and four walks.

TODAY:

A's (Brett Anderson 1-1) at Tigers (Rick Porcello 4-4), 4:05 p.m. TV: CSNCA. Radio: 860-AM; 1640-AM

Chin Music: A's pregame notes from Detroit: Brett Anderson will start Saturday, Adam Rosales gets another start at shortstop

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 5/28/2010 3:37PM

You can't beat the three ballparks on this A's road trip: Camden Yards, Comerica Park in Detroit (where we are now) and Fenway Park to wrap it up. They all have their unique characteristics and charm, no doubt ...

Maybe I jinxed the A's by talking about the threat of bad weather yesterday. It rained hard after last night's game in Baltimore ended, and the team charter was delayed leaving for Detroit. Apparently the plane touched down at about 3 a.m. this morning. Ouch ...

But with tonight's 7:05 p.m. start (Eastern time), at least all the players could sleep in ...

—Brett Anderson will come off the DL and start tomorrow as expected. That means a roster spot will have to be cleared and I'd expect a pitcher to be sent down (Vin Mazzaro is a likely candidate). ... Although Dallas Braden's name didn't come up in Bob Geren's pregame media chat, I saw Braden throwing a side session today and he appeared fine in the clubhouse afterward. His next start is Sunday and there's nothing to suggest he won't go.

—Cliff Pennington gets a second straight day off, w/Adam Rosales playing shortstop again. Geren said Pennington would return to the lineup tomorrow. I don't think it's a bad call giving the kid a two-day break. And good things have been happening w/Rosales in the lineup.

—Kurt Suzuki serves as DH today with Landon Powell behind the plate. Interestingly, Jake Fox and Gabe Gross both draw starts in the outfield against Tigers lefty Dontrelle Willis. The A's current roster has lots of versatile players, but it's tough dividing up playing time for all of them. Fox, for example, is a much better hitter when he gets 3 or 4 at-bats in a game than he is as a pinch hitter. Some guys have a knack for entering the game cold off the bench and delivering a base hit. Others need a few AB's to get their rhythm. I'd put Fox in the latter group.

Enough of my rambling, here's your lineups:

A's: Davis CF, Barton 1B, Suzuki DH, Kouzmanoff 3B, Rosales SS, Fox LF, Ellis 2B, Gross RF, Powell C; Sheets RHP.

Tigers: Jackson CF, Damon DH, Ordonez RF, Cabrera 1B, Boesch LF, Guillen 2B, Inge 3B, Avila C, Everett SS; Willis LHP.

A's prevail despite Cabrera's power display

Scott Ostler, Chronicle Staff Writer

The A's are a fairly quiet team, and then there's Ben Sheets.

Sheets, as a kid, must have been thrown out of every library in Baton Rouge. After the A's eventful 5-4 win over the Tigers on Friday night, in which Sheets pitched a strong seven innings, he and a couple of teammates could have been heard blocks away from Comerica Park as they engaged in a spirited takeoff of the "Wow, that's a low price!" commercial.

Wow, that's a loud pitcher.

Sheets, by the way, does not have a low price. He cost the A's \$10 million for one year, a big gamble that seems to be paying off.

He didn't get the win Friday, but he pitched his fifth consecutive solid game, and his teammates took it from there, improving to 3-1 on their 10-day, gut-check road trip.

It was another late come-from-behind A's win. They scored two in the ninth on two flukish hits, a hit batsman and Landon Powell's sacrifice fly. Then they survived Miguel Cabrera's third homer of the game, off Andrew Bailey, in the bottom of the ninth.

The game began as a matchup of two dinosaurs, fairly young dinosaurs, who are fighting their way back from baseball extinction. Sheets got the better of Dontrelle Willis, the pride of Alameda's Encinal High. But both Sheets, age 31, and Willis, 28, gained ground in their respective personal travails back to baseball relevance.

It was the first time Sheets went seven innings since 2008, and it appears that he is close to regaining the form that made him an effective starter in Milwaukee, before he blew out his right elbow and sat out the entire 2009 season.

"I can tell I'm still building up some stamina," Sheets said. "Hopefully, I can get through the seventh inning easier next time. ... I had one walk, which is a big plus, and he (Carlos Guillen) battled to get that walk."

There's no sneaking through the Tigers' lineup, where the 3-4-5-6 guys all were hitting between .311 and .343. None of the A's starters was over .282 going into the game.

Cabrera hit a two-run homer off Sheets in the first, a solo shot off Sheets in the fourth and an inning-opener in the ninth off Bailey. Cabrera has 13 home runs. The entire A's starting lineup had 16 going into the game.

Willis, meanwhile, survived the evening. Once they called him D-Train and D-Money, but the last few years, he has been mostly D-fective. After almost winning the Cy Young Award in 2005, Willis has struggled mightily.

He went on the disabled list twice last year with what the Tigers called a social-anxiety disorder, although Willis denies he has any such disorder. He has been the Tigers' fifth-best starter, and almost got bypassed Friday. His control is way off, his speed is way down, he seems lost.

He had one of the rockiest first innings you'll see in the big leagues Friday, though giving up just one run. It looked as if manager Jim Leyland was seriously considering removing Willis with one out and the bases loaded, but stuck with him.

The fans booed Willis in the first, then cheered him when he was removed in the sixth, having been able to find a groove. It seems as though they really want to like him.

The Tigers gave Willis a huge salary extension when they got him in trade from Florida, but it was still a great trade for Detroit, because the Tigers also got Cabrera, who is putting up MVP numbers.

Willis seems to be teetering along a ledge, with a promising future on one side and baseball oblivion on the other.

The best dinosaur Friday, and the loudest, was Sheets.

Devine getting healthier after elbow surgery

Scott Ostler, Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writers

Joey Devine said in a text that he threw a 20-pitch session on Friday, and it "felt great," according to the reliever who had Tommy John surgery April 20, 2009.

He is scheduled to throw off the mound again Monday.

"Everything is feeling normal again, which is great," Devine said.

If Devine continues to progress, he could be looking at pitching in rehab games next month and returning to the A's by late June or early July.

Outfielder **Travis Buck**, who has been out more than a month with a strained oblique, said he is scheduled to take batting practice, run the bases and throw this weekend, and if he comes out of that well, he will play in some extended-spring games in Phoenix before heading on a rehab assignment.

Barring any setbacks, that could point to a return toward the end of the A's next homestand.

Center fielder **Coco Crisp** (rib-cage strain) is eligible to come off the DL on June 7, leaving the A's with decisions to make in the outfield.

Perfect tribute: The **Dallas Braden** perfecto party rages on. The Sacramento River Cats will salute Braden's feat prior to their Thursday night game. Braden pitched for the Cats during parts of the 2007 and '08 seasons. His grandmother, **Peggy Lindsey**, will throw out the ceremonial first pitch.

Davis update: **Rajai Davis** went into Friday tied for the major-league lead in stolen bases with 18 (**Juan Pierre**, White Sox). Davis cheated himself out of a steal chance in the first by leading off with a double, didn't go in the second when he got aboard on a fielder's choice, and got on behind **Landon Powell** in the sixth.

A'S LEADING OFF

Scott Ostler, San Francisco Chronicle

Better late? Their flight out of Baltimore was delayed by a thunderstorm so the A's arrived in Detroit after 3 a.m. No problem, Bob Geren said. "I heard the Cards got in at 3:30, for a day game, and their first five or six hitters got hits."

Joey Devine takes a big stride; Buck update

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser 5/28/2010 2:20PM

Reliever Joey Devine says in a text that he threw a 20-pitch side session today and it "felt great," the reliever said. He's scheduled to throw off the mound again on Monday.

"Everything is feeling normal again," Devine said, "which is great."

Devine's recovery from Tommy John surgery last April 21 has been slower than he'd hoped, but specialists usually estimate 12-18 months, and he's at just over 13. If he continues to progress, he could be ready by the end of next month or early July.

Travis Buck also is doing well: he texts that he will be run through all baseball activity this weekend to check out that oblique strain, and then if cleared, he'd play in some games at extended spring training next week. Buck also says that Devine looks "really good."

Here's tonight's lineup: Davis cf, Barton 1b, Suzuki dh, Kouzmanoff 3b, Rosales ss, Fox lf, Ellis 2b, Gross rf, Powell c.

So, another day at shortstop for Rosales. Is that the way the wind is blowing for awhile? It's tough to argue with that decision. I want to see him more at short before I draw any conclusions about his ability there, but he didn't embarrass himself there despite next-to-zero time in the spot.

I'm kind of hoping Powell gets another start behind the plate on Sunday, when Dallas Braden pitches. You can't argue with that tandem after a perfect game. Suzuki isn't likely to get two out of three games off from catching, though. The A's don't do the personal-catcher thing for a reason - Suzuki is going to catch 90 percent of the games or more.

UPDATE: Scott Ostler tells me that, as expected, the A's have officially named left-hander Brett Anderson as tomorrow's starter. Anderson is likely to be limited to about 75 pitches.

The A's will have to make a move to get Anderson on the roster, so....goodbye Powell again? That would definitely make a Sunday start with Braden unlikely. Maybe they're getting a start out of Powell tonight, maximizing his roster time, before sending him out. He's the odd man out this year, for sure.

Or is it time for one of these out-of-options guys to be considered when it comes to clearing a spot? Neither one, Eric Patterson or Jake Fox, is performing consistently well. It's hard to sustain top-notch number with erratic playing time, but I'm not sure how long that guarantees a safe roster spot. Of course, I keep saying that, and they keep staying, so maybe it's all year.

Jenkins: Cold reality of a bad Super Bowl choice

Bruce Jenkins, San Francisco Chronicle

The NFL has chosen New York for the 2014 Super Bowl, and everyone's reminiscing about the good old days, when snowstorms, frozen fields and minus-30 temperatures crafted so many priceless images of postseason games.

There's only one thing wrong with this picture: In every one of those memorable scenes, there was a home team. Those weren't neutral sites; the action came to Green Bay, Chicago or the old Yankee Stadium as a reward for regular-season excellence. That's why it's ludicrous to choose a potentially problematic setting - East Coast in the dead of winter - as a "neutral site."

For one thing, there's nothing neutral about a 5-degree day at the new Meadowlands (New Jersey) stadium if the Super Bowl teams involved are Green Bay and San Diego. And let's be real: This decision wasn't about tradition or some type of retro coolness. The 2014 Super Bowl was bought. It's all about the type of corporate, television and assorted other rich guys' influence that only New York can bring.

By the way, because we're on the topic, the essence of football is *not* 18 layers of clothing, snow-clearing vehicles and the game's most gifted skill players huddling around sideline heaters to keep their frozen hands from snapping off at the wrist. It's a crisp, fall day with a bit of chill in the air, not a hint of rain or snow, everyone savoring this glorious change of season.

When pro football made its debut, winter wasn't even part of the deal. What's the official last day of autumn, Dec. 21, 22, something like that? Over the first 17 years of NFL championship games, only twice were they held beyond the third week of December - and never in January. The 1940 title game was held Dec. 8, for heaven's sake.

The NFL had it right in the early years of the Super Bowl, alternating among the L.A. Coliseum, Miami's Orange Bowl and New Orleans' Tulane Stadium over a seven-year stretch. It stayed on a relatively pure path (couple of invasions by the New Orleans Superdome) until January '82, when a group of complete idiots decided to play the Super Bowl indoors near Detroit. We remember it fondly here - that started it all for the 49ers' dynasty - but life was never the same. Domes are now the rule, to the point where neither of last season's Super Bowl teams, Indianapolis and New Orleans, played a down of outdoor football through the *entire* postseason.

It's sad to realize there are no California stadiums that meet the NFL's modern-day Super Bowl criteria. We won't see that until the 49ers finally relocate or a team lands in Los Angeles. But the game belongs here, or Florida, or wherever the game's greatest athletes get a real chance to shine. Right along with the sun.

Lurking threat

You knew this going in, but when the Colorado Rockies homer off **Dan Haren** in three consecutive at-bats, you realize they're the one team capable of running away with the N.L. West ... What's most remarkable from Lakers-Suns, Game 5: (a) A collective "Nooooo!" fills the Staples Center as **Ron Artest** gathers for an ill-advised three-pointer instead of using most of the shot clock; (b) Artest winds up being the hero; (c) he defends the shot selection, saying, "Just playin' basketball, man;" or (d) **Reggie Miller**, on the TNT postgame show, agrees with him? ... In sportswriting, you root more for people, or stories, than teams - and I'd like to see **Steve Nash** in the Finals for the first time in his great career. ... Baseball's interleague play is tolerable only to a point. When the Giants play six buzz-free games against the A's, instead of three, it gets to be a little bit much. Hey, the Bay Bridge Series! Awful! ... Speaking of which, the Dodgers aren't too thrilled to have drawn the Yankees, Red Sox, Angels and Detroit in this deal. ... Just wondering: If the Giants have the financial means to get involved in the Warriors' sale, why are they so damned worried about the A's moving to San Jose? ... To be clear: There will be one American voice over the course of ESPN/ABC's World Cup coverage: former American player **John Harkes**, doing analysis on the U.S. games only. ... Advice to the networks if they really want to get a U.S. audience involved: Spend a bit of time before each game to introduce the players: mug shots (in real time), where they play during the year, couple of intriguing facts. I've always been drawn into international play by compelling, unforgettable faces: **Schillaci, Figo, Stoichkov, Koeman, Hagi, Suiker, Torres**. Let us know who these people are, what they've done, what they mean to their fans. Give people a few more reasons to care.

A's rally for two in ninth to top Tigers

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

DETROIT -- Friday night's matchup between the A's and Tigers, under the lights in the midst of perfect spring weather, showcased the many facets of baseball, the many reasons why the game is so loved.

Double plays and stolen bases abounded, as did hard-throwing pitches from seasoned hurlers. At the top of the list, though, was the battle between small ball and long ball, both on display from the very beginning.

As a result, the lead changed a handful of times, while a sold-out crowd at Comerica Park also witnessed four innings of a tied 3-3 game.

In the end, though, a handful of scrappy A's players prevailed over one power-happy Tigers hitter. Small ball reigned over long ball, thus handing Oakland a 5-4 victory for its third straight road win.

To say that the win was well-deserved for the A's likely isn't entirely true. After all, they left a season-high 13 on base and went 3-for-15 with runners in scoring position.

However, to say that it wasn't well-deserved likely isn't entirely true, either. You see, those 13 stranded runners only gave a feisty A's club the motivation to finish a job they couldn't quite get done in the first eight innings.

With one out in the ninth, the speedy Adam Rosales safely dived head first into second base on a bloop hit to right field, one that would merely give any other player a single.

"I knew it would be a close play," Rosales said, "so I kicked it into second gear and hoped for the best."

Tigers reliever Ryan Perry then intentionally walked pinch-hitter Ryan Sweeney and hit Mark Ellis with a pitch to load the bases -- a situation in which the A's failed to get a run in the first.

This time, Gabe Gross grinded out an infield single, scoring Rosales to put the A's ahead, 4-3. Before the inning was over, Landon Powell -- who also hit his first homer of the season in the fourth -- tallied a sacrifice fly off Detroit's Joel Zumaya to make it 5-3.

"You have to give them credit, they put it in play," Tigers manager Jim Leyland said. "That's the old saying -- if you put it in play, you've got a chance. They put a couple balls in play that inning that they scored late. They weren't the hardest hit balls, but that's part of it. You have to give them credit."

Detroit narrowed the A's lead to one in the bottom half of the inning courtesy of Miguel Cabrera's third home run of the night, this time off Oakland closer Andrew Bailey, who eventually recorded three outs for his 10th save of the season.

"This is a scrappy team that never quits," A's manager Bob Geren said. "That's how we've been winning. We continually stayed with them the whole game, and it was one of those back-and-forth things that went our way."

"We felt like we had so many chances. We left guys on base, and you can look at that negatively or positively. We put together a bunch of hits while doing that, and we scored three runs in five innings. I'll take that any day."

The A's combined for 14 hits on the night, their most on the road since compiling 15 earlier in the month at Texas. The first, a leadoff double off the bat of Rajai Davis, resulted in a quick run -- one that, yet again, scored courtesy of some small ball.

Daric Barton successfully put down a sacrifice bunt to move Davis to third, and Kurt Suzuki promptly followed with an RBI single off a rather wild Dontrelle Willis, who gave the Tigers 5 1/3 innings of work.

"Guys don't want to come back to the dugout without advancing the runner," Geren said. "That's what we've been preaching all year."

The club has also been consistent preachers of good pitching, which happened to be present Friday, thanks to a solid seven-inning performance from Ben Sheets, who allowed three runs on five hits and one walk while fanning six. It marked the first time the right-hander had tallied seven frames since Sept. 6, 2008, when he tossed a five-hit complete game shutout against the Padres.

"I'm still building my stamina up," said Sheets, who reached 95 and 96 mph on the radar multiple times. "We've seen my velocity climb, we've seen my breaking ball start to break again, and we're seeing more strikes."

It's a rather simple formula for Sheets, whose only trouble came against Cabrera. The Tigers first baseman tallied home runs Nos. 11 and 12 against Sheets, who admitted, "I don't know what you can do with him."

"One guy freakin' did a lot of damage," the A's pitcher continued. "That's why he's special."

Sheets, then, might be surprised to know Cabrera thinks the same of him.

"He pitched good," Cabrera said. "Have to give him credit. He's a good pitcher. The mistakes he made, he made with me. He battled all day and still pitched seven innings."

Unfortunately, Sheets couldn't hang around long enough for the win, which was given to A's reliever Brad Ziegler, who pitched a scoreless eighth.

A win's a win, though. And the A's, despite having yielded the league's most home runs on the road (35 in 21 games), will gladly take it.

"Any guy like Cabrera, it doesn't matter what you throw him," Powell said. "He's going to hit everything. You have to tip your cap to him. I'm glad we were able to outscore him. You take him out of the lineup, it's a shutout."

Starters seeking comeback of sorts in Detroit

By John Schlegel / MLB.com

One of the American League's top rookies in 2009 has had trouble getting his game going on the mound in 2010, while another has had trouble staying on the mound, period.

When the Tigers' Rick Porcello and the Athletics' Brett Anderson square off in the second game of a four-game set at Comerica Park on Saturday, the 21-year-old Porcello will make his 10th start of his sophomore season and the 22-year-old Anderson will be back after missing about a month on the disabled list with a forearm strain and elbow inflammation.

Porcello, who finished third behind the A's Andrew Bailey and the Rangers' Elvis Andrus in AL Rookie of the Year balloting last year, is coming off just his third quality start of the season. He battled through for the victory at Dodger Stadium and took two shots off comebackers, one in the right forearm and the other off the back of his right leg.

"I threw a little bit off the mound today, and it feels good, so it should be fine," Porcello said Friday.

Porcello isn't making a big deal about the injuries or bouncing back from them. He's just glad he's still able to pitch.

"I don't really put much emphasis on the balls hit back at me," he said. "I don't really care about that. But I'm definitely eager to get back out there, as always, and hopefully get us a win."

Meanwhile, Anderson threw all of his pitches without discomfort in a 30-pitch bullpen session Thursday and was fine the following day. The club will make the official move before Saturday's game.

Anderson, who signed a four-year contract extension just days before going on the DL, was limited to 57 pitches over three innings, and A's manager Bob Geren hopes to get him closer to the 80-pitch range Saturday.

Athletics: Lineup juggling for big picture

In the middle of a string of 20 consecutive games, including 13 on the road, Geren showed Friday he's looking at the big picture. He used a lineup not seen before this season, with Kurt Suzuki making his first DH appearance and right fielder Ryan Sweeney taking a day off after playing 44 of the first 49 games. Things likely will be back to normal Saturday, with Suzuki back behind the plate and Sweeney, batting .342 with 10 RBIs over his last 19 games, back in the No. 3 spot in the order. Shortstop Cliff Pennington, who sat the past two games after playing the club's first 47 contests, will be back in the lineup as well. "You have to pace all your guys throughout the season," Geren said Friday. "It's nice to have a flexible roster that allows us to do that." Gabe Gross took the start in right field and Suzuki batted third, while Sweeney entered the game late and wound up scoring what turned out to be the winning run.

Tigers: Cabrera loves facing AL West

While his three homers Friday night were an impressive first for the Tigers' cleanup hitter, the fact that Miguel Cabrera pulled off such a feat against an AL West opponent should come as no surprise. Cabrera now is batting .353 (138-for-391) with 24 homers, 97 RBIs and 75 runs scored in 101 career games against AL West opponents.

Worth noting

The Tigers now have collected an extra-base hit in 44 of the club's 47 games this season, running the season total of those to 152. ... After their 5-4 win Friday night, the A's are now 9-2 in one-run games, the best record in baseball for such outcomes.

Pennington takes day off in opener

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

DETROIT -- The A's lineup on Friday boasted a rather different look, one that -- for the second consecutive day -- did not include Cliff Pennington.

Oakland's starting shortstop, mired in a career-long 0-for-15 slump, had started each of the A's previous 92 games at the position dating back to last year before missing Thursday's game in Baltimore.

On Friday, manager Bob Geren chose to rest Pennington yet again to allow the infielder to "take it easy on his body for 48 hours."

"We're at that point in the season where guys need days off," the A's skipper explained. "He's played every game, so he deserves a day or two off."

Geren said to expect Pennington back in the lineup against the host Tigers on Saturday, when the 26-year-old shortstop will look to boost a dismal .219 batting average. He's 12-for-77 (.156) with one RBI over his last 20 games after hitting .272 with 16 RBIs during his first 27 contests.

"He's really just missing a couple pitches," Geren said. "Every player goes through their slumps. He'll be back in there tomorrow ready to go."

With Pennington out of the mix, Adam Rosales made just his second season start at shortstop Friday. The A's dependable utility player, who has started five of the A's last seven games at four different positions, has now started 41 of the club's last 43 games this year.

First baseman Daric Barton, who enjoyed a 5-for-11 three-game series in Baltimore this week, remains the only A's player to appear in all 49 contests.

Anderson to get the start Saturday

DETROIT -- Manager Bob Geren confirmed on Friday that rehabbing left-hander Brett Anderson, on the mend from elbow inflammation and a strained forearm, will return to the A's rotation Saturday and start against host Detroit.

Anderson, who threw all of his pitches without discomfort in a 30-pitch bullpen session Thursday, felt just fine the following day, prompting Geren to make the announcement. The club, however, has yet to officially activate him from the disabled list and likely won't do so until Saturday.

The 22-year-old lefty has been sidelined on the DL since April 27, retroactive to April 25, a time at which he was expected to miss five weeks -- a proclamation that has proved to be true.

After undergoing most of his rehab at the A's Minor League complex in Phoenix, Anderson was assigned to make one rehab start with Triple-A Sacramento on Monday, when he worked three innings and allowed two runs on six hits while walking one and fanning one.

The A's left-hander, who signed a four-year contract extension just days before suffering the injury, was limited to 50-60 pitches in the stint. Geren hopes Anderson can build on that and give the club at least 70-80 pitches Saturday.

Suzuki in DH role; Sweeney not in lineup

DETROIT -- Even Ryan Sweeney and Kurt Suzuki need days off every once in awhile.

The dynamic defensive duo, which has provided the A's a consistent glove at their respective positions this season, was nowhere to be found behind starter Ben Sheets on Friday.

Suzuki, however, was still in the starting lineup batting third as the club's designated hitter. Both, manager Bob Geren said, needed a day to rest their legs, but the A's skipper wanted to "keep [Suzuki's] bat in there."

The Oakland catcher, reinstated from the 15-day disabled list May 16, entered Friday's contest having started each of the A's 11 games behind the plate since his return, matching the longest consecutive games started streak at catcher of his career. Landon Powell, recalled from Triple-A Sacramento on Thursday for his third stint with the team this year, was instead given the starting nod to play battery mate with Sheets.

Sweeney, meanwhile, has started 44 of the team's 49 games this season and is expected to return to the lineup Saturday for the second of a four-game set against the Tigers. The A's right fielder, batting .342 with 10 RBIs over his last 19 games, was replaced in the outfield by Gabe Gross.

"You have to pace all your guys throughout the season," Geren said. "It's nice to have a flexible roster that allows us to do that."

Geren and Co. are in the midst of playing 20 consecutive games, including 13 road contests -- a stretch that makes the manager's decision to sit guys all the more easy.

Worth noting

The A's charter flight was delayed in Baltimore late Thursday night and, as a result, the team didn't make it to its Detroit hotel until after 3 a.m. ET Friday morning. "Everyone had their Starbucks on the bus today," Geren said. "They probably had just woken up, which is good. They need their sleep." ... A's starting pitchers entered Friday's contest with a combined 3.76 ERA, good for second lowest in the American League. ... The club has allowed 13 home runs in 27 games at home -- the fewest at home in the American League -- and 32 home runs in 21 contests on the road -- the most on the road in the AL.

Lee's Leftovers: Brought to you from Comerica: Friday Inbox

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 5/29/2010

Heading into this season, I knew that my first year on the A's beat would present -- well, many firsts. Covering a perfect game was definitely not one I expected, but, hey, I'll take it. The firsts I was anticipating mostly had to do with the traveling aspect that comes along with the job. Every new city presents new streets, new restaurants and new hotels. And every ballpark comes along with new press boxes and new clubhouses -- both of which usually take time finding. I'm not afraid to say I've always been directionally challenged. So I only wish that the Garmin GPS -- the one I pack every time I'm in a city that requires I rent a car -- came with directions to said press boxes and clubhouses. Trust me, these things aren't always the easiest to locate, and matters are only made worse when you're wandering aimlessly in search of these places while walking through 90-degree Texas heat, as I was a couple of weeks ago. Luckily, I usually give myself plenty of time my first day anyway in order to walk around a bit and get to know the ballpark as a fan. Today was no different, as I arrived at Comerica Park -- home of the Tigers -- with plenty of time to kill before embarking on my "find the media entrance" journey.

It took less than two minutes for me to realize it could easily be one of my favorite parks out of the 12 I've seen so far. It's got an abundance of character, not to mention gorgeous architecture and a classic unassuming baseball atmosphere. When I think of summer baseball, I picture it being played in a park like Comerica, which also boasts a great backdrop of downtown Detroit. What has made my first experience here all the more satisfying is the ease at which I made my way to the press box. Furthermore, the weather is perfect AND there's a frozen yogurt machine right behind me. Any press dining room that offers fro yo gets the thumbs up from me.

Anyway, on the field we have a tied 3-3 game right now. Here's a couple of questions that made its way to my Inbox this week while I was enjoying some rare time off:

Can we get an update on our prized prospects, Chris Carter and Michael Taylor? How are they doing in Triple-A?

Do they have a shot at the bigs this season? Are they still the saviors of our offense?

-- Jeff H., Fremont, Calif.

Well, Jeff, neither currently have numbers that scream "savior" for any club, even a powerless one like the A's. Carter, though currently tied for the Pacific Coast League lead in RBIs (39) and third in home runs (10), is batting just .246 through 46 games with the River Cats. The good news is that he's showing signs of the power hitter the A's will eventually need, but the bad news is that he's collected 57 strikeouts in 175 at-bats. Carter will need to show more discipline and create a better strike zone in order to demonstrate he can not only be a consistent hitter in the PCL but in the big leagues as well. He's also been playing some outfield in an effort to strengthen his versatility, as we all know that goes a long way with the injury-prone A's. That's why Billy Beane likes guys like Adam Rosales, Eric Patterson and Jake Fox -- guys who can play multiple

positions. The club still sees Carter as a first baseman, but it's only protecting its future by giving him starts in the outfield.

Taylor, meanwhile, hasn't played a game since May 11 due to a strained calf and, as a result, has been doing nothing but resting since then. It's one of those injuries that needs to be taken care of completely before being tested again with baseball activity. Otherwise, it's likely going to stay with him all season. Luckily, Taylor has taken good care of himself during the past couple of weeks and could be lifted off the disabled list as soon as this weekend. Before being sidelined, he was posting similar numbers to those we've seen from Carter: .232 average, 22 RBI and 24 strikeouts in 125 at-bats. Needless to say, both still need plenty of seasoning before being deemed ready to make that jump to Oakland. I think both still have a shot at getting called up this year, but while I figured we might see them by June at the earliest, I now think that, if promoted, it won't be 'til the end of the season, possibly as September callups.

Why the big hush-hush about Braden's ankle? Is there more going on than what is being reported?

-- Jeanne P., Central Valley, Calif.

We're talking about Braden here, the guy who has said in the past that it would take cutting off his numb left foot for him to never play again. So was I surprised to hear that he played with a sprained ankle? No. Do I think there's more going on with it than a simple sprain? No. Braden is brutally honest with not only us media folk but also with himself, so if he knew he couldn't help his team win that day, he would have said so beforehand. The guy has more guts than anyone I know, and I believe he assumed he'd be fine for his start. I also believe him when he says he's ready to go again Sunday.

A's beat Tigers despite Cabrera's 3-homer game

Associated Press

Miguel Cabrera's first three-homer game of his career was not enough to beat the Oakland Athletics.

Landon Powell hit his first home run of the season and had a sacrifice fly in the ninth inning that proved to be the game-winning run in Oakland's 5-4 win over the Detroit Tigers on Friday night.

Oakland's Ben Sheets gave up three runs in seven innings, his longest start since a five-hit shutout for Milwaukee against San Diego in 2008.

Brad Ziegler (2-2) gave up a hit in the eighth inning. Andrew Bailey shut Detroit down after giving up a leadoff homer to Cabrera for his 10th save in 12 chances.

Reliever Ryan Perry (1-4) gave up two runs and got just two outs, losing in a second straight game.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Aces Drop 7-2 Decision To Sacramento

Reno Aces

RENO, Nev.- Drew Macias led Reno with two hits and a walk, but the Aces dropped a 7-2 decision to the Sacramento River Cats in the series opener Friday night at Aces Ballpark.

The game was tighter than the final score would indicate, as Reno trailed just 4-2 heading into the ninth inning. Down 3-1 in the sixth, the Aces got on the board with an RBI single by Mark Hallberg. After the River Cats tacked on a run in the top of the seventh, Macias scored the Aces' second run on a Sacramento error, cutting the lead to 4-2. Sacramento would pull away in the ninth, scoring three insurance runs to put the game out of reach and hand the Aces their third-straight loss.

Kevin Mulvey (0-4) took the hard-luck loss for the Aces, despite recording a quality start, allowing three runs in six innings of work.

Sacramento starter Clay Mortensen (6-2) earned the win for the River Cats, tossing 6.2 innings, holding the Aces to just one earned run.

Macias recorded the Aces only extra-base hit, a ground-rule double to right-center. Hallberg had the only RBI for the Aces with his sixth-inning run-scoring single.

The series continues on Saturday night at Aces Ballpark. Reno will turn to RHP Kris Benson (1-0, 7.71 ERA), who is making his second Major League rehabilitation start. Sacramento will counter with LHP Lenny DiNardo (2-5, 3.77 ERA). First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PT.

Tickets for all Aces games start at just \$7, and are available by calling the Reno Aces box office at (775) 334-7000 or by visiting RenoAces.com. The brand-new Freight House District, located just outside Aces Ballpark, is open seven days a week, on both game days and non-game days.

Spina Lifts Ports With 5 RBI in 6-5 Walk-Off Win

STOCKTON, Calif. - First baseman Mike Spina powered the Stockton Ports (21-28) to a 6-5 walk-off win over the San Jose Giants (30-19), by collecting a three-run home run in the first inning and the game-winning two-RBI double in the ninth. It was the second Stockton walk-off of the year-both have come at the expense of the Giants.

The Ports pitching staff was also terrific in Friday night's game. Starter Kenny Smalley struck out five in 4.1 innings. He allowed five runs on eight hits, including three home runs. Lance Sewell, Scott Hodsdon and Paul Smyth combined for 4.2 hitless, shutout innings of baseball for Stockton. The top of the Ports order was active in the game as well, as shortstop Grant Green finished the contest 3x4 and Todd Johnson finished 2x4 with an RBI to extend his hitting streak to 14 games. Spina collected just two hits in the game, but both came when it mattered most. Smyth collected the win, his second, while Jason Stoffel collected his second blown save and third loss of the year for San Jose.

Smalley retired the first three batters he faced to start the game, including striking out the first two Giants. The Ports made it 3-0 in the bottom of the first. With one out, Green singled to third base to start the offense. Johnson then walked to put two on for Spina. Spina then slammed his eighth homer of the year to the Metro PCS Home Run Hill in center field. Third baseman Stephen Parker doubled to continue the hit parade, but was left on base as the next two Ports batters were put out.

The Giants chipped away at the lead in the third, as designated hitter Jose Flores came home to score as left fielder Wendell Fairley grounded out for the second out of the inning. Francisco Peguero then stepped up to the plate, and struck out. But Ports catcher Petey Paramore dropped the third strike and threw the ball to Spina. First base umpire Adam Schwarz called Peguero out. San Jose hitting coach Gary Davenport, who was coaching first base, argued the call and was ejected.

In the bottom of the third, San Jose starter Eric Surkamp collected four strikeouts. He struck out Johnson, but the pitch Johnson swung at went wild and Johnson made it to first safely. Surkamp then fanned the next two batters to end the inning.

San Jose pulled ahead, 4-3, in the fourth inning. With one out, Monell walked. Then second baseman Charlie Culberson collected his sixth homer of the year, dropping the two-run shot over the Food 4 Less sign in left field to tie the game. Smalley got third baseman Drew Biery to ground out before giving up a solo shot to Flores.

Smalley gave up another solo home run to James Simmons in the fifth inning, who replaced Peguero in right field in the fourth inning. It was Simmons' first homer of the year. After that, the Ports replaced Smalley with Sewell, who got the next two batters to ground out to end the inning.

The Ports made it 5-4 in the bottom of the fifth. Left fielder Shane Keough singled to lead things off and next Green singled for his second hit on the night. Johnson collected a single to drive Keough across the plate. The Giants then retired the next three batters to escape additional damage.

From there the two teams held each other scoreless. The Ports headed into the bottom of the ninth down a run with the top of their lineup due. Keough was called out on strikes. Green was then hit by a pitch. Johnson got on base with a single up the middle. With two on and one out, Spina strode up to the plate. He launched the ball deep to center field, where it bounced off the wall for a ground-rule double. Green and Johnson came racing home to score the tying and winning runs, and the Ports team ran out to second base for a group celebration.

The Ports now have a 2-1 lead in the four-game series against the Giants and are 5-4 against San Jose overall this season. The two rivals will face off for the series finale at 7:05 p.m. on Saturday. LHP Ben Hornbeck (0-1, 6.75) will make his second start for Stockton, while RHP Craig Westcott (2-0, 1.13) will take the hill for San Jose.

Cougars Fall to Clinton in Opener **Kane County loses 11th game in last 13**

GENEVA, Ill. – The Kane County Cougars never led Friday night at Elfstrom Stadium, dropping a 6-2 decision to the Clinton LumberKings in the opener of a four-game series in front of 6,872 fans. The defeat was the Cougars' 11th in 13 games, and they are 2-6 this season against Clinton.

Justin Marks (1-6), who had thrown six shutout innings against Clinton in his last start, suffered the loss. He retired the first nine batters he faced but then allowed four runs in the fourth and two in the second. He yielded seven hits, walked none and fanned a career-high nine. Kyle Christensen (1.1), Bo Schultz (1.2) and Jose Guzman (1) combined for four scoreless relief innings and five strikeouts.

The Cougars' only runs came in the bottom of the fourth against Taylor Stanton, who beat them for the second straight time. Anthony Aliotti and Rashun Dixon had consecutive RBI groundouts to score Kent Walton and Myrio Richard, respectively. The Cougars had four hits through four innings but just two over the final five. Stanton (5-2) notched the win.

Game 2 of the four-game set is Saturday night at 6 CT. The Cougars (21-28) will send Anvioris Ramirez (0-1, 14.54) to the mound, and Clinton (28-21) will counter with Erasmo Ramirez (3-2, 2.06). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at www.kccougars.com with pregame coverage starting at 5:45 p.m.

Sanchez And Majewski Are The First To Be Signed In 2010

Wgal.com, 5/27/2010

YORK, Pa. -- York Revolutions pitcher Jesus Sanchez and outfielder Val Majewski have both been signed to the Oakland Athletics.

"Our goal is to help these guys get back to affiliated baseball, and hopefully back to the major leagues," said Etchebarren. "I couldn't be happier for them."

Sanchez went 4-1 in seven starts with the Revs, and at the time of his signing on Thursday, led the league with a 1.63 ERA. He allowed just one run over 19.2 innings in his final three starts with the club, working a 20.1-inning scoreless streak in the process. The seven-year major league veteran also ranks among league leaders with 32 strikeouts.

Majewski ranked seventh in the league in batting as of Thursday, with a .328 average on the season. He's also placed third in RBI (24), tied for fourth in runs (22), and tied for second in hits (39), doubles (10), and extra-base hits (13). It marks the third consecutive year that he has been picked up by a major league organization after beginning the season in the Atlantic League.

Sanchez and Majewski are the first two Revolution players signed by affiliated clubs this season. The Revs have now had 15 players all-time picked up by major league organizations during the season.