

Brett Anderson sparkles in return for A's

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's understandably had Brett Anderson on a short leash Saturday night.

Therefore, it was a surprise when the bottom of the sixth inning rolled around and Anderson's workday wasn't done.

The left-hander marked his return from the disabled list with 52/3 scoreless innings as the A's blanked the Detroit Tigers 6-0 before a crowd of 39,750 at Comerica Park.

The A's won their fourth straight, reclaiming sole possession of first place in the American League West for the first time since May 5.

Mark Ellis homered and had a season-high four RBIs, and Gabe Gross made an over-the-fence grab in left field that may rank as the A's defensive highlight of the year.

But Anderson's surprising dominance, after he missed five weeks with a strained left forearm, had manager Bob Geren smiling in the clubhouse afterward.

"That was very, very impressive," Geren said. "Considering the time he'd been off, to have that sharp of command and that good of stuff "... you couldn't ask for a better start."

Anderson allowed Johnny Damon's one-out single in the first and then retired 16 in a row until the sixth. He was pulled that inning after Damon's double put runners on second and third with two outs.

Brad Ziegler entered and retired Magglio Ordonez on a lineout to third to preserve the A's 2-0 lead. Ziegler allowed one hit over 21/3 innings and Craig Breslow capped off Oakland's seventh shutout, tops in the AL.

Anderson finished at 70 pitches — Geren had him on a 65-75 pitch limit — and gave up three hits with four strikeouts and no walks. His fastball touched 95 mph and his sharp slider was an effective put-away pitch.

"I thought I was as economical as I've ever been in the big leagues," said Anderson, in his second season. "I would have liked to get through six (innings), but you take what you can get at this point."

The shutout stayed intact thanks to Gross, a former Auburn quarterback who used his athleticism to rob Gerald Laird of a leadoff homer in the third. Gross timed his jump perfectly, and, with his arm extended well beyond the eight foot-high wall in left, made the catch on Laird's deep drive.

"I've taken some home runs away, but that's probably the best one I can remember as far as the ball being that far out," Gross said.

The sun was sinking low at the time, and Gross said he lost sight of the ball two or three different times.

"I was joking that I was probably the most surprised person in the ballpark that I caught it," he said.

Actually, Anderson was.

The pitcher didn't even follow the flight of the ball, assuming he'd surrendered a homer. He never saw the catch and didn't realize what happened until the ball was thrown back to him.

"(It was) probably the best play I ever had made behind me," Anderson said.

Ellis' three-run double in the eighth highlighted a four-run rally that padded the A's lead to 6-0. The second baseman is 6 for 8 in this series.

The A's are 27-23 overall and 4-1 on this 10-game road trip. They announced bad news earlier Saturday, as right-hander Justin Duchscherer will have season-ending hip surgery.

But Anderson's showing was a definite boost.

"His stuff is always good," Ellis said. "But to have that kind of command (after missing five weeks) was impressive."

Justin Duchscherer unable to delay hip surgery

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Right-hander Justin Duchscherer will undergo season-ending left hip surgery, adding another unwanted chapter to his injury-plagued career.

Duchscherer, who hadn't pitched in a game since April 29, was in Phoenix rehabbing his hip and trying to return to the A's rotation without surgery.

But he felt sore after throwing a 20-pitch simulated game Friday. After consulting with doctors, he decided that having surgery right away was the best call.

"I knew inevitably it had to happen," Duchscherer said in a conference call Saturday night. "I was just hoping I could pitch part of the season or get through to the end. But I felt myself changing my mechanics, and I didn't want to hurt my arm with different mechanics."

He left an April 29 start at Toronto with hip pain. He went on the DL but tried to return for a May 15 start against the Los Angeles Angels, only to aggravate the injury and go right back to the DL.

The surgery will fix an abnormality in his hip where the femur (thigh) bone and joint meet. It's the same congenital problem as Duchscherer had in his twice-operated on right hip.

Dr. Thomas Byrd, who performed both surgeries on Duchscherer's right hip, will handle this procedure. No date has been set, but the estimated recovery time is six months.

It's yet another hurdle for Duchscherer, 32, a two-time All-Star who has made seven trips to the DL. He missed all of last season because of right elbow surgery and a subsequent bout with clinical depression.

Duchscherer, who joined the A's in a 2002 trade from Texas, tested free agency last winter but re-signed on a one-year, \$1.75 million deal.

"We went into this contract with Justin knowing there was a possibility that injuries could be a factor," A's assistant general manager David Forst said. "You feel bad. He did such a good job coming back from the elbow. ... Unfortunately we just couldn't avoid the hip."

Retirement is not in Duchscherer's plans. If his recovery goes well, he should be ready for spring training.

He'll be a free agent again this offseason and said he'd definitely consider returning to Oakland if the A's were interested.

The Tigers announced after Saturday's game they will designate left-hander Dontrelle Willis for assignment. Willis, an Encinal High grad, has a 4.98 ERA in nine games and has battled control problems all season.

The move puts Willis onto waivers, but a team claiming him would need to pick up the remainder of his \$12 million salary.

If he goes unclaimed, the Tigers have 10 days to trade him, release him or option his contract to one of their minor league teams. Tigers general manager Dave Dombrowski, though, said that he doesn't think Willis will remain with the organization.

Willis joined the Tigers as part of the same trade that brought Miguel Cabrera to Detroit after the 2007 season, and signed a three-year, \$29 million contract extension.

The 28-year-old is a two-time All-Star and a former NL Rookie of the Year who helped Florida win a World Series in his first year and then was a 22-game winner two seasons later.

The perfect game that Philadelphia's Roy Halladay threw Saturday came just 20 days after Dallas Braden threw his for the A's. Braden left by the time reporters entered the A's clubhouse following the game and wasn't available for comment. He pitches today. ... Max Scherzer will start for Detroit today in place of Armando Galarraga.

Steward: If Al Davis can take back \$9.55M from JaMarcus Russell, why not others?

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune columnist

Darting here and there ...

| So that's all the Raiders are trying to recover from JaMarcus Russell, \$9.55 million? If they were taking this before Judge Judy, it would be at least three times that, and they'd probably get it. But with the NFL? Zippo.

| As a poster to Jerry McDonald's Inside The Raiders blog noted, that amount probably doesn't even recoup Russell's team cafeteria expenses. Good one.

| Sad fact is, the money was guaranteed, so Al Davis is doing nothing more than wasting more money trying to chase it. Then again, if it paints Al in a sympathetic light, maybe it's worth the lost cause.

| It's just a shame we don't get a chance to see this \$9.55 mil itemized on Al's overhead projector. That's always the most fun part.

| If the Raiders do reclaim the cash, is there a statute of limitations, or could they go after some of the big dough they once paid to Larry Brown?

| Darrius Heyward-Bey supposedly had his most impressive practice as a Raider this week with new quarterback Jason Campbell winging it to him. Wonderful. Twitter us when he does it in a game.

| We didn't know Coco Crisp was that crisp. Two games, and then back to the disabled list again. Right intercostal muscle strain? Only with the A's, or as I like to call 'em now, the Anatomies.

| The A's are actually as healthy as they've been in awhile, and they're also closer to first place than the Giants (in large part to the Giants' pathetic performance last weekend). No reason Oakland can't win their toss-up division as long as the pitching holds up.

| One guy who's really holding it up right now: Trevor Cahill, who started the season as the odd man out in the rotation. He's a joy to watch when he's on, and that seems to be happening with more frequency.

| Curious move dept.: The A's signed 38-year-old former major league starter John Halama to a minor league contract, and he pitched seven shutout innings Wednesday in his first start for the Sacramento River Cats. He last pitched in the majors in 2006.

| As if Giants fans didn't have enough sky-is-falling angst working right now, they've got a Tim Lincecum slump to fret over. Hide the razor blades!

| So say hey, Willie, tell the Cobb and Joe DiMaggio: John Fogerty's baseball anthem "Centerfield" will be celebrated during the Cooperstown induction ceremony in late July. Nice honor to bestow on our El Cerrito homey.

| Better to be lucky than good: Ron Artest's putback of Kobe Bryant's air ball. Then again, the Lakers seem to get at least one of those per series. That may not be luck.

| With all these teams bouncing back from being down 2-0 and 3-0 in the basketball and hockey playoffs, it's nice that the Sharks could uphold more familiar tradition.

| The offseason argument seems to be Patrick Marleau or Evgeni Nabokov, but how about neither of the above? Forced to choose between them, though, it's got to be Marleau who stays.

| I can't be too hard on the Sharks' demise, for one simple reason: They made the playoffs. Who else has done that around here in recent years? (The Warriors were the last in 2007, for those who struggle with long-term memory).

| As much as I want to care, can't work up a lather about Philly vs. Chicago for the Stanley Cup. For one, Bobby Hull and Bobby Clarke aren't playing. That said, yawn, Blackhawks in 6.

| Diego Maradona says he'll run naked through the streets of Buenos Aires if Argentina wins the World Cup. Like anyone would think that's something out of the ordinary?

! Actually, the pick here is for Argentina to win it all if Maradona keeps his clothes on. Lionel Messi is the best player on the planet and, well, anybody can pick Brazil.

! Finally, we're going to have a Super Bowl in New York. In early February. Brrrr. Maybe they can dredge up Vanilla Ice for the halftime show.

Chin Music: Duchscherer to have left hip surgery, out for season

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 5/29/2010 10:41AM

An update from Detroit:

The A's announced today that right-hander Justin Duchscherer will undergo season-ending surgery on his left hip. This doesn't come as a surprise by any means, but Duchscherer had held out hopes of rehabbing and returning to the mound this season. He went to Phoenix to start his program, but A's assistant GM David Forst said Duchscherer's hip never responded well in recent days of throwing. Duchscherer threw a 20-pitch simulated game Friday and decided to have the surgery after that.

The A's re-signed Duchscherer in the offseason to a one-year \$1.75 million deal after he missed all of last season because of elbow surgery and a bout with clinical depression. "We went into this contract with Justin knowing there was a possibility injuries could be a factor," Forst said. "You feel bad. He did such a good job coming back from the elbow. He had a procedure on his back in spring training and that was no longer an issue. You're hoping he'd get past that stuff. Unfortunately, we just couldn't avoid the hip."

Duchscherer's 2007 and 2008 seasons ended prematurely because of operations on his right hip. He has the same congenital problem in his left hip as in his right — an abnormality at the top of his femur (thigh) bone that eats away at the cartilage in his hip and causes pain when he pitches. There's no date yet for his surgery, but it will be performed by Nashville-based Dr. Thomas Byrd, who handled the operations on his right hip. The expected recovery time is roughly six months.

Duchscherer said recently he would try to resume his career next season even if he had surgery. But I highly doubt that would be in an A's uniform. Forst said the team hasn't considered whether Duchscherer could fit into future plans, but it just seems like the sides will go their separate ways. Duchscherer will be a free agent and, if he fully recovers from this and wants to keep pitching, I would think another team will take a chance on inviting him to spring training. You have to pull for the guy after all the injury and other non-baseball related issues he's dealt with recently.

In other A's news, the team will announce a roster move later today to clear a spot for left-hander Brett Anderson, who will be reinstated from the DL and start tonight against Detroit.

Tonight's lineups and other A's notes

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune 5/29/2010 3:25pm.

The A's try to make it four wins in a row tonight, with Brett Anderson making his return to the mound after missing five weeks with a strained forearm. We won't see Anderson out there for long. He threw 57 pitches in a Triple-A rehab start Monday, and manager Bob Geren said Anderson's pitch count would increase slightly over that. I wouldn't expect him to go past 80 pitches. The question is how many innings that's good for.

Lefty reliever Cedrick Bowers was sent down to make room for Anderson, leaving the A's with a more conventional seven-man bullpen. ... I'm wondering if there could actually be a Vin Mazzaro sighting in tonight's game. Mazzaro was my guess to be optioned out today, simply because he hasn't been used in the past nine days. But perhaps the A's want to keep him around as insurance in case Anderson has a setback. In any case, with the news that Justin Duchscherer is definitely gone for the season, the A's go into tonight's game encouraged about Anderson's return.

Cliff Pennington is back at shortstop, but I'm surprised Adam Rosales isn't somewhere in tonight's lineup. Gabe Gross gets the call in left field against Detroit right-hander Rick Porcello.

The lineups ...

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

Tigers: Jackson CF, Damon DH, Ordonez RF, Cabrera 1B, Raburn LF, Guillen 2B, Inge 3B, Laird C, Everett SS; Porcello RHP.

Anderson sharp in return from DL

Scott Ostler, Chronicle Staff Writer

The baseball gods giveth and the baseball gods taketh away.

On Saturday, the gods taketh'd away from the A's Justin Duchscherer, who is scheduled for hip surgery and out for the season.

They giveth'd the A's back their best pitcher (potentially), as Brett Anderson returned after 34 days on the shelf with an arm injury (elbow inflammation and a forearm strain), and looked like the young man the A's see as their ace of the future.

Anderson put the hammer down on the menacing Tigers, giving up three hits in 5 2/3 innings and retiring 16 Tigers in a row at one point.

Gorgeous weather (78 tropical degrees) for the sellout crowd, and Anderson flat-out ruined the fans' night. That's two sellouts in a row the A's have spoiled.

Anderson: 70 pitches, four strikeouts, zero walks. Seems to have mended nicely.

As have the A's. They have won four in a row and are 4-1 on this 10-game Road Trip of Death. The sun is shining on the A's, and Anderson.

"He looked as good as I've ever seen him, ever," A's manager Bob Geren said. "You can't really pitch any better than that. And the Tigers are very tough against lefthanders. ... That was quite an outing, how crisp he looked, and how good he felt."

How good did he feel?

"I'm sure tomorrow it (left arm) will be a little sore; that's normal," the 22-year-old said. "During the game, it was fine."

He also said, "It's about as good as you can ask, taking a month or so off. It's as economical as I've ever been in the big leagues."

He has been in the big leagues for only 35 starts, five of them this season - but it's a very impressive start. And exactly what the A's need, especially having lost Duchscherer.

Suddenly, Oakland is riding high. The Rangers lost Saturday, so the A's leapfrogged into first place in the AL West, the first time they've held or shared that lead since May 11.

"It all starts on the mound," second baseman Mark Ellis said, "and our pitching will match up against anyone's in the league ... (Anderson's) command was just unbelievable."

That's Mark "Doctor Longball" Ellis, who slammed his first home run of the year leading off the fifth to break a scoreless tie. He also lined a three-run double down the left-field line in the eighth. Since Ellis snapped out of a post-disabled list 0-for-14 slump Thursday night, he is on a 7-for-10 roll.

Heroes were all over the A's dugout, including:

-- Left fielder Gabe Gross. He stole a home run from Gerald Laird in the third with a LeBron-like leap, going armpit high over the 8-foot fence to haul it in.

"I was the most surprised person in the ballpark," said Gross, who was blinded by the low early evening sun. "Before I took off (on his jump), I lost it. To be honest, I lost the ball two or three times. I just kind of threw my glove out where I thought it was."

-- Anderson had two nifty fielding plays, covering first on an off-balance throw from Ellis, and cheating Miguel Cabrera out of a swinging-bunt hit with a bare-handed turn-and-burn.

-- Brad Ziegler worked his seventh straight scoreless outing, going 2 1/3 innings.

Duchscherer done

A's pitcher Justin Duchscherer has decided to have hip surgery, which will end his season.

JUSTIN DUCHSCHERER

Hip surgery next for ailing right-hander

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Justin Duchscherer tried to stave off left hip surgery as long as possible, but injections of cortisone and the lubricant Synvisc did not help, and the two-time All-Star will not pitch again this season, his A's career possibly at an end.

The right-hander felt discomfort in a simulated game in Phoenix on Friday, leaving surgery as the only option. Recovery time is six months.

The A's knew when they re-signed Duchscherer, 32, that this might be a possibility at some point, one of the reasons the \$2 million deal was for one year and incentive-heavy (\$3 million-plus, which won't be paid). He has been on the disabled list six times in the past five years.

"This is something we were prepared for after the last time Duchscherer came out in Anaheim," A's assistant general manager David Forst said of Duchscherer's inability to make a start against the Angels on May 15. "We went into the situation with the contract knowing there were a number of issues that could keep Justin off the field. Everything else, there was never any problem, but he couldn't get away from the hip."

Duchscherer has a congenital problem in his hips; the tops of his femurs are too big for the joint, over the years creating cartilage damage.

"We were aware these things come in pairs," Forst said Saturday.

In 2007, Dr. Thomas Byrd shaved down the top of Duchscherer's right femur and repaired the damage in the area. Duchscherer also required another cleanup surgery in 2008 for his right hip, but the initial treatment was a success and he was able to return to pitching without any impact on his ability.

"It's a very big blow," A's pitching coach Curt Young said. "But if you can't do it physically, the game is taken away from you. The positive thing is it's the same thing he had before."

Duchscherer did not return a phone call seeking comment, but he has said that he plans to rehab this injury and try to join a team for next season. Might the A's consider the right-hander again, even with his extensive injury history?

"That's something we won't think about until after the season when we assess the rest of the staff," Forst said.

There is no date scheduled yet for Duchscherer's surgery. Byrd, based in Nashville, will perform this procedure, too.

A's leading off

Scott Ostler, San Francisco Chronicle

Pregame question for Bob Geren: Miguel Cabrera lights you up for three home runs Friday night, so do you have a special meeting Saturday to rethink how to pitch to him? "That was done during the game."

Anderson's strong return lifts A's into first

Lefty throws 5 2/3 shutout innings in first start in month

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

DETROIT -- On Saturday, about 1,400 miles north of Florida, where Roy Halladay became the second pitcher in 20 days to throw a perfect game, Brett Anderson stood on a mound in Detroit.

The A's left-hander came nowhere near a perfect nine. In fact, he threw just 70 pitches in 5 2/3 innings.

His line wasn't perfect, either, as he offered up three hits to the Tigers.

But he, along with everyone else in the Oakland clubhouse, was perfectly impressed by his outing, as it not only confirmed his health but guided the A's to a 6-0 victory over Detroit for the club's fourth straight win. And thanks to a Rangers loss Saturday, Oakland moved into first place in the American League West with a half-game lead.

"He looked as good as I've ever seen him," manager Bob Geren said. "You can't pitch any better than that."

Said Tigers skipper Jim Leyland: "I thought Anderson was tremendous coming back. He's one of the better pitchers in the league."

Anderson, who was activated earlier in the day after missing time due to a strained forearm and elbow tendinitis, was making his first start since April 24. Admittedly "uneasy" heading into the outing due to a rather rusty feeling in Monday's rehab start, the A's southpaw appeared anything but Saturday.

Following a one-out single to Johnny Damon in the first inning, Anderson retired 16 in a row and entered the sixth frame having tossed just 59 pitches, 40 of them strikes.

"He was tough," Tigers catcher Gerald Laird said. "These guys have good pitching. You have to tip your cap."

And while a couple of Laird's teammates -- Austin Jackson and Damon -- broke up Anderson's rhythm by posting back-to-back hits with two outs in the sixth to end his night, Geren couldn't have been more pleased with his pitcher's performance.

"That was very impressive by Brett Anderson," the A's skipper said. "Considering the time he's been off and how sharp his command was and the efficiency of his pitches, you couldn't have asked for a better start. To expect to get six out of him is almost too much to ask.

"Obviously, we won the game, which is what matters, but it's amazing how crisp he was. ... The story was Brett."

Said Anderson: "I felt pretty good, as good as you can ask for. I had all my pitches working for me, and that was probably as economical as I've ever been."

The A's offense, meanwhile, lent him support in the form of a two-run fifth inning, topped by a four-run eighth that included a three-run double off the bat of Mark Ellis, who went 3-for-4 for the second consecutive night. Oakland's second baseman,

who was hitless in his first 14 at-bats coming off the disabled list May 21, also tallied his first home run of the season in the win.

"I felt like I was having decent at-bats all along," Ellis said. "It's hard when you miss a month of Major League baseball, but I'm feeling better and am just happy I can contribute again."

Given the score, Gabe Gross' contribution to the win may be easily forgotten. But the Oakland left fielder's third-inning gem conjured up much talk in the A's clubhouse Saturday night.

With no outs and Laird at the plate, the Tigers catcher launched a high fly ball to deep left, where Gross made a perfectly timed leap and stuck his glove over the 8-foot wall to rob him of a homer.

"I've taken homers away," Gross said, "but that's the best one I can remember. They don't come around very often."

Said Ellis: "That was incredible. It could have changed the whole momentum of the game. I saw half his body go over the wall and just couldn't believe he came back with the ball."

Not a single run had crossed the plate at the time of the play, which left Anderson actually thinking he had just handed the Tigers a 1-0 lead.

"You can't expect anything like that," the A's starter said. "After it was hit, I turned around, and all of a sudden someone was throwing the ball back to me. I thought it was gone for sure."

Following Anderson's exceptional performance, Brad Ziegler showcased his own version of dominance by putting together 2 1/3 shutout innings of one-hit ball. It marked the right-handed reliever's seventh consecutive scoreless outing, not to mention the second longest outing of his career.

"He was outstanding," Geren said.

Said Anderson: "He was phenomenal. Just an overall good team win."

Oakland has now won four straight and nine of its last 12 after suffering a season-high five-game losing streak.

Perhaps even more impressive, though, is the fact that these wins have come away from the confines of Oakland Coliseum. The A's entered their current 10-game trip with a dismal 5-13 road record, one they've suddenly improved to 9-14.

"The wins and losses and the road and home records are more of a coincidence than anything," Geren offered. "We take each day as they come, but it's good for our confidence."

Mazzaro's career as a starter uncertain

Right-hander to remain in the bullpen, for now

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

DETROIT -- Nine games have passed without an appearance from Vin Mazzaro, whose role as a starter may be diminishing - - at least for the time being.

The A's right-hander, who has been groomed as a starting pitcher since being drafted by Oakland in 2005, has yet to make an appearance since throwing five innings in his first career relief outing May 20 -- a day the A's chose regular reliever Tyson Ross, not Mazzaro, to make the start for the injured Brett Anderson.

His long stretch of inactivity hasn't exactly been that long, manager Bob Geren insists. Because of the length of his last outing, he wasn't available for a few days after that.

Still, plenty of time has passed since the A's skipper has called upon Mazzaro, who made his Major League debut last June and went 4-9 with a 5.32 ERA in 17 starts before being shut down in September with right shoulder tendinitis. He endured a rocky spring and lost out on the fifth-starter battle, but he carried a 3-1 record with a 3.13 ERA in six starts with the Triple-A Sacramento River Cats upon his second promotion this year.

When first recalled May 4, Mazzaro made a spot start for Justin Duchscherer against Texas only to be sent down the following day. He finished with a no-decision after allowing four runs on two hits and four walks while striking out four in three innings.

When his next start will come is unknown. As of Sunday, Geren said, "He's in a relief role for the time being."

Powell spells Suzuki for Sunday matinee

DETROIT -- These days, it's hard not to get all giddy when catcher Landon Powell is in the lineup and playing battery mate with Dallas Braden.

That's because the pair of A's players, both drafted by the organization in 2004, will forever be linked to baseball history thanks to the perfect game they were part of May 9. And on Sunday, in an afternoon match with the host Tigers, they were in the same lineup for the second time since the perfecto.

However, manager Bob Geren wants to make it clear that there's no sense in reading too much into it all. Rather, it simply represents a day off for regular Kurt Suzuki.

"That's all it is," Geren said before the game -- the third in a four-game road set in Detroit.

The day of rest for Suzuki is the catcher's second in the past three games. He did, however, start at the designated hitter spot Friday after starting behind the plate 11 consecutive days following his activation from the disabled list.

A's pitchers own a 2.88 ERA with him behind the plate, good for the second lowest catchers' ERA in the league behind Dioner Navarro (2.60). Not to be outdone, though, is Powell, who has put together a handful of impressive defensive plays this season and has tossed out three of 10 attempted basestealers.

Worth noting

Rajai Davis moved into the Major League-lead for steals on Sunday when he stole second base, his 20th of the season, in the first inning against the Tigers. ... A handful of A's players, including Jerry Blevins and Jake Fox, have hosted several friends and family members this weekend in Detroit. Blevins, who grew up less than two hours away in Swanton, Ohio, had 23 ticket requests for Sunday's afternoon game.

Duchscherer to miss rest of season

A's righty to undergo left hip surgery at date to be determined

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

DETROIT -- Sometimes the hardest thing and the right thing are the same.

Such was the lesson learned this week for right-handed pitcher and two-time All-Star Justin Duchscherer, who decided to undergo season-ending surgery on the left hip that limited him to five starts this year, the A's announced Saturday morning.

Nashville-based physician Dr. Thomas Byrd, who twice orchestrated surgery on Duchscherer's right hip, will perform the operation to correct a femoral acetabular impingement at a date to be determined. The injury-prone pitcher has a congenital issue in his hips where the femur meets the joint, a problem that was resolved in the right hip by the same surgery, which typically requires six months of recovery time.

"I knew [surgery] was inevitable," Duchscherer said. "I haven't had a chance to pitch without pain."

The 32-year-old was initially placed on the disabled list May 7, retroactive to April 30, due to left hip inflammation. Byrd administered a cortisone shot at the beginning of the month and warned Duchscherer it could potentially mask the pain instead of completely taking it away, as it unfortunately did.

As a result, he was activated May 15 but reinjured the hip during pregame preparations for his scheduled start in Anaheim that day. Subsequently, the A's put him back on the DL on May 16, marking his seventh career DL stint.

After receiving an unsuccessful injection of joint-cushioning Synvisc, the veteran pitcher was sent to undergo rehab work in an effort to avoid surgery at the A's Minor League facility in Phoenix, where he was taking part in a facilitated rehab program designed by pitching coach Curt Young and bullpen coach Ron Romanic. The righty even underwent a 20-pitch simulated game on Friday before succumbing to a visit with a local physical therapist, assistant general manager David Forst said.

"He got through it," Forst told MLB.com by phone, "but didn't feel well doing it. He finally saw another doctor down there, and it was just confirmed that it probably wasn't going to hold up. So that's when he decided to go ahead and shut it down."

"After my bullpen, I felt stiff and sore," said Duchscherer, who realized he was out of options not named surgery. "I'd rather have it fixed than risk any damage. I felt myself changing mechanics, and I didn't want to hurt myself with new mechanics."

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 joining the DL this year. He was sidelined during all of the 2009 season due to elbow surgery and a subsequent bout with clinical depression, and he has missed parts of each of the last four seasons.

Because of Duchscherer's injury-prone past, the A's simply offered the pitcher a one-year contract this offseason that was highly incentive-laden. Forst didn't comment on the club's future plans with Duchscherer but, from his understanding from the pitcher's agent, "he definitely wants to play next year. That's why he wants to do the surgery now."

"We went into the contract knowing his past and knowing there were issues that could prevent him from pitching," he continued. "Pitching depth is something we focused on, and we're very happy with how guys have performed."

Duchscherer confirmed those beliefs Saturday evening via phone from Arizona, where he spoke emphatically about putting on a uniform again. Which uniform, though, remains unclear.

"It's up to the teams that are interested," he said. "I like the A's coaching staff and the players, so if the opportunity came up, I'd be interested in coming back."

A's shut out Tigers, 6-0

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DETROIT — Oakland Athletics manager Bob Geren was expecting to rely heavily on his bullpen Saturday night.

After all, starting pitcher Brett Anderson was on a strict pitch count in his first start since April 25, and no one was sure how he would do in his return from elbow and forearm problems.

Anderson surprised everyone — even himself — as he led Oakland to a 6-0 win over the Detroit Tigers.

He pitched 5½ innings, allowing just three hits. He didn't walk a batter and struck out four in a 70-pitch outing.

"That's about as good as I could have possibly hoped for after a month off," Anderson said. "That's probably the most efficient game I've ever pitched in the major leagues."

Instead of needing several relievers, Geren needed only two.

Brad Ziegler and Craig Breslow pitched the final 3¼ innings, allowing two hits.

"That was very, very impressive by Brett," Geren said.

"Considering the time off, for him to be that sharp and that efficient is amazing. He was only going to get 65-75 pitches, and there was no way I thought he could get us almost six innings.

That's more than we could have asked."

Rick Porcello (4-5) allowed two runs and seven hits in 6¼ innings.

"I was a little off — I really didn't have a feel for my pitches," Porcello said. "I didn't have great stuff, but I was able to keep us in the game."

The Tigers have only scored four runs in the first two games of the series, all coming off Miguel Cabrera's three homers on Friday night.

"Anderson is one of the best pitchers in the league, and (Ben) Sheets looks like he's back, so we've seen two nasty pitchers in the last two days," Tigers manager Jim Leyland said. "We didn't do much with them, and that happens when you aren't swinging good."

It was scoreless until Mark Ellis led off the fifth with a solo homer into the Oakland bullpen — his first of the season. Oakland added a second run later in the inning when Rajai Davis reached on an infield single, stole second and scored on Ryan Sweeney's two-out triple.

"We left a lot of guys on against these guys yesterday, and no one was scoring early tonight, so it felt great to hit that one," said Ellis, who has seven hits in his last three games. "I struggled when I first came off the DL (on May 21), but I think I've got things back now."

Detroit's only hit in the first five innings came on Johnny Damon's bloop single to left in the first.

The Tigers' only threat came in the sixth when Austin Jackson singled with two out and took third on Damon's double. That brought Ziegler out of the Oakland bullpen to relieve Anderson, and Magglio Ordonez lined out on his second pitch.

"Brad did a great job for us," Geren said. "He got out of that jam, and then he gave up 2 1-3 innings on 20 pitches. That's pretty efficient, too."

Davis tripled with one out in the seventh, but Tigers reliever Brad Thomas got out of the jam by getting Sweeney to ground into a double play.

Tigers reliever Brad Thomas loaded the bases with one out in the eighth on a single and two walks. Ellis greeted Eddie Bonine with a three-run double and later scored on Cliff Pennington's sacrifice fly.

Slumping Tigers catcher Gerald Laird was robbed of a leadoff homer in the third when left fielder Gabe Gross reached well over the eight-foot fence to make the catch.

"That's probably the greatest play I've ever had anyone make behind me in a game," Anderson said. "I was so sure it was gone that I had turned back around — I thought it was a homer until they threw the ball back in from the outfield. I had to watch the replay."

Laird is hitting .154 this season, and recently changed his jersey number in an attempt to get his offense going.

"That's part of the game — I thought I got it pretty good, and he made a great play on it," Laird said. "I've just got to keep battling. I'm hitting the ball better — I just need to find some holes."

Oakland's Kevin Kouzmanoff flirted with a homer in the next inning, but Ordonez in right field made a stumbling catch as he banged into the 365-foot sign in right-center field.

NOTES: The Tigers announced after the game that Dontrelle Willis will be designated for assignment in order to make room for Sunday's starting pitcher, Max Scherzer. ... The Athletics optioned reliever Cedric Bowers to Triple-A Sacramento to make room on the active roster for Anderson. ... Anderson has allowed one run over 11 innings in his last two starts against Detroit. ... Detroit's four runs in the first two games of the series all came on Miguel Cabrera's three homers in Friday's opener.

Baseballisms 101: Guide to the quirks of America's pastime

By Chris Murray, Reno Gazette Journal, 5/30/2010

Ever wonder why baseball has a seventh-inning stretch or a ceremonial first pitch?

Or when the first hot dog was served at a ballpark?

These quirks are part of what make baseball America's pastime. Discovering them is part of the fun of baseball.

Here is a look at 10 "baseballisms." We have included their origin (thanks to the book "The Cultural Encyclopedia of Baseball") the Reno Aces' take on the baseballism (thanks to player Mark Hallberg and former player Ryan Roberts) and one quote of note about that baseballism.

The seventh-inning stretch

The origin: The most popular, though inaccurate, story about the seventh-inning stretch details President William Howard Taft standing up to stretch his 300-pound body on opening day in 1910 during a Washington Senators game, and the crowd followed.

However, the first widely reported seventh-inning stretch was in May 1882. In a game between Manhattan College and the New York Metropolitan, Manhattan coach Brother Jasper told the student fans to stretch and move around. It just so happened to be the seventh inning.

Signing "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" was added to the festivities by broadcaster Harry Caray, who used to sing the song to himself during the seventh-inning stretch. In 1976, White Sox owner Bill Veeck hid a secret microphone in the broadcast booth so Caray's singing would play throughout the park. The tradition quickly caught on.

The Aces' take: At Aces games, an inflatable baseball head pops up beyond the center-field fence to lead the crowd in reciting "Take Me Out to the Ballgame."

"I think it's pretty cool," Hallberg said. "It's unique. Not every park has that. Most people don't get to see that every day, so maybe we take that for granted. I've even seen catchers in between innings get crossed up because there's a big white ball and they can't see the actual ball coming out of the pitcher's hand."

Quote to note: "A friend of mine, Harry Williams, wrote 'In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree' and he never saw an apple tree." -- Jack Norworth, defending his ability to write "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" without ever attending a baseball game (he didn't see a game until 1940, but wrote the song in 1908)

Slathering game balls with mud

The origin: In 1930, A's coach Lena Blackburne discovered a special mud by the Delaware River that dulled the gloss of baseballs without distorting their color. He began putting this mud on the ball to remove its slickness.

In 1940, future Hall of Fame pitcher Bob Feller tossed a no-hitter but repeatedly complained about the ball's slickness, which reportedly led to the major leagues formally adopting the Blackburne mud. But in 1938 the American League already was requiring its umpires to apply the mud to game balls before each contest.

The Aces' take: Three Aces ball boys are responsible for slathering mud on a dozen balls before every home game, a chore that takes roughly two hours. The trio also squeezes juice from an orange on the ball, thanks to a tip from ex-Aces outfielder Chris Roberson.

"The citrus makes it a little more grippy," said Noah Krueger, one of the bat boys. "Some dude down in Mexico taught Roberson about it and he told us. We used to have to spit on the ball, but by the time we were done, all of our throats were dry."

Quote to note: "It is very fine, like thick chocolate pudding." -- Lena Blackburne Baseball Rubbing Mud owner Jim Bintliff, describing the mud's texture

Leaving your glove on the playing field

The origin: This is one tradition that has been discontinued, but it shows how quirky the game can be. Until 1954, players -- except for the pitchers and catchers -- left their gloves on the field at the completion of an inning.

Rule 3.14 outlawed such practice to prevent injuries to players and rule out the possibility that a batted ball could hit a discarded glove, which was a normal occurrence.

The Aces' take: Aces players don't have to worry about tripping over a glove these days, but they do have to break them in. While some players will put their glove under a pillow or lather it with oil, Roberts takes a simpler approach.

"I play catch with it," Roberts said. "I'm really not a big guy on lubing it up or microwaving it. I just play catch with it and let it break in to how I close the glove. That, to me, is the best thing."

Quote to note: "They'd put dead mice in his glove -- rats, frogs, lizards, all kinds of things. That really upset him." -- Former Red Sox manager Ralph Houk, on what players would leave in the glove of Yankees shortstop Phil Rizzuto to freak him out

The ceremonial first pitch

The origin: The first widely reported "ceremonial first pitch" was in Japan in 1908 when ex-Japanese Prime Minister Okuma Shigenobu fired a strike before the game between Japanese and U.S. college teams.

In America, the tradition was established on opening day in 1910 when President Taft, a former player and huge fan of the game, was asked by umpire Billy Evans to throw out the first pitch from the stands.

The Aces' take: Hallberg has seen plenty of first pitches in his day. His advice for those who have to throw one?

"I just say, 'Throw it and don't think about it,'" Hallberg said. "Just go out there and throw it and if you miss the guy, you miss him, but at least you'll get the ball to home plate."

Quote to note: "Eric Davis missed the sign. I called for a pitchout." -- Cincinnati mayor Mark Mallory, after he uncorked what is widely considered the worst first pitch in the history (more a spike than a throw to former Red Eric Davis)

Serving hot dogs at games

The origin: The lyrics of "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" reference peanuts and Cracker Jack, but no ballpark food is as popular as the hot dog.

Hot dogs originated in Germany in 1852 and made their way to the U.S. in 1867. Just who introduced them to ballparks is a point of contention.

Some credit St. Louis Browns owner and German immigrant Christopher Von der Ahe; others say concessionaire Harry Stevens, who worked at the Polo Grounds, was responsible. Either way, hot dogs started popping up at ballparks in the 1890s.

Today the hot dog is baseball's most popular food. The Los Angeles Dodgers serve more than 1.7 million "Dodger Dogs" a year, the most of any team.

The Aces' take: Roberts said his favorite ballpark food is chilli cheese fries. Hallberg opted for the hot dog. Just don't tell him what's in the delicacy. "I prefer not to know," Hallberg joked.

Quote to note: "There isn't enough mustard in the world to cover Reggie Jackson." -- A's pitcher Darold Knowles (although he was talking about a hot dog of a different sort)

Pine tar and batting gloves

The origin: Pine tar, a sticky substance invented to preserve wood in harsh conditions, was introduced to baseball during its early stages.

Baseball gloves, however, didn't come into fashion until the 1960s. Golf pro Danny Lawyer introduced the first batting glove to the New York Giants' Bobby Thompson in 1949.

However, gloves were used only for batting practice and spring training until 1964, when Ken "Hawk" Harrelson wore them for good after developing a blister while playing 27 holes of golf.

The Aces' take: Chris Rahl and Sean Coughlin are known as the Aces who like pine tar the most, although Roberts also likes some grip on his bat.

"I like my bat sticky," Roberts said. "I use the tiger grip stick more than the pine tar because pine tar can get wet and slippery until it dries out. So I use the tiger stick, and the bottom half of my bat is real lubed up, really sticky for my bottom hand, and the top hand I don't really have a whole lot of stickiness up there."

Quote to note: "The bat handle, for not more than 18 inches from the end, may be covered or treated with any material (including pine tar) to improve the grip." -- Baseball's official rule book, which states pine tar can't extend more than 18 inches from the bottom of the bat (a rule George Brett knows pretty well)

Tobacco, seeds and gum

The origin: Baseball players tend to have at least one of three things in their mouth at all times: chewing tobacco, sunflower seeds or bubble gum.

Chewing tobacco has been part of baseball since at least the 1840s. By 1909 Bull Durham tobacco advertisements adorned more than 150 major league and minor league fences.

Sunflower seeds and gum also date back decades, with gum rising in popularity when it started being inserted with baseball card packs in the 1950s.

Some players opt against tobacco, seeds and gum, chewing on stranger things during games. The most notable were Greg Swindell (fingernails), Joe Horlen (bathroom tissue), Harry Coveleski (bologna) and Todd Welborn (dirt).

The Aces' take: The use of tobacco is outlawed in the minor leagues, which leaves Aces players picking between seeds and gum. Hallberg opts for the first of those two.

"Sunflower seeds," Hallberg said when asked what keeps his mouth busy. "I don't know why I picked them. It's just something I like the taste of, probably because of the salt."

Quote to note: "I thought I was going to get foot cancer." -- Pirates outfielder Andy Van Slyke, after sharing center field with the Phillies' Lenny Dykstra, a notorious tobacco chewer and spitter

Foul pole, but fair ball

The origin: Prior to the 1930s, right around when foul poles were invented, hitters were awarded home runs only if the ball landed in fair territory on the opposite side of the fence.

At least one source figures Babe Ruth would have had at least 50 more home runs had hitters been awarded home runs based on whether the ball was fair or foul when it went over the fence.

But why is it called a "foul pole" if a ball is deemed fair if it hits the pole? Most accounts reason that it's because the foul poles are extensions of the foul lines.

The Aces' take: While you rarely see a ball ding off the foul pole, Hallberg said it's "pretty cool" to nail one of the metal poles that rise over the fence.

"It's something unique if you can hit a homer and have it hit the foul pole," Hallberg said. "It will sometimes rattle around and everybody in the crowd will go nuts."

Quote to note: "Foul Pole Polka." -- Sports writer Thomas Boswell's description of Carlton Fisk's famous 1975 World Series dance to keep his game-winning homer in fair territory

The night game

The origin: The first night baseball game was played between two department store teams in 1880, as a demonstration put on by the Northern Electric Light Company.

Pro teams started playing night games in 1930, when Negro Leagues began playing under the lights to boost attendance.

The first major league night game was waged on May 24, 1935, when Cincinnati hosted Philadelphia. The Chicago Cubs became the last organization to play a night game in 1988 (more than 40 years after any other team).

The Aces' take: The majority of the Aces players prefer playing under the lights rather than under the sunshine.

"I'd rather play day games when it's cold, but ultimately if it's nice weather and summertime, then night games are the best," Roberts said. "It's just a game I like playing at night underneath the lights."

Quote to note: "You don't have to pay for sunshine." -- Brooklyn Dodgers owner and general manager Branch Rickey, on why he preferred day games (although the Dodgers were the second major league club to host a night game on June 15, 1938, during which Johnny Vander Meer pitched his historic second consecutive no-hitter)

The knuckleball pitcher

The origin: Perhaps the oddest duck in baseball is the knuckleball pitcher.

Toad Ramsey is credited with inventing the pitch while playing for St. Louis and Louisville in the 1880s. Ramsey was an apprentice bricklayer, and a load of bricks was dropped on his hand, serving the tendon in his middle finger. As a result, he couldn't apply pressure with the finger and resorted to the "knuckleball," which is actually thrown with the fingertips.

Eddie Rommel is considered the father of the knuckleball; he was taught how to throw the pitch by a Baltimore plumber. Rommel developed and used it in the 1920s after the major leagues outlawed his beloved spitball.

The Aces' take: While the Aces rarely face a knuckeball specialist, Hallberg said he doesn't look forward to the days he must dig in against the fluttering pitch.

"They throw so much slower than everybody else," Hallberg said. "You figure it would be easier to hit, but all of a sudden the ball is dancing around a little bit and it throws off your timing and you have more time to think about what you're doing, so it's a little bit tougher. I couldn't care less about a knuckleballer."

Quote to note: "There are two theories on hitting the knuckeball -- unfortunately neither of them works." -- Famed hitting instructor Charlie Lau

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Sacramento holds off Reno for fourth win in row

By Kevin Poveda / Sacramento River Cats

The Sacramento River Cats held off a late rally by the Reno Aces and escaped with a 5-4 road victory Saturday night. With the victory, Sacramento extended its winning streak to four and is now four victories away from the .500 mark for the first time since April 27 when they were sitting at 10-10. The four-game winning streak is the River Cats' longest of the season.

The River Cats got things going early in what would turn out to be a nail-biter in the end. Third baseman Eric Sogard hit his first home run of the season on a line drive to right field in the first inning to give Sacramento the early 1-0 lead.

The River Cats then put up back-to-back solid innings in the third and the fourth. Sogard singled with two out in the third before scoring on a Josh Donaldson double. With the double, Donaldson extended his hitting streak to seven games. Left-fielder Matt Watson, who was added to the Sacramento roster via free agency on May 28, proved why the River Cats brought him back for his second stint with the team. Watson started off the fourth inning with a line-drive double to center field. Watson didn't stop there, eventually scoring off an error by first baseman Brandon Allen. Watson finished the day 3-for-4 with two doubles, an RBI and a run scored. Following Watson in the fourth, second baseman Corey Wimberley tripled on a fly ball to right field scoring shortstop Michael Affronti.

Reno staged the beginning of their comeback in the sixth inning when center fielder Drew Macias tripled on a fly ball to right field, scoring Brandon Allen. Reno had Sacramento on pins and needles in the final two innings of play, slowly chipping away at the 5-2 lead the River Cats had built through the first seven.

Aces left fielder Jeff Bailey opened up the eighth inning with a triple on a line drive to center field, eventually scoring on a sacrifice fly by Allen. Reno got another run on the board when Macias got his third hit of the game, a single that brought in Pedro Ciriaco.

Sacramento brought in reliever Henry Rodriguez to close out the game, but Rodriguez would have to fight for his fifth save of the season as the Aces would score one run and get two additional men on base before Ciriaco struck out, leaving the winning run on first base.

Catcher Josh Donaldson wasn't the only River Cat to extend a streak in the River Cats victory. Infielder Corey Wimberley extended his consecutive on base streak to 26 games, dating all the way back to May 4. Sacramento also recorded five extra base hits: three doubles and a triple.

Pitching falters late as Naturals edge Hounds

By Oscar LeRoy, Midland Reporter Telegram

Throughout their recent struggles at the plate, at least the Midland RockHounds could rely on their pitching to keep them in ballgames, and even at times save their hides from a tough game at the plate.

But Saturday night was an off night for the RockHound hurlers as they issued six walks, including three with the bases

loaded, as Northwest Arkansas opened a three-game series against Midland with a 6-5 victory in front of 4,814 fans at Citibank Ballpark.

The Naturals, who were coming off being swept at Frisco, had a four-run seventh inning and a two-run ninth as five combined walks played a part in both rallies.

The RockHounds almost had a dramatic comeback for the second consecutive night when Alex Valdez hit a two-run home run to right field and had runners at second and third base. But Naturals reliever Luis Coleman got Matt Whitney to hit into a game-ending grounder to second base.

Valdez was actually a double away from hitting for the cycle. He had a triple in the first inning and single in the third to go with his homer in the ninth.

The RockHounds got two unearned runs against Naturals starter Eduardo Paulino in the third inning and that early 2-0 lead held up thanks to the pitching of Pedro Figueroa (1-4), who pretty much held the top hitting team in the Texas League in check through six innings.

But in the seventh, the lefthander got into a deep hole when he allowed the first two batters to reach on singles and then loaded the bases when he walked Anthony Seratelli.

Figueroa gave way to Justin Friend and he didn't have much luck either. He walked Chris McConnell, the first batter he faced, to bring in the first Naturals run. Then after striking out leadoff batter Derrick Robinson, he walked Johnny Giavotella to walk in another run. Clint Robinson added a sacrifice fly and Jeff Howell chipped in with an RBI single to give Northwest Arkansas a 4-2 lead.

"That's what won us the ballgame or at least got us out in front," said Howell, the Naturals catcher who was 3 for 5 on the night. "It was a big inning for us offensively and then we had a guy come back out and put zeros on the board after that."

Everett Teaford (5-2), in relief of Figueroa, scattered four hits and allowed just one run through his two innings of work. The only run he allowed came in the eighth when Jeff Baisley doubled and later scored on a bobble by center fielder Derrick Robinson as the 'Hounds cut it 4-3.

Midland was still within striking distance but the Naturals added two insurance runs in the top of the ninth against RockHounds reliever Neil Wagner, who took the loss in Thursday's 5-2, 14-inning loss to Tulsa. Wagner allowed three of the first four batters to reach safely with singles. The last of which coming from Ernesto Mejia, which brought home Giavotella. But then Wagner got into serious trouble after intentionally walking dangerous hitter Tim Smith to load the bases with two outs to get to No. 8 hitter Seratelli. But Seratelli drew the bases-loaded walk to score Howell and give the Naturals the eventual game-winning run.

"We kept on it offensively and that's exactly what this team does well — and that's score runs when we have to," Howell said. "Luckily we didn't give it up there."

NOTEBOOK

'HOUND BITES: The RockHounds have added OF Val Majewski to the roster. Majewski, a third round pick by the Baltimore Orioles in 2002, was recently signed as a minor league free agent by the Oakland A's. Last year Majewski split time between Independent Camden and then Arkansas of the Texas League. He hit .235 with four home runs and 18 RBI in 36 games with the Travelers. Since the addition brought the roster to the league maximum 24 there was no counter move. ...If the name Tim Smith sounds familiar, he played with Midland College from 2005-06. He was a 7th round draft pick by the Texas Rangers out of Arizona State University in 2007 and was acquired, along with C Manny Pina, by the Kansas City Royals in a trade last September. Smith and Pina played with Frisco last season. ...RockHounds 2B J.C Holt made the play of the game in the fifth inning when he fielded a grounder hit by Chris McConnell to the middle of the infield and then scooped the ball from behind the back to shortstop Josh Horton to get the force out at second base. ... The win gives the Naturals an 8-8 record against Texas League South Division opponents this season. Midland is now 9-7 against North Division teams.

TODAY'S PROBABLES: The RockHounds are expected to send LHP Carlos Hernandez (3-1, 2.81 ERA) to the mound against Northwest Arkansas LHP Edgar Osuna (5-1, 1.21). Game time is 2 p.m.

Ports Split Series with Giants with 4-2 Loss

STOCKTON, Calif. - After triumphing in a come-from-behind win on Friday, the Stockton Ports watched the San Jose Giants enjoy that same kind of triumph, as the Giants (31-19) scored three runs in the ninth inning, all off Andrew Carignan, to defeat the Ports (21-29), by a final of 4-2.

The Ports had several chances to score in the game, leaving 12 total runners on base. The Ports brought the winning run to the plate in the ninth inning, but were unable to mount a winning rally. Shortstop Grant Green and catcher Petey Paramore both collected two hits in the game. Center fielder Todd Johnson singled in the ninth to extend his hitting streak to 15 games.

Southpaw Ben Hornbeck had a great outing, striking out nine and allowed just one run on a solo home run in six innings. Brett Hunter walked two and fanned two for a scoreless seventh inning. Andrew Carignan allowed three runs on two hits and two walks in 1.1 innings, and Paul Smyth allowed two hits before picking up the final two outs of the game.

San Jose jumped to an early 1-0 lead in the third inning as center fielder Juan Perez hit a solo home run to right field, his fifth homer on the year. It was one of the two hits that Hornbeck allowed in the game.

The Ports responded in the third with a run of their own. Left fielder Shane Keough was hit by a pitch to lead off the inning. The next two batters flew out, and then first baseman Mike Spina hit a deep single to centerfield, allowing Keough to come racing home to tie the game.

Stockton took a 2-1 lead in the sixth inning. With one out, second baseman Tyler Ladendorf doubled down the right field line. He stole third base while right fielder Jeremy Barfield was at-bat. Barfield walked to put two runners on for Paramore. Paramore singled to score Ladendorf.

In the seventh inning, the Ports came close to extending their lead. Green doubled to right field to jump start the inning. While Johnson was at-bat, Quirarte threw a wild pitch that allowed Green to move to third. Johnson grounded out. Spina then hit into a fielder's choice that put out Green in a run down around third. The Ports went from having a runner on third with no out to a runner on first with two out for Parker, who walked. Ladendorf came up to bat, and flew out to right fielder James Simmons to end the inning.

The Ports held onto their slim 2-1 lead through the eighth inning, but San Jose wasn't finished. In the ninth with Carignan on the mound, designated hitter Johnny Monell singled up the middle. Monell replaced Charlie Culberson, who was ejected after arguing a third strike call in the sixth inning. First baseman Brandon Belt then ripped a triple off the centerfield wall to tie the game.

With Drew Biery batting, Carignan threw a wild pitch, and Belt scored the third Giants run of the game. Carignan then issued back-to-back walks to put two on with one out. The Ports then called upon Smyth to pitch. Simmons then singled to load the bases. Catcher Aaron Lowenstein followed suit with an RBI single to make it 4-2. The Ports collected the next two outs to get out of the jam.

The Ports rally in the bottom of the ninth fell short. Green walked, and Johnson followed him on base with a single. With two on and one out, Spina struck out looking. Then third baseman Stephen Parker grounded out to end the game and seal the series split.

The Ports hit the road for a three-game set with Modesto. The Ports will play the Nuts at 6:05 PM on Sunday at John Thurman Field. RHP Justin Murray (2-3, 4.53) will start for Stockton, while RHP Ethan Hollingsworth (5-2, 2.21) is scheduled to take the mound for Modesto.

Cougars Lose 15-Inning Marathon **Kane County drops 12th game out of last 14**

GENEVA, III. – In a 4-hour, 37-minute marathon in front of 7,026 at Elfstrom Stadium, the Kane County Cougars suffered a 5-3, 15-inning loss Saturday night against the Clinton LumberKings. The Cougars rallied to tie the game in the bottom of the ninth on a two-run single by Max Stassi, but Clinton took control in the 15th and handed the Cougars their 12th loss in 14 games.

Both starting pitchers turned in solid efforts. The Cougars' Anvioris Ramirez gave up one run -- in the fifth -- on six hits, walked one and fanned two over six innings in a no-decision. The Cougars tied the game, 1-1, in the sixth on a Kent Walton homer off Erasmo Ramirez. After the LumberKings scored in the seventh against Josh Lansford and in the eighth against A.J. Huttenlocker, Stassi plated Walton and Myrio Richard in the ninth to draw the Cougars even, 3-3.

The 3-3 deadlock remained until the 15th inning when the LumberKings scored two runs -- one earned -- against Connor Hoehn (4-3). Position player Juan Nunez finished the Cougars' pitching duties by recording the final out in the frame. Daniel Cooper (2-1) picked up the victory, and Jose Jimenez recorded his first save.

The Cougars (21-29) and LumberKings (29-21) continue the four-game series Sunday night at 6 CT. Rob Gilliam (3-3, 3.34) will face spot-starter John Housey (3-0, 2.25). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at www.kccougars.com with pregame coverage starting at 5:45 p.m.