

A's News Clips, Tuesday, July 20, 2010

Injuries, then Boston Red Sox spoil Oakland A's homecoming

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

On a day when the A's learned that No. 3 hitter and starting right fielder Ryan Sweeney would miss the rest of the season, all the good vibes from a five-game winning streak also went on the shelf.

Daisuke Matsuzaka and the Boston Red Sox added more misery to Oakland's dismal homecoming news with a 2-1 victory Monday night at the Coliseum before just 19,341 fans, many of them rooting for the visitors.

The A's opened their six-game homestand with an opportunity to move over .500 for the first time since June 11, but the day went badly for them before they even took the field.

The sour development with the 25-year-old Sweeney, who will have surgery on his right knee to address a patella tendinitis issue, put a serious psychological damper on a club desperately trying to climb back in the AL West race. If that wasn't discouraging enough for the badly battered A's, third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff had to be scratched just before game time with lower back stiffness.

The Red Sox then compounded the pain by holding the A's to just three hits. Matsuzaka (7-3) limited the A's to just one hit and one walk over the first six innings and then got help from his bullpen to outduel Oakland starter Ben Sheets (4-9). Sheets gave a reasonably strong performance but paid for a fourth-inning lapse in which Boston scored two runs.

"He (Matsuzaka) really mixed up his pitches and kept us off-balance," said Rajai Davis, who provided the A's run with a one-out, third-inning homer off the Boston starter. "Even the pitch I hit for the home run was a pretty good one, a slider that probably caught too much of the plate. Other than that, he was real tough against us."

Matsuzaka retired the first seven A's hitters he faced before Davis' homer. Then, after issuing a leadoff walk to Daric Barton in the fourth, Matsuzaka retired 10 straight hitters before a seventh-inning jam forced him to give way to Daniel Bard and Jonathan Papelbon, who preserved the slim lead over the final 21/3 innings.

The A's had to take a little more salt when Eric Patterson, whom the A's traded to Boston on June 26 for reliever Fabian Williamson, led off the top of the fourth with a triple into the right-center gap. He scored on a David Ortiz sacrifice fly to tie the game, and two batters later, Adrian Beltre hammered Sheets' first pitch to left-center for his 15th home run.

Patterson, who with Sweeney down for the year might have found some time in the Oakland playing rotation had he stuck around, felt sorry for his former teammate and the A's but admitted he's enjoying his time in Boston primarily filling in for injured second baseman Dustin Pedroia.

"I talked to some of the (A's) guys downstairs before the game (about Sweeney)," he said. "I feel sorry about what happened, but that's baseball. I'm happy to be over here and contributing as best I can to the Red Sox. Hopefully, it'll all work out OK for them."

For much of the night, it looked like it might with Gabe Gross getting the start in right field in place of Sweeney. Gross made two spectacular defensive plays, laying out to snare Kevin Cash's right-field flare in foul territory in the fifth inning and then gunning down Kevin Youkilis at third base in the sixth when Youkilis tried to go from first to third on a Beltre single to right.

Gross was set up to be the hero when he came to bat in the bottom of the seventh with runners at second and third and two out, but he popped out meekly to third base. The A's squandered another rally in the eighth before Papelbon came on to pitch a 1-2-3 ninth for his 21st save.

"Gross had a good situation, but (Bard) made a pretty good pitch on him," manager Bob Geren said.

Oakland A's update: Club supports Ryan Sweeney's decision to have knee surgery

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

The timing of Ryan Sweeney's decision to have knee surgery may have been bad, what with the A's on one of their best streaks of the year. Nonetheless, the club supports the outfielder's call to shut it down for the year and protect his future.

"It got to a point where it was very painful for him, and it was recommended that to go on in the future and feel 100 percent healthy, this was the right way to go," manager Bob Geren said. "It was a decision by a lot of people, mainly him. We backed him 100 percent."

The 25-year-old Sweeney, the A's No. 3 hitter much of the year, will have surgery to correct patella tendinitis in his right knee, which has been bothering him since last season. He has had a series of platelet rich plasma (PRP) injections as well as a cortisone shot to try to ease the condition, but it has not improved.

"I got the MRI a week ago and then I had a couple different doctors look at it," Sweeney said. "They basically said it wasn't a matter of if I needed the surgery, it was a matter of when I needed to get it. So I had to make that decision.

"It sucks because I want to play," he added. "But I'm a young player and to try and finish this year and play in pain, then get it done at the end of the season and possibly miss a month or two of next season, I didn't want to do that."

A date for the surgery has not been set, but Sweeney said it would be soon. It will be performed by noted Vail, Colo.-based orthopedic surgeon Dr. J. Richard Steadman, who has conducted knee procedures on numerous professional athletes, notably John Elway, Joe Montana, Bruce Smith and several members of the U.S. ski team, including Phil Mahre, Picabo Street and Bode Miller.

Sweeney missed the entire series at Kansas City and hasn't played since July 11, the last game before the All-Star break. He was hitting .294 with one home run and 36 RBIs despite playing with the injury. He said the condition mostly affected his running the bases and playing in the outfield but maintained it may have impacted his hitting as well.

"I felt like I did the best that I could," he said. "I don't like to make excuses for myself, but I was in pain. I think mostly it affected me mentally. It's such a mental game, and there were a few games where I was thinking about my knees and maybe not thinking about hitting the ball."

Geren appreciated Sweeney playing through the injury as long as possible.

"He's a tough guy, he's done a heck of a job and we're all proud and appreciative of what he's done," Geren said.

Geren said he has a number of options for right field. Gabe Gross got the start Monday night, and the manager indicated Rajai Davis and Matt Watson may get time. Geren added that Conor Jackson is an option once he comes off the disabled list and that Travis Buck is healthy and available at Triple-A Sacramento.

Right-handed reliever Henry Rodriguez was called up Monday to replace Sweeney on the roster.

Left-hander Brett Anderson will have another rehab start for Sacramento tonight in Colorado Springs. Geren said that he expects Anderson to throw approximately 80-85 pitches and that Anderson could return to Oakland for his next scheduled start. ... Third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff, originally in Monday night's starting lineup, was a late scratch with lower back stiffness.

Inman: Oakland A's are hurting for sluggers

By Cam Inman, Oakland Tribune columnist

Batting third, fourth and fifth in the A's lineup are options (e), (f) and (z). The heart of the order? Nah, the heart of darkness.

Already embarrassingly weak on the major league bell curve, the A's 3-4-5 spots got even weaker Monday.

Leading hitter Ryan Sweeney won't be employed in the No. 3 hole anymore this season. He exited Monday to undergo knee surgery. And he takes with him a 56-game streak without a home run, typifying the A's power-starved lineup.

Ah, but there still is catcher Kurt Suzuki, designated hitter Jack Cust and third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff to carry the A's lineup up the American League West standings. Wait, this just in: Kouzmanoff, scratched because of lower-back stiffness.

Of course he got scratched just before Monday night's game with the Boston Red Sox. Such is life with the disabled-list-prone A's, who basically are waging a three-game, split-squad series this week with the injury-plagued Sox.

Suzuki, Cust and No. 5-hitter Adam Rosales went a combined 0 for 11 as the A's managed only three hits overall in Monday night's 2-1 setback before a ridiculously sparse crowd of 19,341.

As well as the A's have played lately, they cannot climb into legitimate playoff contention with this no-fear lineup. Their cast is filled with respectable, decent players. But that lineup is made up entirely of 1-2-6-7-8 hitters.

When general manager Billy Beane makes his token trade in the next two weeks, a solid-hitting prospect would be a welcome asset here in Tarp Town USA.

As for whether Beane will ever keep such a hitter for an extended period of time, well, you're probably wondering whatever happened to Brett Wallace, Carlos Gonzalez, Andre Ethier, Nick Swisher and Nelson Cruz. (Warning to A's fans: Don't look up their gaudy stats unless you want to slap your forehead in dismay.) As for Sweeney, he flashed phenomenal defensive skills in the outfield, carried a team-high .294 batting average and has headed into an uncertain sunset with problematic knees at the ripe age of 25.

"I was thinking about my knees and not about hitting the ball," Sweeney said of this season's pains.

Quite an admission. And he was the A's best hitter? How sad.

"I showed I can hit for average and put the ball in play," Sweeney said. "A 3-hole hitter usually hits a few more home runs."

A few more in one game, or in one season? His only home run this season came in a May 4 win over the Texas Rangers.

When it comes to finding a replacement outfielder, A's manager Bob Geren tossed out five candidates and muttered something about "lots of options."

Realistically, Geren should have channeled one of the greatest cinematic managers of all-time, "Major League" skipper Lou Brown (played by James Gammon, who passed away Monday at age 70). Among Brown's quotes: "Don't you have any proven major league talent?"

Suzuki is a wonderful but miscast talent in terms of the batting order. He entered the game hitting .200 with no home runs in 11 games as the No. 3 hitter, where Geren deployed him Monday night.

Suzuki typically has split time as the cleanup hitter with Kouzmanoff, but neither is a bona fide slugger. Entering Monday, Suzuki was hitting .256 with 10 home runs, Kouzmanoff .271 with nine home runs.

For the third time in four games, the A's instead bequeathed the No. 4 spot to Cust, a Triple-A call-up from Sacramento if you want to be harsh and recall his preseason demotion.

Cust is no stranger to batting cleanup, and he enjoyed a fine run there the past few seasons. But when he strikes out on six pitches in his first two at-bats Monday night, well, jeez.

"I take the same approach no matter where I hit," Cust said before the game. "As long as I'm in, I'm ready."

When will the A's next wave of Triple-A prospects be ready? Not soon enough. Outfielder Michael Taylor was batting .347 during a 13-game hitting streak through Sunday, and designated hitter Chris Carter has 19 home runs for the Sacramento River Cats.

Until the A's remedy their lineup, their young pitching staff must overachieve to keep them in the race and Geren must find a way to motivate those uninspiring bats.

Maybe Geren can just quote another Lou Brown classic: "The local press seems to think that we'd save everyone the time and trouble if we just went out and shot ourselves. Me, I'm for wasting sports writers' time. So I figure we ought to hang out for a while and see if we can give 'em all a nice big (burger) to eat!"

Fine, but the A's don't have much time to waste, or much of a lineup to tout.

Chin Music: Sweeney out for the year: knee tendinitis surgery

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 7/19/2010 4:59PM

Carl Steward, filling in for Joe Stiglich. Here's a brief story I filed on Ryan Sweeney for the website. More details forthcoming.

In yet another injury setback for the hard-luck A's, right fielder Ryan Sweeney was placed on the disabled list and will be lost for the season after electing to have surgery on his right knee to alleviate patella tendinitis.

The 25-year-old Sweeney, who was hitting .294 with one home run and 37 RBIs, has been the A's No. 3 hitter for much of the year. He has been bothered by the knee tendinitis since last season but received occasional injections to curb the pain. After the pain worsened, Sweeney had an MRI last week and made a mutual decision with the club that the surgery was necessary.

A date has not been scheduled for the surgery but Sweeney said it will be very soon. He hopes to be back 100 percent for spring training in 2011.

Noted Vail, Colo., orthopedic surgeon J. Richard Steadman, who has performed knee surgeries on numerous professional athletes including John Elway, Joe Montana and Bruce Smith as well as U.S. Olympic skiers Phil Mahre, Picabo Street and Bode Miller, will conduct the surgery on Sweeney.

Sweeney shuts it down for the year

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

On a night two heavily bandaged clubs were facing each other at the Coliseum, the A's began things by placing everyday right fielder Ryan Sweeney on the disabled list so he can have season-ending knee surgery.

Then the A's, who have used the DL 18 times this season, fell 2-1 to the Red Sox, who have used the DL 16 times. Both teams currently have 10 players out of action, and Boston is missing many big-name players, including starter Josh Beckett, catchers Victor Martinez and Jason Varitek, and 2008 AL MVP Dustin Pedroia. The clubs entered Monday with an astonishing combined total of 1,300 player-games missed.

Sweeney, 25, has played on chronically sore knees his entire pro career, but when his right knee became even more painful this month after he twisted it while trying to avoid a tag in Cleveland, he began to explore other options. He tried a cortisone shot for the right knee along with platelet-rich plasma injections for both knees July 12, but there was little improvement, so Sweeney was placed on the DL on Monday and said he will have surgery for right patella tendinitis in Vail, Colo., as soon as possible.

The surgeon, Dr. Richard Steadman, is an internationally known knee-tendon specialist who has treated several soccer players, including Ronaldo, for patella problems. According to Sweeney, the recovery time is four to six months. He expects to be healthy for spring training.

"I'm a young guy, playing in pain - that's not something I want to deal with my whole career," Sweeney said. "Trust me, I want to play, but it was just keep going to come back, and I still have a long career in front of me."

Sweeney had an MRI exam on his right knee earlier in the month, and he got one on his left knee Monday. He said Steadman has not seen those results yet, so he is not sure if he will need any procedure on the left knee. Sweeney has not had knee surgery before, arthroscopic or otherwise, but if there's any cleanup work recommended for the left knee, he said he'd have both repaired. Sweeney's .294 average is the team's best.

Asked about possibilities in right field, manager Bob Geren mentioned Gabe Gross and Matt Watson, and he noted that two injured players, Conor Jackson and Travis Buck, will be available in the near future.

Buck began a rehab assignment at Triple-A Sacramento on Monday and went 1-for-5 with three RBIs and a stolen base. Jackson has yet to play any rehab games, but when healthy, he is likely to play left field, with Rajai Davis shifting to right.

Top outfield prospect Michael Taylor has a 14-game hitting streak at Sacramento and went 3-for-6 with a homer and five RBIs on Monday, but the A's remain reluctant to bring him up immediately.

A'S BEAT

Good audition, but no win for Sheets

By Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Many people believed that Monday night's start might be an audition of sorts for **Ben Sheets**, with the trade deadline approaching, though the A's have expressed little interest in moving him.

Instead, the man gaining some notice in Oakland's 2-1 loss to Boston was **Gabe Gross**, in right field — a position temporarily unsettled with **Ryan Sweeney** going on the disabled list.

Rajai Davis is likely to move there when left fielder

Conor Jackson returns from the DL.) There were mixed results for Gross, who made a terrific throw in the sixth to nail **Kevin Youkilis** trying to go from first to third on a single to right by **Adrian Beltre**. "I didn't even think we had a shot," Sheets said of the play.

Gross then came up with runners on second and third and two outs in the seventh, and he popped up against Boston reliever **Daniel Bard**.

Sheets had another strong outing, potentially piquing interest. He allowed two runs in 6²/₃ innings, and he has given up two runs, total, in his past 14²/₃ innings. Beltre's solo homer in the fourth

provided the winning margin.

Another injury: Third baseman **Kevin Kouzmanoff**

was scratched with lowerback stiffness, but manager

Bob Geren said Kouzmanoff will be OK to go tonight.

Were he to miss even a few days, Oakland probably would need to call up an infielder; **Adam Rosales**, at third Monday, is the team's only backup infielder. **Steve Tolleson** is batting a teamhigh .332 at Triple-A Sacramento.

Briefly: When Sweeney was placed on the DL, righthander **Henry Rodriguez**

was recalled from Sacramento. That means when

Dallas Braden comes off the DL today, the two most likely candidates to return to the minors are left-hander **Cedrick**

Bowers and righthander

Ross Wolf. Wolf has worked once since being called up July 7. ... **Brett Anderson**, scheduled to start for Sacramento tonight, might need another rehab start after that, according to Geren.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Familiar faces: Boston's double-play combination Friday consisted of ex-A's Marco Scutaro and Eric Patterson. Patterson, traded to Boston in late June, tripled in the fourth and scored. "I'm excited to be over here," he said. "It's a great group, a great staff."

'Moneyball' will put A's, Coliseum in the spotlight

A's are ready for their close-up

GWEN KNAPP, San Francisco Chronicle

Long accustomed to fans of MLB's marquee teams taking over their stadium, the A's soon will yield the Coliseum to a more glamorous version of themselves. Next week, the crew bringing the book "Moneyball" to the screen will begin filming in Oakland, with Brad Pitt as Billy Beane and the calendar flipped back to 2002.

Initial plans for the film went on the shelf last year, because converting a book about statistical analysis into a screenplay turned out to be as challenging as reaching the playoffs on a payroll below \$50 million. But "Moneyball" found its ace pitcher in screenwriter Aaron Sorkin, the man who mined wit from Congressional Budget Office projections for "The West Wing."

He also wrote the 1990s sitcom "Sports Night" and the script for the soon-to-be-released "The Social Network," a film about the founders of Facebook.

Most sports movies tend to whiff on realism, and Sorkin's stylized dialogue might not work perfectly, but he is the only screenwriter whose work deserves a footnote from the congressional steroid hearings. Roger Clemens lifted his outrage and arrogance directly from Jack Nicholson's "You can't handle the truth" speech in Sorkin's "A Few Good Men."

If the "Moneyball" movie, with Bennett Miller ("Capote") as director, stays true to the book and becomes a hit, another classic movie line will come to mind. The refrain from "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid" will resonate every time the current A's take the field: "Who are those guys?"

Michael Lewis' book stressed on-base percentage and power (rather than batting average and speed) as Beane's blueprint for a low-budget winner. The current A's lack the patience at the plate that defined Oakland's contenders from early in the 2000s; their bats have virtually no pop, and they like to put their spikes in gear.

Beane would argue — as he did after the book was released in 2003 — that authentic "Moneyball" demands no athletic prototype. It simply requires the general manager to assemble a roster of players whose skills have been undervalued.

Still, the cinematic A's — and their record 20-game winning streak of '02 — could seem fairly disconnected from reality if the team extends its stretch without a playoff appearance to four seasons. (The movie is due for release next year.) The overall theory that underpriced talent can compete for postseason spots should hold, though, especially if the Padres and Rangers go the distance in their division races, joining the 2008 Tampa Bay Rays in pseudo-Moneyball glory.

The parallels aren't exact. The Rangers and Padres have leading-man managers in Ron Washington and Bud Black, and the A's prefer to put character actors on the bench while their general manager plays the role of cerebral swashbuckler.

But regardless of where they or Beane's philosophy stands now, the A's deserve their moment on the big screen. From Charlie O. to Billyball to the Bash Brothers to Moneyball — with a mule, mustaches and the law-schooled micromanaging Tony La Russa in supporting roles — the Oakland franchise has long been a special, eccentric part of baseball.

So how did the Angels make it to the theaters before the A's — and in a flick that had the Coliseum posing as their park? Apparently, "Athletics in the Outfield" didn't hit the right note.

Even the Giants have been immortalized by Hollywood — if anyone bothers to remember the creepy 1996 stalker film "The Fan," starring Wesley Snipes.

On the whole, though, California's most famous industry has egregiously slighted Western baseball. The Yankees have been film staples — from the "Pride of the Yankees" and "Damn Yankees" to the cameos of Mickey Mantle, Yogi Berra and Roger Maris in a Doris Day-Cary Grant vehicle, "That Touch of Mink."

"Fever Pitch" with Jimmy Fallon paid tribute to the Red Sox, albeit in a weak rewrite of Nick Hornby's hilarious soccer novel. "Fear Strikes Out," about the mental illness of Jimmy Piersall and starring Anthony Perkins, gave Boston its due, as well.

Cleveland starred in "Major League," and the camera adored the Detroit Tigers in Kevin Costner's "For Love of the Game."

So the A's are due, if not for a pennant, then for their close-up. The tale might not match their current story line, but at least, all of baseball can root for the team to recapture the spirit of its movie version.

That wasn't true of the last screen gem about genuine baseball history. "Eight Men Out" recalled the 1919 White Sox and their capitulation to gamblers in the World Series. Even after losing a series opener to the Red Sox on Monday night to drop below .500 again, "Moneyball" has a relatively happy ending.

Forget replay — just improve umpiring

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

As Doug Harvey tells the story, he was umpiring first base in a game in the '60s, and a manager rushed out four times to dispute calls, saying each time that a replay would prove Harvey wrong. Harvey eventually told the manager, "You can take your replay and shove it because I'm better than any replay machine you've got."

Harvey's going into the Hall of Fame on Sunday, and maybe he actually was better than a replay machine, especially one in the '60s. Hey, players and managers called him "God."

He was that good. He didn't have a Don Denkinger or Jim Joyce moment. He's not known for a brutal call that altered history.

Suddenly, Phil Cuzzi is known for costing the Giants their sixth straight victory. He did a terrible job Sunday, especially when ruling that Travis Ishikawa was out at the plate in the ninth inning, giving New York an extra chance to beat the Giants — which it did. It's the latest ammunition for the pro-instant-replay campaign, but we prefer the alternative. Rather than relying on more technology, how about trying to improve the quality of umpiring in place?

Such as:

Ã» More in-season training. If players spend hours before a game hitting, fielding, throwing and running, umpires could afford to spend more time on the fundamentals of making calls. Don't simply appear at game time with all the answers.

Ã» Encourage more consultations. Harvey's all for this.

Umpires need to double- or triple-check certain calls. Joyce could have done everyone a favor, immediately after his unfortunate call in Armando Galarraga's imperfect perfect game, by meeting with his crew.

Ã» Wait a second. Umpires love to make immediate calls, especially on bang-bang plays.

Makes them feel authoritative, which is fine — unless they're wrong. Broadcasters hate delayed calls, but so what?

Harvey was good at pausing before calling. He wanted to make sure he got it right.

Ã» Re-evaluate all umpires.

Make sure they're the best in the world. If someone's better in the minors or elsewhere, get him. Don't be afraid to release a guy who can't keep pace.

General managers aren't.

The more Doug Harveys, the better. As he said, "I know that there are no famous Doug Harvey plays, and I'm proud of that."

Drumbeat: Sweeney to have knee surgery, out for season; Kouz scratched

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 7/19/2010 5:56PM

Ryan Sweeney has dealt with chronic knee pain for essentially his entire pro baseball career, but it has worsened with time, and while at Cleveland earlier this month, his right knee became more of a problem. Sweeney zipped to try to avoid a tag, and his right knee tightened up even more afterward.

A cortisone shot for the right knee and platelet rich plasma injections for both done a week ago did not improve the problem, and after Sweeney was examined again today, the decision was made to place the outfielder on the DL and send

him to renowned patella-tendon injury expert Dr. Richard Steadman, who is based in Vail, Colo., and who has treated many soccer stars, including Ronaldo, for patella problems.

Sweeney will have surgery on the right knee; he said he is unsure if there will be any procedure for the left knee. That will be determined by Dr. Steadman, who has yet to see the MRI for that knee, according to Sweeney. Sweeney's surgery has not been scheduled yet, but it will be "as soon as possible," Sweeney said. He said that recovery time is four to six months, so he should be completely ready for spring training.

Manager Bob Geren mentioned Gabe Gross (who is starting tonight) and Matt Watson as the primary candidates to play right, with Conor Jackson expected to return from a hamstring strain within the next couple of weeks. Geren also noted that Travis Buck is now on a rehab assignment at Triple-A Sacramento. Michael Taylor, who is on a hot streak, is not considered the top option right now; the team would prefer that Taylor continue to get seasoning at Sacramento and he'll be brought up when he's thought to be ready to handle big-league pitching on a nightly basis. That could be this season, but it's not in the immediate future.

The A's have used the DL 18 times this year and they're steaming toward that club-record 25. Boston is at 16 for the season, so this is a series with a lot of player-games missed - 1,300 combined.

UPDATE: Perfect! Kevin Kouzmanoff has just been scratched with back stiffness, so Adam Rosales is at third. In the lineup just below, it's a straight-up change, Rosales for Kouzmanoff. This is the all-medical series, indeed. Who will be next to head to the trainer's room?

Here's the lineup: Crisp cf, Barton 1b, Suzuki c, Cust dh, Kouzmanoff 3b, Ellis 2b, Gross rf, Davis lf, Pennington ss

Dallas Braden is definitely set for tomorrow night; Brett Anderson's rehab start for Triple-A Sacramento, at Colorado Springs, will be tomorrow night, rather than tonight, in order that he then slots into the rotation after Braden. That will come either Anderson's next start or the following one.

Correction: I'm not sure what I was thinking, maybe all these injuries are scrambling my brain, but Anderson was scheduled to start tomorrow all along, and Braden is too. I wrote it in today's paper, in fact. Nobody has moved. Sorry! Someone will have to be shifted one way or the other at some point, although the A's have days off Thursday and Monday so Braden could be shuffled instead.

Also, perhaps I should mention in here somewhere that Henry Rodriguez was recalled from Sacramento when Sweeney went on the DL.

Sheets drops duel with Red Sox

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- On paper, Ben Sheets was tagged with yet another loss on Monday.

But the A's righty, who pitched into the seventh inning, can't always be judged by a box score.

However, a seemingly lackluster Oakland offense -- which also lost Ryan Sweeney to season-ending knee surgery -- usually can.

Such was the story on Monday, on a night when Sheets showed up with his good stuff but the starting nine didn't exactly follow suit with Boston's Daisuke Matsuzaka on the mound.

In the end, a 2-1 Oakland loss to the Red Sox proved to be the only visible representation of a game that had Sheets throwing "really well," according to manager Bob Geren.

"He really did," the A's skipper said.

But Sheets, the always honest hurler, slightly begged to differ.

"My stuff was below average," he said. "I was able to mix my pitches well. I probably made up two or three pitches from four or five new arm angles."

One of those pitches likely went to Adrian Beltre, who was responsible for the deciding run. Beltre went deep after David Ortiz's sac fly brought home former A's utility man Eric Patterson, who opened the fourth inning with a triple.

"When I hit it," Beltre said, "it was early, so I got lucky there. But that was a good pitch he left over the plate, and I was able to put a good swing on it."

"I don't even know what that was," Sheets said. "I've thrown that pitch 1,000 times this year and gotten outs. ... That pitch didn't do nothing except fly out of the park."

Following the fourth, though, Sheets -- pitching in front of a handful of scouts as potential trade bait -- kept the Red Sox off the board and left with two outs in the seventh with seven hits, two walks and two strikeouts attached to his name.

It marked his ninth loss of the season, but it also signified the 14th straight outing in which he's pitched at least six frames and the seventh time he's allowed two runs or fewer.

"It's been up and down for me," he said. "It seems like every time I get on a high, I come back down. There's still a lot of season left, though."

Meanwhile, Rajai Davis' third-inning homer represented the A's lone form of offense, as Matsuzaka gave up just two hits and two walks while striking out six in 6 2/3 innings en route to garnering his seventh win of the season.

"He was able to throw strikes with every pitch that he has," Red Sox catcher Kevin Cash said. "He even broke out his changeup, which he doesn't use that much, and it was pretty effective for him. When you can get that cut fastball into lefties and then get ahead with his fastball down and away to righties, he's going to have good outings."

"He had a couple variations on his fastball," Geren said. "He had a good breaking ball, and he was able to throw his down-and-away pitch when he needed to. He just didn't leave many balls over the plate to hit."

Gabe Gross hit a soft lineout to third base to strand runners on second and third with two outs in the seventh, and the A's again had an opportunity in the eighth, when Cliff Pennington boarded with a single and stole second before being joined by Daric Barton, who walked with two outs. But a Kurt Suzuki groundout ended the inning, and Boston closer Jonathan Papelbon recorded a 1-2-3 ninth to make a rather seamless A's bullpen -- Jerry Blevins, Michael Wuertz and Craig Breslow combined for 2 1/3 innings of one-hit ball with four strikeouts -- seem somewhat forgettable.

Furthermore, Oakland again dropped below the .500 mark, which the club hit on Sunday for the first time since June 15 thanks to a season-high-tying five-game win streak.

"It didn't end up like we wanted," Sheets said. "We had our chances there at the end, but it just didn't work out."

Braden, Wakefield set to hook up in Oakland

By Rhett Bollinger / MLB.com

A's left-hander Dallas Braden and Red Sox knuckleballer Tim Wakefield will both pitch with something to prove on Tuesday at the Oakland Coliseum.

Braden is out to show that he's ready to go after missing 18 games with left elbow stiffness and that his perfect game on May 9 was no fluke. He still hasn't won since that perfect game -- he's 0-5 over his last eight starts -- but he has a respectable 4.31 ERA over that span.

He recently made a rehab start on Thursday with Class A Advanced Stockton and allowed three runs over five innings and declared himself healthy and ready to return to the rotation.

"The left side of my body feels like I got ran over by a Greyhound. It's just been a while," he said. "I felt good. I was able to throw some breaking balls. The biggest thing I was looking for was just to come away knowing that I was able to stand in there with no pain or hesitation, and that was there."

Wakefield, meanwhile, is coming off one of his worst starts of the season. He allowed seven runs (six earned) over just two innings against the Rangers on Thursday.

It was a baffling outing for Wakefield, who allowed all six of those runs in the first inning, because he felt good coming into the start.

"Talking to [pitching coach John] Farrell after the game, it was like I had some of the best stuff I had all year coming out of the bullpen," Wakefield said. "I'm as dumbfounded as everyone else. I looked at the tape and tried to figure out the mechanics and didn't have it tonight. Bottom line."

Red Sox: Lowell nearing rehab stint

Veteran infielder Mike Lowell received a cortisone shot from New York-based hip specialist Dr. Brian Kelly on Monday. He's expected to return to Boston to work out for a few days before joining Triple-A Pawtucket on Thursday.

A's: Sweeney done for season

Outfielder Ryan Sweeney announced on Monday he's having season-ending surgery on his right knee, dealing a major blow to the A's offense. Sweeney was batting a team-leading .294 but elected to get surgery on his knee because of patella tendinitis.

"We want to get this done as quickly as possible," said Sweeney, 25. "If I was 35 years old and on my way out, I'd consider holding out until the end of the season. But I'm hoping if I can get it done now, it will help me be a better player in the long run."

Worth noting

With Sweeney done, the A's recalled right-hander Henry Rodriguez from Triple-A Sacramento on Monday to take his place on the 25-man roster. ... A's third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff was scratched from the A's starting lineup just 20 minutes before game time on Monday with lower back stiffness and was replaced at third base by Adam Rosales. ... Red Sox utility man Eric Patterson, who spent parts of the last three seasons with the A's organization, returned to the Oakland Coliseum for the first time as a visiting player on Monday and went 1-for-3 with a run scored.

Sweeney facing season-ending surgery

Right patella tendinitis ends A's outfielder's 2010 campaign

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The A's lost one of their most productive hitters on Monday, when outfielder Ryan Sweeney announced he's having season-ending surgery on his right knee.

The 25-year-old Sweeney, who is batting a team-leading .294, was officially placed on the 15-day disabled list on Monday with right patella tendinitis, exactly one week after receiving a cortisone shot. He also received platelet-rich injections over the All-Star break, but neither could prevent the inevitable.

"A couple different doctors looked at the knee," Sweeney said, "and it wasn't a matter of if I needed the surgery. It was a matter of when I was going to get it. So we just had to make that decision.

"I just felt like I'm a young player and to try to finish the year and play in pain, then get it done after the season and miss parts of next year, that's not what I want to do. I don't want to miss any of next year. It's just one of those things I knew I needed to get done now."

Sweeney is unaware of the exact procedure to be performed on his right knee, but he was told the operation -- to be administered at a date to be determined by Dr. Richard Steadman in Vail, Colo. -- requires four to six months of recovery. He also didn't rule out surgery on his left knee, which is to be examined soon.

"The recovery part is huge," he said. "I'm going to work my butt off to be ready by Spring Training. I was told that 90 percent -- or maybe even 100 percent -- don't experience pain anymore after the surgery, so I'm hoping that's the case."

Sweeney has experienced knee problems for the majority of his life, and he was given a platelet-rich injection for both knees at the end of last season "as a form of pain relief," he said. But the pain he's currently experiencing surfaced just one month into the season.

"The last time I got it, I did the rehab and it felt better," Sweeney said. "It just came back, and it's something that progressively gets worse when you keep playing.

"We want to get this done as quickly as possible. If I was 35 years old and on my way out, I'd consider holding out until the end of the season. But I'm hoping if I can get it done now, it will help me be a better player in the long run."

Sweeney was a player the A's utilized in the middle of the lineup for most of the first half despite an overall lack of power, as evidenced by his one home run. He started 59 games batting third and was also placed in the fifth spot 15 times.

"I felt like I did the best I could," he said. "I don't like to make excuses for myself. I was in pain, and mostly it affected me mentally. It's such a mental game, and there were games where I was thinking about my knee and not about hitting the ball. I would have liked to hit a few more home runs, but those are going to come. I guess I'm not that type of player right now."

In Sweeney's stead, manager Bob Geren said he'd likely rotate a handful of players, including Rajai Davis, Gabe Gross and, when healthy, Conor Jackson and Travis Buck, in the outfield.

"We've got a great group of guys," Sweeney said, "and we all get along. It's disappointing I won't be here."

A's recall Rodriguez to reinforce 'pen

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- News of Ryan Sweeney's forthcoming season-ending knee surgery prompted the A's to recall righty Henry Rodriguez from Triple-A Sacramento on Monday.

The 23-year-old Rodriguez joins the A's for the fourth time this season, during which he's endured seven relief appearances with Oakland. The hard-throwing right-hander compiled a 3.86 ERA in his first three stints with the club, and manager Bob Geren hopes he can keep his control intact.

"We've seen what he can do when he controls the strike zone," the A's skipper said. "He brings a positive element to the bullpen."

Rodriguez was 0-2 with 11 saves and a 1.69 ERA in 20 relief appearances for Triple-A Sacramento, where he recently spent time on the disabled list -- from June 15 to July 9 -- with a strained right hamstring.

Kouzmanoff scratched with stiff back

OAKLAND -- Kevin Kouzmanoff was scratched from the A's starting lineup just 20 minutes before game time on Monday with lower back stiffness and replaced at third base by Adam Rosales.

Kouzmanoff, who has appeared in 89 of the A's 92 games this season, drove in at least two runs in each of the club's last three games in Kansas City and entered Monday's contest against the visiting Red Sox leading the American League with seven RBIs since the All-Star break.

Rosales, meanwhile, is also riding a hot bat, having tallied 16 hits in his last 39 at-bats. During that span, he hit .410 after going 1-for-19 over his previous eight games. He started his second game of the season at first base on Sunday and has now started at least two games at five different positions, including five at the hot corner.

Worth noting

A's manager Bob Geren said Conor Jackson (right hamstring) is still undergoing a running program in Arizona, but a timetable has not been set for a Minor League rehab stint. ... Lefty Brett Anderson (elbow) is set to make a rehab start for Triple-A Sacramento in Colorado Springs on Tuesday. Depending on the results of that outing, which will have Anderson throwing around 80 pitches, the club will then determine if he needs another start before rejoining the A's rotation. ... Outfielder Travis Buck (leg soreness) has joined Sacramento, Geren said. He started in right field, batting second, for the River Cats on Monday.

A's End Their Five Game Streak

Malaika Bobino, Oakland Post,

Oakland, CA – Coming off the All- Star break the Oakland A's swept the Kansas City Royals to continue their winning streak to five games. For the first time since June 15, the A's return to the .500 mark. That changed tonight when the A's lost to the Boston Red Sox 2-1.

"We just want to come out and play our game," said Rajai Davis. "As long as we keep getting hits, pitching good, playing defense and keeping teams to minimum runs, we'll be fine."

Oakland struggled again as they did during the first half of the season in getting hits. Losing both Ryan Sweeney and Kevin Kouzmanoff was a huge blow to the lineup. Sweeney will have a season ending knee surgery while Kouzmanoff was scratched from tonight's game with back spasms.

The upcoming schedule will be tough, the A's will face teams that sit atop their divisions. Tonight begins a six-game homestand against the Red Sox and the Chicago White Sox. Then they will travel to play the first place Texas Rangers in their division.

Davis got Oakland's only run in the third frame by hitting a solo home run, his fourth of the season. But former A's player Eric Patterson tripled top of the fourth frame and scored Boston's first run to tie the game. Adrian Beltre followed with a home run to seal their victory.

"Obviously coming over to a new team you don't know what to expect," Patterson said. "Things have been going good for me, the team has been very welcoming and my stats have gone up." "It's good to be back and see some old faces, I've made a lot of good friends here."

Oakland's bullpen did a great job and the defense was outstanding but again they could not finish strong. The A's stranded runners on second and third with two outs in the seventh and failed to produce any sort of scoring opportunity.

Ben Sheets recorded his ninth loss of the year, he surrendered seven hits with two walks and two strikeouts in 6 2/3 innings. Sheets has tossed at least six innings in 16 or 19 starts, allowing two runs or fewer six times and walked two batters or fewer nine times.

"It's been up and down for me," Sheets said. "My stuff was below average, it seems like every time I get on a high, I come back down. There's still a lot of season left though." "It didn't end like we wanted, we had our chances there in the end but it just didn't work out for us."

A's lose to Red Sox, 2-1

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Daisuke Matsuzaka pitched two-hit ball into the seventh inning and Adrian Beltre homered to help the Boston Red Sox snap the Oakland Athletics five-game winning streak with a 2-1 victory Monday night.

Eric Patterson tripled and scored against his former team as the Red Sox got off to a strong start on their 10-game West Coast road trip. Boston had lost eight of 11 heading into this crucial trip that continues in Seattle and Anaheim.

Ben Sheets (4-9) put together another solid outing for the A's, allowing just two runs and seven hits in 6 2-3 innings. But he was once again done in by a lack of offensive support.

Sheets was the beneficiary of a big night from the bats in his last start before the All-Star break as Oakland beat the Los Angeles Angels 15-1, but has gotten only one run of support in nine of his 20 starts this season.

That was the case once again Matsuzaka (7-3), who has won back-to-back starts after going more than a month without a win.

Matsuzaka, who lasted only one inning in his last start in Oakland a year ago, was much sharper this time around. He retired the first seven batters of the game before Rajai Davis drove the ball into the left-field seats to give the A's a 1-0 lead.

Matsuzaka struck out the next two batters and didn't allow another hit until Mark Ellis hit a two-out double in the seventh inning. That put runners on second and third and ended the night for Matsuzaka, who struck out six and walked two in 6 2-3 innings.

Daniel Bard relieved and got Gabe Gross to pop out to third base to end the threat. The A's put two runners on in the eighth against Bard, but Kurt Suzuki grounded out to end that inning. Jonathan Papelbon pitched a perfect ninth for his 21st save in 24 opportunities.

The A's, coming off a three-game sweep in Kansas City, were looking to move above .500 for the first time since June 11 but were unable to generate nearly enough offense.

The Red Sox took the lead in the fourth when Patterson legged out a leadoff triple to snap an 0-for-11 string. Patterson was traded from Oakland to Boston on June 26 and five of his first eight hits for the Red Sox have gone for extra bases.

Patterson scored on David Ortiz's sacrifice fly. Then with two outs, Beltre hit a drive to left-center for his 15th home run to give Boston a 2-1 lead.

Sheets left the game after walking Marco Scutaro to load the bases with two outs in the seventh inning, kicking the ground in apparent disgust as he walked back to the dugout. Jerry Blevins helped him escape the jam by getting pinch-hitter Bill Hall to ground out.

NOTES: The last 10 games between the teams had been played in Boston, the longest such streak between the teams since 1919. ... A's 3B Kevin Kouzmanoff was scratched with a stiff back. ... Oakland placed OF Ryan Sweeney on the DL with a right knee injury that will require season-ending surgery. ... Boston 3B Mike Lowell had a cortisone injection in his injured right hip Monday and will begin a rehab assignment at Triple-A Pawtucket on Thursday. ... OF Jeremy Hermida (ribs) is expected to join the Red Sox in Seattle later this week after playing two rehab games at Pawtucket.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Carter smacks two bombs as Sacramento rolls

By Abbie Ellis / Sacramento River Cats

Five home runs, including two from Chris Carter, led the River Cats to a 16-3 win Monday night over the host Colorado Springs Sky Sox.

The River Cats had a hit in every inning except for the fifth, and 15 hits overall on the night. All nine players in the lineup earned a hit. With Fresno's 1-0 loss to visiting Salt Lake, the River Cats move 2.0 games behind Fresno in the division standings.

Alan Johnson, who had allowed only two home runs all year, gave away two home runs before being replaced by Matt Wilhite. The first was a Josh Donaldson solo home run in the second inning. The second Sacramento home run came when Dallas McPherson smacked a fly ball to center field as part of the River Cats killer fourth inning.

The Sky Sox allowed seven runs in a fourth inning that gave the River Cats an 8-1 lead.

With one out, McPherson blasted his eighth home run and began an all-out Sacramento slugfest. Adam Heether's expert base running stretched his hit into his 14th double. Corey Wimberly then singled to score Donaldson and move Heether to third. With Eric Sogard batting, Wimberly stole second, his Pacific Coast League-high 35th steal of the season. Sogard then walked to load the bases.

Travis Buck, on rehab from the Oakland A's, grounded into a fielder's choice, but a throwing error allowed Heether and Wimberly to score. Another Sky Sox throwing error allowed Michael Taylor to reach and Buck to score. A two-run homer from Chris Carter, his 20th of the season, scored Taylor and left the Sky Sox with a seven-run deficit.

Wimberly smacked his fourth triple in the sixth inning on a fly ball to center. Taylor singled to score Wimberly and tack on another run.

Sacramento continued its domination in the seventh inning and scored another six runs for a 15-3 lead. With two outs and bases loaded, Buck hit a two-run single that scored Heether and Wimberly. A pitching switch-up wasn't what the doctor ordered for Colorado Springs, and Taylor knocked the ball out of the park for a three-run homer. For back-to-back home runs, Carter blasted his second of the night.

Kyle Middleton mixed his pitches well, changing speeds and hitting the right spot to keep the Sky Sox on their toes. Middleton allowed his sixth home run all year, but still managed the win. Middleton pitched 5.2 innings for five hits, three runs (one home run) and six strikeouts.

Sacramento and Colorado Springs face off again Tuesday at 6:05 p.m.

Horton's RBI Single Sinks The Hooks

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

Beach Weekend didn't pan out real well at home, but a trip to the beach in South Texas got off to a MUCH better start as the RockHounds took the opener of a 4-game series at Corpus Christi, defeating the Hooks, 5-2.

Josh Horton's 2-run single broke a scoreless tie, and the 'Hounds allowed only a pair of Koby Clemens solo home runs, never giving up the lead built on Horton's ribbies.

Clemens, who is now tied for the Texas League lead in home runs with former NW Arkansas Naturals third baseman Mike Moustakas (now at Triple-A), lifted a towering solo home run in the fourth, cutting the 'Hounds lead to 2-1. By the time Clemens hit a solo, line drive shot in the ninth, the RockHounds had re-built the lead to 5-1.

Alex Valdez answered Clemens' fourth inning home run with a solo shot of his own in the fifth, with Val Majewski and Corey Brown each driving in a run. Majewski also saved a run with a diving catch with a runner in scoring position and two out to end the Corpus Christi fifth inning.

Matt Wright scattered seven hits over 5.2 innings, with Justin Friend and Mickey Storey going the rest of the way.

Ports Hang On for 9-8 Win

Stockton now 8-2 in last 10 games with Series Victory

STOCKTON, Calif. – The Stockton Ports (45-50) took an 8-4 lead by scoring eight runs in the fourth frame, and held on to defeat the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes (53-42), 9-8 on Monday. The Ports finished the homestand with a 5-1 record, and are now 8-2 in their last 10 games.

Stockton starter Ben Hornbeck struck out eight in 5.0 innings for his third win on the season. He allowed four runs on seven hits in the start. Paul Smyth picked up his 16th save, striking out the side in the ninth inning. The Ports totaled 12 hits in the contest, with Grant Green finishing the contest 4x5 with a two-run home run and three RBI. Jermaine Mitchell and Kent Walton each had a pair of hits and a pair of RBI.

The Quakes jumped to an early 2-0 lead in the first inning. Center fielder Mike Trout doubled to right field to lead off the inning. He came around to score on a two-run home run by first baseman Gabe Jacobo.

Rancho Cucamonga made it 4-0 in the fourth inning. Right fielder Clay Fuller struck out swinging, but advanced to first and second on a throwing error by Ports catcher Ryan Ortiz. Fuller stole third while designated hitter Angel Castillo was at-bat, and came around to score as Castillo hit a sacrifice fly to center field. Left fielder Eric Oliver then hit his fourth home run of the year, a solo shot to left field, to put the Quakes ahead, 4-0.

Rancho Cucamonga starter Patrick Corbin, who turned 21 on Monday, kept the Ports hitless in the first three innings, retiring the Ports in order, and striking out four.

But Stockton got to Corbin in the fourth inning, splitting the game wide open by scoring eight runs. Mitchell led off the inning with a single for the first Stockton hit of the game. Green then drilled a 1-1 pitch over the left field wall for his tenth home run of the season to make it 4-2. Stephen Parker then grounded out and Mike Spina struck out. With two out, right fielder Jeremy Barfield singled. Tyler Ladendorf followed him on base with a single, and then Ortiz walked to load the bases.

Designated hitter David Thomas singled toward second base and the ball just grazed the top of Jon Townsend's glove. Barfield and Ladendorf both scored to tie the game. With left fielder Kent Walton at the plate, Thomas stole second to put two runners in scoring position. Walton then singled to center field, which allowed Ortiz and Thomas to come home and make it 6-4 in favor of Stockton.

The hit parade continued as Mitchell came back up to bat and slammed his sixth home run of the year over the left field wall to give the Ports a 8-4 advantage. Green collected his second hit of the night, but then Parker flew out to end the inning.

Stockton added their ninth and final run in the sixth inning, as an RBI single by Green scored Ortiz.

The Quakes added their fifth run in the seventh inning. Trout tripled to right field to start the frame, and scored as Luis Jimenez grounded out to Parker at third base. Rancho Cucamonga rallied in the eighth inning for three runs to make it a one-run game.

Scott Deal was on the hill for the Ports in the eighth inning. Fuller doubled to right field to star things. Deal then got Castillo to ground out before walking Oliver. Stockton manager Steve Scarsone then replaced deal with righty Jose Pina. Pina gave up an RBI single to Townsend to make it 9-6. Shortstop Jesus Campos then grounded out to short, which allowed the seventh Quakes run to score. Trout hit an RBI single to make it 9-8. Trout was caught stealing as he tried to take third while catcher Alberto Rosario was at the plate for the final out of the inning.

Smyth made things interesting in the ninth inning. After striking out the first two batters, he gave up back-to-back singles to Jacobo and Fuller. He got Castillo to strike out swinging to end the game.

The Ports start a six-game road trip on Tuesday, visiting the San Jose Giants and Visalia Rawhide for three games apiece. RHP Justin Murray (6-3, 3.65) will take the hill for the Ports, while RHP Oliver Odle (10-3, 4.53) will start for the Giants at 7:00 PM PST on Tuesday. Fans can follow the game live on KWSX 1280 AM.

Smith, Cougars Cruise Past Whitecaps

Kane County winning streak hits 7

GENEVA, III. – With 6 2/3 innings of mound work from Murphy Smith and eight runs on 10 hits from the offense, the Kane County Cougars kept rolling Monday afternoon at Elfstrom Stadium. They beat the West Michigan Whitecaps, 8-2, to claim their seventh straight victory. The Cougars have won 14 of their last 17 and finished their nine-game homestand with an 8-1 mark.

Smith (5-0) picked up the victory after yielding two runs -- one earned -- over 6 2/3 innings. He scattered nine hits, walked one and fanned four before Max Peterson and Connor Hoehn combined for 2 1/3 scoreless innings to end it.

The Cougars struck early and often against the 'Caps. Myrio Richard moved his hitting streak to 15 games with a first-inning RBI single, and Jose Crisotomo singled home Leonardo Gil in the second to make it 2-0. After Jason Christian poked a two-out two-run double in the fifth to make it 4-0, the Cougars scored four times in the eighth. Gil was hit by a pitch with the bases loaded, Chris Affinito squeezed home Christian, and Conner Crumbliss cracked a two-out two-run double. The Cougars had 10 hits in the game, marking the 10th time in 18 games this month they have 10-plus hits.

The Cougars (16-8, 48-45) are off Tuesday and start a nine-game road trip Wednesday night at 6:05 CT with the opener of a three-game series against the Lansing Lugnuts (13-11, 48-45). Justin Marks (3-10, 4.97) is scheduled to face Egan Smith (3-0, 2.73). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at www.kccougars.com with pre-game coverage starting at 5:50 p.m.

Oakland A's Prospect Q&A: Bo Schultz

David Malamut, OaklandClubhouse.com

Jul 19, 2010

Bo Schultz is a graduate of Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism, but his media career is on hold as he pursues an opportunity in the major leagues. The submarine right-hander has been a groundball machine for the Kane County Cougars out of the bullpen this season, inducing more than three groundouts for every flyout. David Malamut spoke with Schultz, who has a 2.82 ERA in 51 innings.

David Malamut: How has the season gone so far?

Bo Schultz: Not too bad.

DM: What do you throw?

BS: Fastball and slider. Mostly just fastball though. Change-up sometimes.

DM: What are you working on?

BS: Trying to throw more strikes.

DM: What's your mentality on the mound?

BS: Attack the strike zone.

DM: What did you learn pitching at Highland Park High School (Dallas, Texas)?

BS: Throwing hard helps.

DM: What did you learn playing at Northwestern University?

BS: I'm a pitcher not an outfielder, as much as I want to believe the other. I almost played the outfield but not quite. I played in high school. I was ok, not great. I didn't play all the time [he didn't play in a game as a freshman or sophomore]. I played more during the summers.

DM: What was it like being signed by Oakland as an undrafted free-agent in 2008?

BS: It was great. A great way to finish school at Northwestern.

DM: What was your Arizona League experience like?

BS: Really, really hot. An interesting jump from college. It was different playing with a lot more talent around. Playing in the Big Ten was fun and challenging, especially for me considering I really grew into my ability when I grew into my size. I realized what it took to be a pitcher how to attack the strike zone. I had a great pitching coach there who really, really opened my eyes on how to pitch to your strengths rather than giving in and trying to pitch to their weakness, and compromising yourself, because once you start compromising yourself you lose your conviction in your pitches then you start losing your bulldog mentality.

The biggest thing in Arizona was trying to be completely confident and believe in myself that I deserved to be there with the better talent.

DM: When did you go sidearm?

BS: At the end of my year in Arizona, the pitching coordinator Gil Patterson said "you don't project to becoming a big league pitcher from where you are unless you somehow start spotting and locating like Greg Maddux" which for me was definitely not going to happen, considering walks have always been my issue.

So far I've had some good luck and decent success. I really attribute it to the guys behind me because I'm not a big strikeout guy. I try to pitch to contact as much as possible and hopefully once it leaves my hand it ends up on the ground somewhere and someone in the infield gets the out. It's definitely easier to get outs when your not putting them on base for free.

DM: Do you warm up for a couple of pitches over hand first always?

BS: It just gets the arm going.

DM: How was it been with Kane County?

BS: I have really enjoyed it. It is really good to be back in Chicago.

DM: How was the Midwest League been?

BS: It's fun. The difference between college and rookie ball even though it may not have been huge the higher up you go, increasingly more talented guys are around, strike-zones get tighter, hitters are more disciplined. Even though this is considered a pitchers' league it's still by no means easy to get outs without being able to pitch with your good stuff.

DM: Besides baseball what do you like to do?

BS: I like to play golf. I swing hard in case i hit it.

DM: If you were not playing baseball what would you be doing?

BS: Struggling to be a journalist.

DM: Top-5 artists in your iPod?

BS: James Taylor, Dave Mathews, Revolution, Jay-Z, Tu-Pac.

DM: Biggest influence growing up?

BS: My parents just because they said whenever you make a commitment, you're going to do it to the best of your ability no matter if you want to do it or not.

DM: Who was your baseball hero growing up? **BS:** Being a Texas boy, Nolan Ryan.