

Oakland A's silenced by Chicago White Sox's Mark Buehrle in 5-1 loss

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

As well as they've played of late, it'll be a telling next two weeks for the A's. They have entered a stretch in which they'll play 12 of 15 games against first-place teams Chicago and Texas.

The White Sox came into Oakland on Friday night and immediately gave the A's, who'd won seven of their previous eight and 14 of 21, a bitter taste of why Chicago leads the American League Central. Veteran left-hander Mark Buehrle, pitching on the one-year anniversary of his perfect game against Tampa Bay, thoroughly snuffed them with a 101-pitch complete-game four-hitter as the Sox won 5-1.

Buehrle (9-8) outdueled the A's hottest pitcher, Trevor Cahill, who came into the game 8-1 with a 2.85 ERA over his 12 prior starts and had limited opposing hitters to a .194 average during that stretch. Buehrle had been 0-6 lifetime at the Coliseum and 3-12 against the A's for his career despite a respectable 3.93 ERA.

Cahill (9-4) gave up just four hits and two earned runs over seven innings, but he was no match for Buehrle. Although Buehrle was conducting a clinic against Cahill's teammates, the A's young right-hander was a very attentive student.

"It's always you versus the other guy, and (Buehrle) outpitched me," Cahill, 22, said. "I think I learned a lot just watching him pitch. I just watched and saw how he attacked the zone and got guys to chase. He was effective going after guys while I was falling behind."

There are definite similarities in the styles of Buehrle and Cahill, and Buehrle likes what he sees from his Oakland counterpart.

"I think his stuff's better than mine," he said. "I came in (to the clubhouse) between innings and watched his sinker on TV. It moves a lot, and he obviously throws harder than I do. It seems like he gets a lot of ground balls on early contact, and that's kind of the key to success — keep your pitch count down and get late into games."

Buehrle got 14 ground ball outs and threw just 51 pitches through the first five innings. No Chicago relief pitcher even got up out of his seat as Buehrle, 31, went the distance. He didn't walk a batter, struck out two and retired 11 straight at one point in the middle innings.

"You usually have five days a year where it just seems like everything's working, and tonight was one of them," Buehrle said. "When you miss your spot, they weren't swinging or didn't find those holes."

One of his notable victims was A's Kurt Suzuki, who went 0-for-4 after signing a four-year, \$16.25 million contract earlier in the day. It was an all-around rough night for the Oakland catcher, who didn't get a lot of help from his pitchers holding runners and surrendered four Chicago steals.

About the only solace Suzuki had was that several of the A's pitchers might have picked up some tips from the no-nonsense Buehrle, who dispatched the A's in 2 hours, 16 minutes.

"Buehrle's a good type of guy for a lot of young pitchers to watch, the way he's so aggressive in the strike zone and goes right after hitters," Suzuki said. "Too bad it had to be against us."

Cahill and Buehrle matched zeros over the first three innings, but the White Sox finally broke through with a run in the fourth and two more in the sixth. The A's got back within 3-1 on back-to-back doubles by Kevin Kouzmanoff and Jack Cust in the seventh, but two more Chicago runs in the ninth against hard-throwing A's rookie Henry Rodriguez was more than enough for Buehrle.

"His overall numbers this year aren't that great, but he's always capable of throwing up a gem like he did tonight," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He's a veteran guy and when he has command of all of his pitches, he's tough, and he had that from the beginning. He worked quick and he hit his spots."

Oakland A's sign catcher Kurt Suzuki to a new four-year deal

By Carl Steward , Oakland Tribune

He's no Joe Mauer, but Suzuki is plenty rich

When Twins catcher Joe Mauer signed an eight-year, \$184 million contract during spring training, Kurt Suzuki calculated out loud that he was at least half as good as Mauer.

Well, the A's catcher got the years right. He was rewarded with a new four-year contract Friday, and although he didn't get close to half of Mauer's money, he still got a sweet deal: \$16.25 million.

"That was a joke," said of his spring Mauer comparison. "Mauer's definitely in a league by himself. I'm definitely happy with what I have right now. I'm very grateful and fortunate that Oakland was willing to invest this in me. It gives me that confidence knowing that they believe in me and my abilities."

The A's initiated contract discussions with Suzuki, 26, during the spring. In roughly three seasons, he has developed into one of the top all-around catchers in the league, and general manager Billy Beane said it was a relatively easy call making the extended investment, which will carry Suzuki through his arbitration years. Entering Friday, Suzuki was hitting .257 with 10 homers and 37 RBIs this year.

The contract kicks in this season and supersedes the \$420,000 one-year deal that was in place. There is a 2014 vesting option based on Suzuki starting a minimum number of games in 2013, his agent Dan Horwits confirmed.

"Since the day Kurt got here, beyond being an outstanding player, he's been an outstanding leader and a quality guy off the field as well," said Beane. "He's the type of player in which you like to invest."

Manager Bob Geren is happy that Suzuki will be in control of the A's pitching staff for the foreseeable future.

"Obviously, it's well deserved," Geren said. "He's one of the best catchers in the league in my opinion, a hard worker and a cornerstone of our team."

Said Suzuki: "The one thing I've always felt is that I could work harder than anybody else. I think that's what's helped me along the way."

Outfielder Rajai Davis has a slight hamstring strain and was unavailable Friday. "... The A's have yet to announce their Sunday starter, and Geren said they will decide from among Brett Anderson, Dallas Braden and Ben Sheets, all of whom threw on the side Friday.

Chin Music: Suzuki signs 4-year extension

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 7/23/2010 5:20PM

Carl Steward here, filling in for Joe Stiglich tonight. Something big always happens when I'm in for Joe (Braden perfect game, Sweeney out for year) and tonight is no exception.

The A's have locked up catcher Kurt Suzuki for awhile: the next four years at \$16.25 million. Here are details Joe filed to the Bay Area News Group website ...

The contract kicks in this season, superseding the one-year \$420,000 deal Suzuki had in place, and runs through 2013. There's a vesting option for 2014 based on Suzuki starting a minimum number of games in 2013, his agent, Dan Horwits, confirmed.

Suzuki, 26, is the second core young player the A's have locked up this season. Left-hander Brett Anderson received a four-year, \$12.5 million deal in April that includes club options for 2014 and 2015.

Suzuki would have been arbitration-eligible for the first time after this season. His new deal buys out his arbitration years and, if the option vests, his first year of free agency as well.

Suzuki took over as the A's catcher during his rookie season of 2007 and has since developed into one of the American League's best at his position. He's hitting .257 with a team-leading 10 homers and 37 RBIs this season, but he's earned the most respect for his game-calling and handling of pitchers.

GM Billy Beane said this was a relatively easy call seeing as Suzuki is one of the most dependable and hardest-working players on the team. Suzuki, obviously, was very excited about the new deal.

Not bad for a guy who once walked on at Cal State Fullerton.

MLB Commissioner Bud Selig "disappointed" by San Jose's move for a stadium ballot measure

By Tracy Seipel, San Jose Mercury News

San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed's bold move Thursday to ask the city council to place an Oakland A's ballpark measure on the November ballot without Major League Baseball's blessing apparently did not go over well with top league officials.

"We were surprised and disappointed by the news today in San Jose about the stadium referendum," Commissioner Bud Selig said in a brief statement issued today by MLB.

"We were not part of the process and had no knowledge that a decision to proceed with the election had been made. A ballot referendum is premature."

"As I have said before," Selig added, "the object in this very complicated situation is not to get it done as fast as possible, but to get it done right."

Whether a stadium will be built here depends largely on whether major league team owners vote to remove the San Francisco Giants' territorial claim to Santa Clara County. If that happens, Oakland A's owner Lew Wolff has said he will pay to build the \$461 million ballpark, provided San Jose voters give the team permission to build on city land.

The council must act no later than its Aug. 3 meeting to place such a measure on the November ballot.

But both the A's and San Jose officials have expressed frustration that a decision has not been issued, even 16 months after Selig appointed a special committee to study the A's options.

In his statement, Selig said the committee "will continue its work unaltered" by Reed's move; Selig plans to meet with committee members Monday.

Reed was out of town Friday and unavailable for comment on Selig's statement. But Wolff — a college fraternity brother of Selig's — said he supported the city's efforts to proceed without waiting for baseball's decision.

"We and the city want to have as many unknowns identified and completed as possible should a decision on the new venue we seek be forthcoming," he said. "If the decision to share the district is not available to us, we will, of course, abide by the commissioner's decision."

Contact Tracy Seipel at 408 275-0140.

COMMISSIONER'S STATEMENT

Baseball Commissioner Allan H. (Bud) Selig issued the following statement today regarding San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed's proposal to put the Oakland Athletics stadium referendum on the November ballot:

"We were surprised and disappointed by the news today in San Jose about the stadium referendum. We were not part of the process and had no knowledge that a decision to proceed with the election had been made. A ballot referendum is premature and completely independent of the ongoing work of the committee which has been in place to thoroughly study this situation.

"There is an established process in place and the committee will continue its work unaltered by these actions. Consistent with the ongoing evaluation of the Oakland A's situation, the committee will meet with me once again this Monday. As I have said before, the object in this very complicated situation is not to get it done as fast as possible, but to get it done right."

Cahill's good, but Buehrle's better

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Trevor Cahill wants to be like Mark.

Mark Buehrle, that is - the 144-game winner who finally won a game at the Coliseum. Buehrle was his fast-paced self Friday night, and Cahill, 22, watched in awe as Chicago's lefty cruised through nine innings to beat the A's 5-1.

"It's always you versus the other guy, and he outpitched me," Cahill said. "I think I learned a lot watching him. He's a contact pitcher, too. He did what I try to do - go deep into games, work fast and get ahead in the count. Watching him tonight, that's kind of how I'd like to pitch. Nine innings and 100 pitches or so."

One hundred and one, to be exact. The A's scored their only run on consecutive doubles by Kevin Kouzmanoff and Jack Cust in the seventh inning. Otherwise, Buehrle gave up two hits. The clinic ended with a nine-pitch, 1-2-3 ninth.

He had been 3-12 against the A's, 0-6 in 13 games at the Coliseum.

"Finally," Buehrle said. "I was waiting for my beer shower."

He didn't get one. But it was still a nice way to celebrate the one-year anniversary of his perfect game against Tampa Bay.

Friday's game lasted 2 hours and 16 minutes and would have been quicker had Henry Rodriguez not slowed the pace in the ninth. It was 3-1 entering the inning, but A.J. Pierzynski hit a two-run single, and Rodriguez did a lousy job holding runners, which helped account for three stolen bases in the inning. Even Pierzynski had a steal, his first this year and the 11th of his career.

Buehrle pitched the White Sox to their 12th win in 16 games. Their 29-9 record since June 9 is the best in the majors.

"You're going to have games like that five to eight times a year," Buehrle said. "When you do, it's fun."

The White Sox scored their first run on Carlos Quentin's fourth-inning sacrifice fly and scored two more in the sixth, an inning that began when Cahill walked Juan Pierre. Ex-Giant Omar Vizquel singled, and Pierre scored when Rios grounded to shortstop Cliff Pennington, who dropped the ball for an error.

Vizquel scored when Quentin hit a roller to the right side. Cahill picked up the ball, and his only play was to first base.

The leadoff walk was costly, and Cahill noted afterward that Buehrle didn't walk a single batter.

"He didn't let things get out of hand," Cahill said. "I learned how successful you can be getting ahead (in the count). I fell behind a lot."

Kurt Suzuki, on the day he received a four-year, \$16.25 million contract, was 0-for-4. Cahill was happy for his catcher, saying, "I don't think there's anyone more deserving in this league than Kurt. You see how important he is."

Cahill's buddy Brett Anderson snagged a four-year, \$12.5 million contract in April and now Suzuki is making big bucks. If Cahill continues his progression, he could be in line for his own extension.

Apparently, he's willing to learn. He did from a master on Friday.

Suzuki gets 4-year deal

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

Kurt Suzuki was a walk-on as a freshman at Cal State Fullerton and was buried on a depth chart behind two catchers on scholarship. He eventually earned the starting job and received some financial help as a sophomore and a little more as a junior.

"You should earn everything you get," Suzuki said. "Coming from Hawaii and not being the best player or the biggest or strongest, I earned everything I got."

A second-round pick in the 2004 draft, Suzuki raced through the A's farm system and has emerged as Oakland's best position player. He was rewarded Friday with a four-year, \$16.25 million contract that extends through his arbitration years and possibly his first year of free agency.

The contract, which supersedes his original 2010 deal, is for \$600,000 this year (plus a \$150,000 signing bonus), \$3.4 million in 2011, \$5 million in 2012 and \$6.45 million in 2013. The A's hold a club option for \$8.5 million in 2014 with a \$650,000 buyout, but the option could vest (and be worth \$9.25 million) if he starts 118 games in 2013.

Asked about focusing on his job after the big payday, Suzuki said, "It's hard not to think about the money. At the same time, I know what my job is: to perform. Two years ago (his first full season) or now, my job is to go out and play hard and do the best I can. I still do that. Nothing's going to change."

General manager **Billy Beane**, who began serious negotiations in spring training, credited Suzuki's work ethic and durability and called him "one of the top two or three (catchers) in the league." As for Suzuki's upside, Beane said Suzuki could hit for a high average with 20-plus homers and provide Gold Glove defense.

Briefly: Manager **Bob Geren** said the club hadn't decided whether Sunday's starter will be **Ben Sheets**, **Brett Anderson** or **Dallas Braden**. Anderson and Braden made rehab starts Tuesday. ... **Rajai Davis** (left hamstring) and **Andrew Bailey** (back spasm) were unavailable Friday.

A'S LEADING OFF

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

San Jose surprise: Commissioner Bud Selig said he was "surprised and disappointed" that San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed is proposing an A's ballpark referendum for the November ballot. Selig said he plans to meet Monday with his committee, which has been studying possible ballpark sites for 16 months.

Drumbeat: Suzuki signed to four-year, \$16.25 million contract - more details

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser 7/23/2010 2:39PM

This has been in the works for some time - dating back to last offseason, going through the spring - but the A's have finally wrapped up a multi-year contract for catcher Kurt Suzuki, with four years at a guaranteed \$16.25 million, and a fifth year, 2014, that kicks in with a vesting option based on games played, with the number just under 120 games. With the vesting option, the deal could be worth \$25-26 million.

UPDATE: I now have the breakdown of the deal: Suzuki gets \$600,000 this year with a \$150,000 signing bonus; \$3.4 million in 2011; \$5 million in 2012; \$6.45 million in 2013. The club holds an option for \$8.5 million in 2014, with a \$650,000 buyout, but there is also the vesting option that kicks in for that year if Suzuki plays in at least 118 games in 2013. The vesting option is worth \$9.25 million.

That means that Suzuki, the team's best all-around player, is signed through his arbitration years. The vesting option would take care of his first year of free agency. Suzuki's current contract for 2010, a one-year deal signed this spring, is supplanted by this deal.

It's a good deal for both sides, and Suzuki, 26, is such a central, important figure for the team, this is a significant move. He and Brett Anderson, signed to a multi-year deal earlier this year, could be working together a long time.

Considering the team's nice start to the second half and this news, it's been a good week for the A's.

My colleague John Shea will bring you more from the ballpark this afternoon.

Cahill gets little support against White Sox

A's drop series opener to efficient Buehrle

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- In a duel of arms with All-Star credentials, the veteran Mark Buehrle bested A's righty Trevor Cahill on Friday night. While Cahill didn't pitch poorly, he was outdone by four-time All-Star Buehrle, who went the distance in a 5-1 A's loss to open the three-game set.

As Buehrle briskly mastered the A's, the 22-year-old Cahill became a student from the Oakland bench.

"It's always you versus the other guy," Cahill said. "He outpitched me and I think I learned a lot in today's game just watching him pitch. ... He did what I try to do every time out there -- go deep into the ballgame and limit your pitches per inning."

Cahill finished seven innings Friday, allowing three runs (two earned) on four hits and two walks, but he was charged with the loss to drop his record to 9-4. Buehrle, meanwhile, used just 101 pitches and yielded four hits and no walks.

The A's rarely pressured Buehrle, who was in complete control the entire game. Oakland's only run came in the seventh, when Kevin Kouzmanoff and Jack Cust hit consecutive doubles to end Buehrle's shutout bid. Other than that, the A's could only manage a harmless Coco Crisp single in the third and a futile Cust double in the second.

"Buehrle's a good type of pitcher -- not just young pitchers -- but for a lot of pitchers to watch," A's catcher Kurt Suzuki said. "The way he's so aggressive in the strike zone and goes right after hitters. Too bad it had to be against us."

While Cahill's stat line was nothing to scoff at, he said his location was a bit off Friday. Cahill was especially peeved at himself for leading off the sixth inning by issuing a walk to Juan Pierre which sparked a two-run frame.

After Pierre's walk, Cahill gave up a single to Omar Vizquel and then was stung by a Cliff Pennington error on a possible double-play ball, which scored Pierre. Vizquel later scored on an infield groundout to give Chicago a 3-0 lead and the A's couldn't recover.

"I didn't have my best stuff," Cahill said. "All my pitches were just kind of mediocre and I wasn't able to get that strikeout when I needed it."

In fact, Cahill didn't strike out a batter for the first time all season and for the third time in his career. Still, A's manager Bob Geren said he liked what he saw out of his young righty.

"He pitched good enough to win," Geren said. "You go seven innings and give up three runs anytime, that puts your team in a good position if you're scoring runs. Unfortunately, Mark Buehrle -- we didn't get anything going against him. He was hitting his corners, using his changeup and we just got nothing going at all."

Though it was a vintage Buehrle performance, quick and efficient, it was a far cry from his previous performances in Oakland. The southpaw entered Friday's game with an 0-6 record and a 4.66 ERA in 12 games (10 starts) career at the Oakland Coliseum.

"I was waiting for my beer shower," Buehrle said of winning in Oakland. "It was one of those games that was fun. Everything was working. They weren't finding holes. Making pitches, getting ahead in the count. We have that five to eight times a year and when it happens it's fun."

Mark Ellis said the A's knew what to expect from Buehrle, but that he was simply too tough on Friday.

"Same thing as always," Ellis said. "He was just around the zone, working quick and making pitches. You never get the same thing twice in a row and that's just what he does. We were prepared going into the game and knew exactly what we were going to get and he did that tonight. He just beat us."

The A's catered to Buehrle's style and obliged him with 14 ground-ball outs on the evening. Cahill, being a sinker pitcher who pitches to contact, said there was plenty to learn on Friday.

"He's a guy you like to watch and see how he attacks the zone," Cahill said. "He gets guys to chase and he had all his stuff working today. You just got to tip your cap."

The lone positive on offense was the performance of Cust, who has become one of the team's hottest hitters recently. Cust went 2-for-3 with a pair of doubles against the crafty Buehrle, and is batting .322 with four home runs and 13 RBIs over his last nine games.

"He's been swinging the bat well," Geren said of Cust. "He's starting to hit some more homers now and all along he's had a higher average than normal. That's good, we need that in the middle of our lineup right now and he's giving it to us."

A's, Suzuki agree to four-year deal

Club locks up 'outstanding leader' through 2013

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The one they call "Zook" looks like he'll be staying around for a while.

On Friday, the Athletics announced they have signed catcher Kurt Suzuki to a four-year extension that immediately supersedes his current deal and runs through 2013 with a club option for 2014. With the new accord, the A's control Suzuki's rights through his arbitration years.

"Since the day Kurt got here, beyond being an outstanding player, he's been an outstanding leader and a quality guy off the field as well," said A's general manager Billy Beane. "He's the type of player you'd like to invest in."

Suzuki said the deal was worth \$16 million, while the San Francisco Chronicle reported the deal is worth \$16.25 million guaranteed and could be as much as \$26 million with the option year, which reportedly becomes vested if Suzuki plays in 118 games in 2013.

"If you look \$16 million in the face and turn it down, to me, you're crazy," Suzuki said. "It's like a weight lifted off your shoulders. Me and my wife, we've been going through this during the season and we're happy with the whole deal. We like that comfort level, knowing that security that you have is always a benefit."

For the A's, it means they keep the team's best all-around player for a reasonable price. It also means Suzuki, 26, will be able to groom and grow with the team's young pitching staff, which includes arms like Gio Gonzalez (24), Trevor Cahill (22), Vin Mazzaro (23) and Brett Anderson (22), who also signed a four-year extension with the A's earlier this season.

"That's awesome to get a core group of guys here," Anderson said. "Me and him are the first two, I guess. It'll be awesome to have him as my catcher for the next however many years."

Though he's become one of the team's biggest power threats -- his 10 home runs lead the A's this season -- Suzuki said he prides himself on defense.

"My number one thing is being able to run a pitching staff," Suzuki said. "Whether it's blocking balls, throwing guys out, receiving -- just the overall part of my game. Don't get me wrong, I love to hit. Hitting is one of my favorite things to do, but my main focus is defensively."

Suzuki's path to prominence surely isn't a typical one. He left his native Hawaii as an 18-year-old trying to walk on at perennial college powerhouse Cal State Fullerton. After earning a scholarship, Suzuki thrived in his junior year in 2004, batting .413 with 16 homers and 87 RBIs.

The A's drafted Suzuki in the second round of the 2004 First-Year Player Draft and he spent two full years in the Minor Leagues before getting called up to the bigs in 2007 to study under Jason Kendall. Given Kendall's sterling reputation around the league, Suzuki said it was tough to replace the veteran backstop once the A's traded Kendall.

"He's a guy I still look up to, playing-wise," Suzuki said. "He's, to me, one of the best catchers in the game. To be able to play behind him for a month was awesome. And then when I took over, it was nerve-wracking because I wanted to be as good as he was."

"Realistically, I knew that wasn't going to happen right away. ... It was going to take some time. It was a lot of learning and a lot of failing. But at the same time, learning from your failures is the part I really had to remember."

As Suzuki's teammates learned of his new extension before Friday's series opener against the White Sox, the pitchers were especially quick to voice their pleasure.

"Suzuki is definitely the captain of this team," Gonzalez said. "He's a guy who deserves a title like that. He busts his tail, he helps out the pitching staff whichever way he can and he's always doing his homework. A catcher like that well deserves a great contract."

White Sox, A's leaning on starting pitching

By John Schlegel / MLB.com

From the very start every night, the White Sox are making it tough on their opponents. That trend is continuing into their weekend series at Oakland.

With Mark Buehrle giving up one run in a complete-game victory Friday night, White Sox starters have allowed just that one run in their last 29 1/3 innings of work entering Saturday's second game against the A's.

Veteran Freddy Garcia will be tasked with keeping that roll going, as he faces A's right-hander Vin Mazzaro in a Saturday afternoon affair at the Oakland Coliseum.

The White Sox enter the game having won 12 of 16 to continue their torrid summer run, while the A's still have come out on top in seven of their past nine games.

Pitching has been key for both clubs this season -- the A's rank second in the AL in ERA, and their staff is right behind the White Sox in terms of its performance in the month of July.

But the White Sox are taking it to a new level lately. White Sox starters are now 23-7 with a 2.41 ERA in posting 33 quality starts in their last 39. The last run a White Sox starter had given up before Buehrle allowed the one in his gem Friday night was by Daniel Hudson in the first inning Monday at Seattle.

White Sox: Quentin returns in RF, will DH

Carlos Quentin's return to the lineup came in right field Friday night, but he will be finding his way into the DH slot this weekend. Quentin, who missed three games with a bruised right hand, went 0-for-1 with two walks before being replaced late by Andrew Jones. White Sox manager Ozzie Guillen hopes one way to keep Quentin healthy is to use him as a DH, but he even goes hard enough at that, too. "He will DH this weekend, maybe Saturday ... or Sunday. Ideally both," Guillen said. "But in the meanwhile, we're going to see how we do. DH is not easy. This guy, when he's DHing, he looks like a bull before he goes to the ring. He's so anxious. This guy never stops swinging. Every time he DHs, I wear him down."

A's: Mazzaro on a roll

Having allowed only one run in three of his last four starts, Mazzaro has gone 3-0 with a 1.93 ERA during that span, while allowing a mere .214 opponents' batting average. The 23-year-old pitched a career-high 7 2/3 innings in his last outing

against the Royals, impressing veteran DH Jack Cust, whose three-run homer gave the A's enough breathing room to withstand a furious Kansas City rally. "Vin's been great," Cust said. "He's got the stuff, it's just the confidence behind it and throwing the ball with that confidence."

Worth noting

The White Sox enter play Saturday 14-8 vs. the AL West this season. With one more victory, they'd match their win total vs. the West in 2009, when they went 15-18 vs. the division. ... The A's are in a stretch in which they're playing 12 of 15 games against first-place clubs.

Anderson in the mix for Sunday's start

By Alex Espinoza / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Southpaw Brett Anderson rejoined the A's on Friday and threw a bullpen session, but Oakland manager Bob Geren didn't say who would start Sunday's series finale against the White Sox.

Anderson hasn't pitched for the A's since June 3 because of left elbow inflammation. Geren said Anderson, Dallas Braden and Ben Sheets are all being considered to start Sunday.

"I'll prepare like I'm throwing on [Sunday] until they tell me different," Anderson said.

The 22-year-old Anderson, widely regarded as the team's most talented pitcher, threw 83 pitches in a rehab start for Triple-A Sacramento on Tuesday. If Anderson was to stay on four days' rest, he would pitch on Sunday. The same can be said for Braden, who finished 4 2/3 innings for the A's against the Red Sox on Tuesday.

Geren said the team will likely make the decision by Saturday. Anderson said he was a limited in his last rehab start and couldn't throw all the breaking balls he wanted to, but that he had no such problems during Friday's side session.

"It was my normal bullpen," Anderson said. "I threw all my pitches good, so it's on to the next start, whenever that might be."

After going 11-11 with a 4.06 ERA in his rookie season last year, Anderson has gone 2-1 with a 2.35 ERA in six starts this season. Anderson is currently on the 15-day disabled list for the second time this season, having missed 30 games with similar elbow problems from April 25-May 28.

"It's never fun being on the DL," Anderson said. "You always want to be able to help your team win. I think I have pretty good capabilities to do that and I was off to a pretty good start before I got hurt. But there's nothing you can do about it now, you just got to pick up where you left off and try to win some ballgames."

Beane expects little Deadline action

OAKLAND -- When the July 31 non-waiver Trade Deadline comes and goes, it will likely do so without much noise from the A's. Listening to Oakland general manager Billy Beane on Friday, it sounds like Ben Sheets and Coco Crisp will still be members of the A's in August.

"Regardless of where we finish this year," Beane said, "I think it's important to build some momentum and I think that would require us to hold on to our guys. ... In a general sense, I don't expect us to be very active, because I'd like to keep the guys that are here around."

Beane also directly addressed the trade rumors surrounding Sheets, who has garnered the attention of several teams. Sheets, who signed a one-year, \$10 million deal with the A's in the offseason, is 4-9 with a 4.53 ERA in 20 starts.

"I think he's been an important part on the field," Beane said. "I also think he's been very influential in the clubhouse with all these young guys. He's been a great addition personality-wise and I think he keeps the players loose; he's a competitor on the mound. I think it would behoove us to keep a guy like that around."

But Beane wouldn't go so far as to speculate on Sheets' contract status after the season, saying, "We'll get to that."

Prospects await call at Triple-A

OAKLAND -- Though he came to the A's dugout before Friday's game against the White Sox to discuss Kurt Suzuki's extension, general manager Billy Beane eventually digressed toward the development of several high-profile Minor League players.

Chief among them are, of course, Chris Carter and Michael Taylor. Carter and Taylor have long been discussed in the same breath, as the potential sluggers are still in Triple-A Sacramento awaiting their promotions. Beane was largely non-committal when discussing if and when Carter and Taylor would be called up.

Carter, who had played 90 of 96 games at first base entering Friday, is batting .241 with 23 home runs and 71 RBIs this season. Taylor, who has five home runs and 58 RBIs, toted a 17-game hitting streak entering play Friday and is batting .379 (25-for-66) in that span to raise his season average to .275.

"Chris has been hitting for extra bases the whole year," Beane said. "He's been consistently driving the ball -- we got to get the average up a little bit. Michael was hurt -- in May he was out for three weeks -- and he's starting to swing the bat. Both of them are starting to swing the bat real well, it's been fun going to the box scores."

Beane said he sees Taylor playing left field at the Major League level, while saying Carter has the physical tools to play in the outfield as well. But Beane said it wouldn't do Carter any good to come up to the Majors and serve as a designated hitter.

"We'll keep him at first right now," Beane said. "He's a pretty good athlete, so I don't think [Carter playing outfield] is out of the realm of possibility. We talked about that in the spring, but if he hits and hits for power we'll find a spot for him."

Beane also commented on the success of 2009 first-round pick Grant Green, who recently played in the All-Star Futures Game during the All-Star break in Anaheim. Green is batting .332 with 10 homers and 50 RBIs for Class A Stockton this season.

"His last six weeks have been absurd," Beane said. "Slugging, batting average. I was looking at some of his numbers the other day and I said, 'Holy cow.'"

Beane also said prized international free-agent signee Michael Ynoa has suffered from a recent bout of tendinitis, but that Ynoa will start throwing again this week.

Worth noting

A's outfielder Rajai Davis was a late scratch from Friday's lineup with a left hamstring strain. ... A's closer Andrew Bailey was unavailable Friday because of an upper back strain. Geren said Bailey experienced a muscle spasm in his last outing on Tuesday. ... Oakland lefty reliever Jerry Blevins tossed 2/3 innings of scoreless relief on Friday and hasn't allowed a run over his last 13 appearances, a span of 9 2/3 innings. ... A's general manager Billy Beane said he doesn't expect negotiations with No. 1 pick Michael Choice to be finished until near the Aug. 16 deadline.

As San Jose tries to lure A's, team signs catcher Suzuki to \$16M deal

Jorge Ortiz, USA Today Daily Pitch

The A's reached agreement Friday on a four-year contract worth \$16.25 million with catcher Kurt Suzuki. The city of San Jose hopes he plays at least part of that time down south.

Defying baseball's timetable, San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed said Thursday he will ask the City Council to put a ballpark measure on the November ballot rather than wait for MLB to complete its report on the A's stadium options.

San Jose has to put the measure on the ballot by Aug. 3 for it to go to voters in the November election.

Reed's decision drew a strong rebuke from Commissioner Bud Selig, who said in a statement:

"We were surprised and disappointed by the news today in San Jose about the stadium referendum. We were not part of the process and had no knowledge that a decision to proceed with the election had been made. A ballot referendum is premature and completely independent of the ongoing work of the committee which has been in place to thoroughly study this situation."

After their plans to move to Fremont fell through, the A's focused their efforts on San Jose, where co-owner Lew Wolff has business interests. The territorial rights to the area, however, are owned by the Giants, who are steadfastly opposed to the A's moving there.

Regardless of where they play, the A's had been looking to sign Suzuki to a long-term deal, and this contract -- which kicks in immediately and supersedes his current one-year deal -- will buy out his arbitration years. There's also a club option for 2014.

The San Francisco Chronicle reports Suzuki will earn a guaranteed \$16.25 million and could make as much as \$25-26 million if the A's pick up the option.

Suzuki, 26, had a breakout season last year, batting .274 with 15 homers and 88 RBI. This year his average is down to .257 but he ranks first on the team with 10 home runs and second with 37 RBI.

Oakland trounced by Chicago as Buehrle pitches 4-hit gem

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Mark Buehrle pitched a four-hitter on the one-year anniversary of his perfect game as the Chicago White Sox beat the Oakland Athletics 5-1 on Friday night.

Buehrle (9-8) was nearly flawless through six innings against Oakland before giving up a run in the seventh that ended a scoreless streak of 26 1/3 innings by White Sox starters.

Carlos Quentin drove in two runs in his return to Chicago's lineup, and Omar Vizquel added two hits to move past Luke Appling into 50th place on baseball's career hit list, helping Chicago increase its lead to 2½ games over Detroit in the AL Central.

Buehrle pitched a perfect game against Tampa Bay last season.

Quentin had not played since getting hit in his right wrist against Minnesota last Sunday. He missed three games but was back in the lineup Friday at designated hitter, a position he'll stay at for the next few days while Chicago tries to ease him back into the outfield.

One of the White Sox top hitters before getting hurt, Quentin picked up where he left off. He drew a pair of walks, knocked in Alex Rios with a sacrifice fly in the fourth then drove in Vizquel with a groundout in the sixth.

A.J. Pierzynski added a two-run single in the ninth off Oakland reliever Henry Rodriguez.

That's an encouraging sign for Chicago, which has won three of four on this road trip since dropping three of four at home against Minnesota.

Buehrle's performance was equally strong for the White Sox.

The lefty gave up a pair of doubles to Jack Cust and a two-out single to Coco Crisp in the third. The only run came in the seventh when Cust doubled in Kevin Kouzmanoff, who had also doubled.

Buehrle struck out two and didn't walk a batter for the third time in his last four starts. He also notched his second complete game of the season and earned his first career win in Oakland.

Oakland All-Star Trevor Cahill (9-4) lost for the second time in four starts. The right-hander scattered four hits and allowed three runs over seven innings but got little offensive support from his teammates.

The A's, who announced before the game that they signed catcher Kurt Suzuki to a new four-year contract, lost for only the second time in nine games.

NOTES

-- Oakland GM Billy Beane said he doesn't anticipate trading RHP Ben Sheets, who signed a \$10 million one-year deal in the offseason. Sheets (4-9) scuffled early in the season but has a 3.37 ERA over his last five starts.

-- The stadium radar gun mistakenly clocked a Buehrle pitch at 800 mph in the first inning.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

River Cats alone in first after Mortensen gem

By Robbie Enos / Sacramento River Cats

After coming off a series sweep of Colorado Springs in which they scored 49 runs, the Sacramento River Cats had a change of pace Friday night against the Tacoma Rainiers.

That change of pace was a 2-1 victory over the Seattle Mariners affiliate in Game 1 of a four-game set. There were only eight total hits in the entire game. The River Cats (57-43) are now alone in first place after Fresno lost at Reno.

In a night of little offensive power, the main star was River Cats starting pitcher Clayton Mortensen, who threw 8.0 shutout innings. It was a victory for the River Cats defense as well, with Mortensen collecting only three strikeouts. His final line included just one walk and two hits allowed.

Because to a strong performance from Tacoma starter Michael Pineda, the River Cats offense had a lackluster night. An Eric Sogard triple in the third and a Corey Wimberly run created in the sixth were the only critical products of the night for Sacramento.

Pineda was taken out in the sixth, finishing up with eleven strikeouts through 5.0 innings pitched. In six starts he has a 3.71 ERA with 42 total strikeouts and nine walks. He walked zero batters in the game, but despite his performance earned his first loss of the season.

The Rainiers almost snagged the win back in the bottom of the ninth facing reliever Jon Hunton. Chris Woodward started the inning off with a single to left field. Matt Mangini broke up a double play ball to keep the out count at one.

Mangini advanced to second on a wild pitch by Hunton, and then scored on a Mike Carp single to left field. With two outs Michael Benacka entered the game and retired Matt Tuiasosopo on strikes to finish the game.

Sogard got the Cats on the board in the third with an RBI triple. After Adam Heather was hit by a pitch, Sogard blasted a pitch off the wall to drive in the first run of the game. Pineda retired the first seven batters with three strikeouts before allowing the run.

Pitching completely dominated the game early. Pineda collected eight strikeouts through the first four innings. Mortensen retired the first 10 batters he faced before giving up a single to Matt Mangini in the fourth.

Pineda continued his unreal strikeout show. Through the first five innings of play he had sat down eleven batters after getting all three of his outs in the fifth by that manner. He struck out the side in both the third and fourth innings as well.

With mega Pineda out of the game and reliever Yusmeiro Petit coming in to pitch the sixth, the Cats added another run. Wimberly led things off with a soft line drive to left field. He then stole second base before Travis Buck drew a walk.

Manager Tony DeFrancesco called for the double steal, getting Buck thrown out at second but allowing Wimberly to steal his 38th base of the year. Michael Taylor finished things up with a groundout RBI.

With the win, the Cats have now won 31 of their last 41 games. Coming into the game their 563 runs scored were the third best in the Pacific Coast League. Their 497 runs allowed ranks 10th. They also rank fifth in the league in home runs and first in both walks and strikeouts.

They will face off against Tacoma again Saturday at 7 p.m. The game will be televised on Comcast SportsNet California, along with Johnny Duskow's radio broadcast of Talk 650 KSTE. After they finish the series Monday, the Cats return for an eight-game homestand.

Brown's blast lifts 'Hounds past Missions

Jonathan Hull, Midland Reporter-Telegram

What a difference a week can make in baseball.

Last weekend, the Midland RockHounds were left reeling after the San Antonio Missions put 17 runs on the scoreboard in back-to-back games.

The Missions bats didn't return to Midland with the same spark on Friday and the RockHounds rode a towering two-run home run by Corey Brown and several stellar defensive plays to a 3-2 victory at Citibank Ballpark.

"It's great for our pitchers to know if they command the zone and create early contact, that we're going to make the plays behind them," RockHounds manager Darren Bush said. "That gives the pitchers confidence."

It seemed like every inning one RockHound or another was making a highlight defensive play, robbing the Missions of either a hit or a run.

In the second inning, shortstop Josh Horton made a high leap to snag a line drive by Missions third baseman James Darnell. Horton robbed another base knock in the third, leaping to his left and taking one away from San Antonio first baseman Mitch Canham.

With the game tied at 1 after a double by Missions shortstop Andrew Parrino scored Blake Tekotte, Archie Gilbert made a strong throw from left to ensure the Missions didn't grab the lead in the top of the third.

Missions second baseman Logan Forsythe hit a single into shallow left field and Parrino was waved home from second base. Gilbert came up firing, throwing a one-hop bullet to catcher Gabriel Ortiz, who applied the tag on Parrino for the inning's third out.

That set the stage for Corey Brown to bring in what turned out to be the winning runs. With two outs and Val Majewski on first, Brown lifted one high into the air towards left. With the wind blowing out to left from right, the ball got caught in the jet stream and found its way into the visiting bullpen for a two-run homer, placing Midland up 3-1.

"It was good to get a homer out here with the wind blowing the way it is," Brown said. "Since I wasn't able to get one in Corpus, it's nice to get one here and get a few dollars. Glad to be back home."

The Missions cut the deficit to one in the fourth, when Canham came through with a sharp grounder up the middle, scoring Darnell.

The Missions managed two base runners after the fourth, though, as RockHounds starter Ryan Edell settled down and relievers Daniel Sattler and Justin Souza each threw a shutout inning with Souza getting his fourth save of the season to cap the game.

"It's a great feeling to be able to contribute to the victory," Brown said. "I can't say that my home run is the only reason we won. Everyone played a huge role. It wasn't just hitting. Pitching was great and defense was good."

The RockHounds (15-12) have won four of their last five since the back-to-back 17-run onslaughts by San Antonio (11-16) last weekend. They trail first-place Frisco by two games in the standings, but have a seven-game lead on San Antonio for the Texas League South Division wild card.

"We really don't try to look at records or standings. We try to come out here and play the way we're supposed to play," Brown said. "So far this half, we've been able to do that. If we keep it up, then we should be able to make a run for another championship this year."

NOTES: With back-to-back doubles in the second inning, Shane Peterson and Matt Sulentic remain the RockHounds' hottest hitters over the past two weeks. During the last two games, both batters are hitting better than .400. Peterson, who had a go-ahead solo home run in Thursday night's 5-2 extra-innings victory over Corpus Christi, hit a two-out double to right in the second inning and then traded places with Sulentic, who followed Peterson with a double to the wall in left center. ... RockHounds starter Ryan Edell might want to make every start against the Missions. Three of Edell's five wins this season have come against San Antonio. He's 3-0 with an ERA around 2.00.

TODAY'S PROBABLE STARTERS: Left-hander Tyler Lumsden (4-8, 4.04 ERA) will take the mound for San Antonio in his first start as a Mission. All of Lumsden's stats are from time spent with Corpus Christi this season. He was acquired by the Missions from the Hooks on July 20. Right-hander Matt Wright (3-0, 3.42) takes the mound for the RockHounds.

Late Rawhide Runs Doom Ports

VISALIA, Calif. - Fresh off taking two of three from the San Jose Giants, the Stockton Ports were hoping to keep their momentum rolling as they began a three-game series with the Visalia Rawhide. Friday night, however, the Ports were left frustrated as they stranded 10 baserunners and gave up four two-out runs in a 6-4 loss to the Rawhide.

Stockton's frustrations began early in the game. After starter Shawn Haviland recorded two quick outs in the bottom of the first, he gave up a single to Marc Krauss, walked Paul Goldschmidt, then gave up a single to Ryan Wheeler. Wheeler's knock drove in Krauss and an error in fielding the ball made by Ports right-fielder Jeremy Barfield allowed Goldschmidt to score as well, putting Visalia up 2-0.

Haviland would be victimized by another two-out mistake in the second. With two down, Haviland plunked ninth-place hitter Gerson Montilla, followed by an RBI double from Alberto Diaz to make it a 3-0 ballgame.

Despite some early struggles, Haviland would settle down and not allow a run over his final four innings of work. Haviland would receive a no-decision, going six innings and allowing three runs (two earned) on four hits while walking a season-high four and striking out eight.

Meanwhile, the Ports failed to take advantage of Rawhide starter Charles Brewer, who also walked a season-high four batters. Brewer walked four but allowed just two hits and struck out five in going five innings as he received a no-decision.

It wasn't until the seventh that Stockton finally put their first runs across, and they as well came with two outs in the inning. Rawhide reliever Will Harvil had retired the first five batters he faced before allowing a two-out single to Jermaine Mitchell. While throwing his second pitch to Grant Green, Harvil experienced shoulder pain and had to be removed from the game. Justin Mace (2-1) would walk Green, then give up a three-run homer to Stephen Parker that tied the game at 3-3.

Visalia, though, would be quick to take the lead back in the bottom of the inning, again with two outs. Jose Pina (1-2) started the frame and struck out his first two batters. Krauss, Goldschmidt, and Wheeler would then hit three straight singles, with Wheeler's scoring Krauss to make it a 4-3 game. Pina would strike out the side in the seventh, but take the loss after allowing the go-ahead run.

Mace allowed a one-out double to Yusuf Carter in the eighth and then strike out Tyler Ladendorf, at which point he was lifted from the game in favor of Christian Beltre (SV, 2), who got David Thomas to fly to center to end the inning and preserve the lead.

Mace, despite allowing the home run to Parker, would be credited with the win in the game.

The Rawhide added two big insurance runs in the bottom of the eighth off Ports reliever Trey Barham. Pinch-hitter Alfredo Marte started the inning with a single and Rossmel Perez followed with the same. Montilla came up next and hit a 3-2 pitch to straight-away center for a double. Marte scored on the hit and Perez scored when the relay throw was mishandled by Ladendorf, putting Visalia's lead at 6-3.

Stockton would rally in the ninth but ultimately fall short. With one out, Mitchell tripled to left-center and scored on an ensuing single from Green. Beltre struck out Parker and then yielded a single to Mike Spina, putting runners at the corners with two down. Beltre would strike out Barfield to end the ballgame and preserve the Game 1 victory for Visalia, earning his second save in the process.

The Ports and Rawhide will play the second of their three-game set on Saturday night at Recreation Park. Ben Hornbeck (3-2, 4.79 ERA) will take the mound for Stockton, opposed by Visalia right-hander Eric Smith (0-2, 14.54 ERA). First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

Cougars Lose Quietly in Lansing

Kane County suffers first sweep since mid-May

LANSING, Mich. – After winning seven straight games and six straight series, the Kane County Cougars have cooled off with the start of their nine-game road swing. They lost, 3-0, and had only one hit Friday night at Cooley Stadium against the Lansing Lugnuts and were swept in the series, totaling six runs on 14 hits over the three games.

Dan Straily (7-7) suffered the loss. He gave up a first-inning run from a bases-loaded jam and then yielded solo homers in the fourth and fifth for the 3-0 deficit. Straily gave up four hits, walked three and struck out two in five innings. Bo Schultz and Jose Guzman combined for three scoreless relief innings, but the Cougars' offense sputtered against four Lansing hurlers.

Leonardo Gil's infield single in the fifth against Ryan Tepera (9-4) accounted for the Cougars' lone hit. Gil also walked twice, Conner Crumbliss walked once and Chris Affiinito reached on an error to represent the five instances where a Cougar reached base. The team was averaging 5.9 runs per game in July entering Friday's contest and had not been swept in a series of three-plus games since mid-May.

The Cougars (16-11, 48-47) continue their six-game trip through Michigan on Saturday night at 6:05 CT when they open a three-game set against the Great Lakes Loons (21-5, 64-31). Ian Krol (7-3, 2.26) will oppose Elisaul Pimentel (8-3, 3.27). 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.