

A's News Clips, Sunday, July 25, 2010

Snakebitten Oakland A's blow out Chicago White Sox but place Ben Sheets on disabled list

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Just when it seems the A's disabled list reaches full capacity, there turns out to be room for another member.

Right-hander Ben Sheets was placed on the 15-day DL on Saturday with a strained right elbow, not only robbing the A's of their most experienced starter but also taking away their best bargaining chip with the trade deadline approaching.

And although the A's aren't jumping to conclusions about how much time Sheets could miss, the veteran pitcher expressed concern about whether he'll be able to return at all this season.

That news put a damper on an otherwise encouraging afternoon as the A's walloped the Chicago White Sox 10-2 at the Oakland Coliseum.

Sheets developed swelling in his elbow following his last start Monday against Boston, an outing in which his velocity was noticeably lower than in previous starts.

It's not an encouraging development considering he missed all of the 2009 season after having surgery on the elbow to repair a torn flexor tendon.

Sheets is 4-9 with a 4.53 ERA in 20 starts, and although his numbers haven't been pretty, a silver lining was that he appeared healthy most of the season and was eating up innings.

But he revealed Saturday that he hasn't felt 100 percent all season long.

"From how I felt before the spring, I thought it'd keep getting better," he said. "I just never turned the corner. It's just kind of stayed the same. It's really been up and down, up and down. There haven't been many days that I've felt normal."

The inner part of Sheets' elbow was noticeably swollen Saturday morning. He's been examined by the A's medical staff, but he'll get a second opinion next week from Texas Rangers team physician Dr. Keith Meister, whom Sheets worked with during his offseason rehabilitation.

The A's signed Sheets, 32, to a one-year, \$10 million contract in January, rolling the dice that he would return to the form that made him a four-time All-Star with the Milwaukee Brewers.

The thought was that if the A's weren't in contention as next Saturday's non-waiver trade deadline approached, Sheets would be an attractive trading chip. However, teams aren't allowed to trade players on the DL.

Sheets' injury continues a theme this season, as the A's have a large chunk of their payroll tied up in veterans with questionable injury histories who haven't stayed healthy.

Center fielder Coco Crisp was given a one-year, \$5.25 million deal but missed 70 of the first 72 games with a broken pinkie finger and a strained rib cage.

Designated hitter Eric Chavez, making \$12 million in the final season of a six-year deal, has played in just 33 games because of two bulging disks in his neck. Right-hander Justin Duchscherer, making an affordable \$1.75 million, was lost in May to what's likely a season-ending hip injury.

"With every injury, there will certainly be an attrition when it comes to performance," A's general manager Billy Beane said. "It's not just (Sheets') injury, it's all the injuries. "... You look at a club like the Red Sox, a great, great club. They've lost players and it's having an impact on them."

The A's rotation has held up well despite injuries, and right-hander Vin Mazzaro's effort against Chicago was proof of that.

Mazzaro (6-2) allowed just three hits and two earned runs over six innings, winning his fourth straight decision.

The A's (49-48) are now 7 1/2 games behind American League West-leading Texas.

A's notes: Jack Cust, with two home runs, provides pick-me-up in light of Ben Sheets' news

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Cust provides pick-me-up in light of Sheets' news

One day after being bottled up by Chicago White Sox left-hander Mark Buehrle, the A's unloaded on Freddy Garcia during a 10-2 victory Saturday.

The A's pounded Garcia for five runs and six hits and chased him after just 1 1/3 innings. Their 13-hit attack provided more than enough support for Vin Mazzaro, who went six innings to get the victory.

And if the pregame news was downbeat as right-hander Ben Sheets was lost to the disabled list, the continued hot streak of designated hitter Jack Cust was a pick-me-up once the game started.

Cust homered twice and is hitting .364 (12 for 33) with six homers and 15 RBIs over his past 10 games.

He and Kurt Suzuki went deep in back-to-back at-bats off Tony Peña in the fourth inning to give the A's a 7-2 lead. Cust launched another solo shot to lead off the eighth against Scott Linebrink.

Cust pointed to the recent roll that Suzuki (3 for 4, two RBIs) has been on to help explain his success. Suzuki is 12 for 30 over his last eight games after emerging from a 4-for-37 funk.

"When he's on base, it just opens up the whole field," Cust said. "He's getting on base, and I'm just trying to follow up."

Cust also said he's seeing the ball better these days, interesting in that he's sporting a black eye after taking an accidental elbow from his 3-year-old daughter, Ava.

Dallas Braden will start today as the A's try to take the three-game series from Chicago. With Sheets sidelined, either Braden or fellow left-hander Brett Anderson — still on the DL — was going to draw the start. But the A's opted to have Anderson, recovering from left elbow inflammation, make another rehab start for Triple-A Sacramento today against Tacoma. Assuming all goes well, Anderson will be activated and slide into the rotation either Friday or Saturday against the White Sox in Chicago.

Closer Andrew Bailey is bothered by back spasms that have sidelined him the past three games. He's eyeing Tuesday's road trip opener at Texas for his possible return. "I'm still a work in progress, but hopefully with an off day (Monday), that will be enough." "... Outfielder Rajai Davis (hamstring) remains day-to-day. "... Reliever Cedrick Bowers was recalled from Sacramento to take Sheets' roster spot.

Chin Music: Ben Sheets joins DL with right elbow swelling — his return uncertain

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 7/24/2010 12:42PM

This morning brought more injury news from the A's clubhouse, and it's a pretty significant development. Ben Sheets went on the 15-day disabled list with swelling in his right elbow, and though he and the A's aren't jumping to any conclusions, Sheets acknowledges the possibility it could be season-ending. His velocity was noticeably down in his last start Monday against Boston, and the next morning Sheets woke up with swelling in his elbow. I saw his elbow today and there's a big lump on the inner half of it, and Sheets said the swelling has actually gone down some. He's been examined by A's doctors, and now he'll fly to Dallas to get a second opinion from the doctor he worked with during the offseason. Sheets had surgery in February 2009 to repair a torn flexor tendon in the elbow, which sidelined him all of last season. The A's are waiting for results from the next doctor's visit before deciding how long he'll be out.

It's now apparent that Sheets never fully bounced back in his recovery, even as it seemed at times that his stuff was rounding into form. "From how I felt before the spring, I thought it'd keep getting better," Sheets said. "I just never turned the corner. It's just kind of stayed the same. It's really been up and down, up and down. There haven't been many days that I've felt normal."

If there's a blessing in disguise for the A's, they might have the rotation depth to absorb this hit. They expect to get Brett Anderson back from the DL soon. With Dallas Braden starting tomorrow against the White Sox, the A's will have Anderson make one more rehab start tomorrow for Triple-A Sacramento. A potentially healthy rotation of Trevor Cahill, Gio Gonzalez,

Vin Mazzaro, Anderson and Braden still looks pretty formidable. So I wouldn't say Sheets' injury, in and of itself, makes the A's chances to stay in AL West contention any steeper than they already were. But will this development push the A's toward being sellers? I asked GM Billy Beane how he thought Sheets' injury affects the A's ability to stay competitive.

"All the injuries have an impact, so I think with every injury, there's certainly going to be an attrition when it comes to performance," Beane said. "Losing Brett for nine weeks, losing for Coco for two months, losing Sweeney for the rest of this year ... When you start taking players away it makes it more difficult."

Glean what you will from that. Sheets appeared to be the A's top trading chip, and we know he won't be dealt now. We'll see how this impacts the A's decision-making with the non-waiver trade deadline one week away ...

—In other health-related news, closer Andrew Bailey (lower back) and outfielder Rajai Davis (hamstring) remain day-to-day. I didn't get a chance to grab Bailey this morning to see how he's doing.

—Reliever Cedrick Bowers was recalled to take Sheets' roster spot.

A's — Crisp CF, Barton 1B, Suzuki C, Cust DH, Kouzmanoff 3B, Ellis 2B, Gross RF, Watson LF, Pennington SS; Mazzaro RHP.

White Sox — Pierre LF, Vizquel 3B, Rios CF, Konerko DH, Quentin RF, Kotsay 1B, Ramirez SS, Castro C, Beckham 2B; Garcia RHP.

As power heats up, squeeze fizzles out

[Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer](#)

Oakland's power displays are becoming less rare, thanks to **Jack Cust's** recent surge, so on Saturday, the team tried something even less-A's like, with a suicide squeeze attempt in a 10-2 victory over the White Sox.

That was unsuccessful - **Gabe Gross** pulled back rather than bunting the pitch, leaving **Kevin Kouzmanoff** an easy out coming from third - but the homers were there. Cust hit two of them, his first multi-homer game of the season, and he's banged six in the past nine games.

"I'm trying to keep it going," said Cust, who lifted his average to a team-high .306.

Kurt Suzuki and Cust hit back-to-back shots in the fourth, and Suzuki added two other hits, while Cust walked three times to go with his two homers.

"It's a good feeling, because you're on the bases the whole day instead of going back to the dugout," Cust said. "It was a lot of hitting with runners on base, and that opens up the whole field, and I'm trying to follow up, keep the line going."

Gross made no excuses for messing up the A's first squeeze bunt attempt since 2007. He just drew back the bat, possibly just sheer hitter's instinct because it was a low pitch, but Gross said he couldn't explain it. (**Eric Byrnes** did the same thing on a squeeze attempt with the Mariners early in the season.)

"It is an absolute emptiness standing there, knowing Kouz is on his way and he's out because I didn't get the job done," Gross said.

Vin Mazzaro, now assured of a rotation spot unless or until **Ben Sheets** comes off the disabled list, improved to 6-2 overall, and he's 4-0 with a 2.12 ERA over his past five starts. He allowed a two-run homer to **Ramon Castro** in the second, but only two other hits in his six innings. He walked three and struck out five.

Briefly: Closer **Andrew Bailey** (back spasms) said that he's feeling better but that he's unavailable for the rest of this series. He hopes to be OK for Tuesday's game at Texas. ... **Rajai Davis** is day-to-day with what Geren called a mild hamstring strain. ... With Sheets going on the DL, the A's called up left-hander **Cedric Bowers**, who'd been sent down Wednesday. ... The A's have used the DL 19 times this year and 83 times since the start of the 2007 season. The only team that has topped that over the same stretch is Texas, with 86 DL uses. ... **Ryan Sweeney's** knee surgery will be Friday in Vail, Colo.

Sheets awaits 2nd diagnosis; season in doubt

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Many thought Ben Sheets would be gone in a trade right about now, with the deadline fast approaching. Instead, the franchise's all-time most expensive pitcher is off the roster the more predictable way for Oakland: Sheets was placed on the 15-day disabled list Saturday before the A's 10-2 victory over the White Sox.

Sheets, who missed all of last season after flexor-tendon surgery, said his elbow has swelled far more than usual his past few starts. When asked if the injury might be season-ending, he said, "It's possible. I don't know. I don't like the fact it's so swollen. It's been so up and down the last two weeks, so up and down all year."

Sheets will visit his own orthopedist, Dr. Keith Meister, in Dallas on Tuesday. He already has been checked by A's doctors, and general manager Billy Beane said the team will wait to disclose a diagnosis until Sheets gets a second opinion.

"We wouldn't want to speculate," Beane said. "We'll have a more definitive diagnosis after that."

The right-hander said his elbow ligament is sound, and that the problem is probably with his repaired flexor tendon; he noted that Jason Jennings required two flexor tendon surgeries. The A's have had numerous elbow ligament injuries in the past season and a half, with Joey Devine and Josh Outman among those having Tommy John surgery.

Today's starter, Dallas Braden, is coming back from elbow tendinitis, and Brett Anderson, who will make one more rehab start today for Triple-A Sacramento and then start at Chicago on Friday, has spent two stints on the DL this year with elbow issues.

Sheets (4-9, 4.53 ERA) is making \$10 million on a one-year contract this season, the top single-season salary ever for an Oakland pitcher, and the A's had agreed to decline free-agent compensation if and when he signs elsewhere after the season. That led to speculation that the A's would move him if out of the race.

Beane has said for some time, however, that the team had no plans to trade Sheets, citing the team's need for healthy arms as well as Sheets' strong influence and leadership skills in a young clubhouse.

On Saturday, Beane said that it is tough to pry the ball away from Sheets even when his elbow has ballooned, but the A's figured that with days off last Thursday and on Monday, and with Anderson returning to the rotation Friday, that this was the best time to get Sheets checked out.

"Ben is such a competitor, he wanted to go out and pitch on Sunday," Beane said. "We said, 'Let's make sure we get this right.' "

Beane sounded nearly as pessimistic as Sheets, though, when he said of the DL decision, "Everyone felt bad for Ben, and he's given everything he's had."

Sheets has an additional \$2 million he could make in performance bonuses based on innings pitched, starting at 165 innings. He's at 119 1/3 innings now.

"I don't even care," Sheets said. "I'd only like to hit 'em because it means I was pitching all year."

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Chavez check: Eric Chavez said via e-mail that he plans to rejoin the team soon and that his neck is beginning to feel better. He'd like to resume baseball activity in a few weeks with an eye toward potentially playing in September.

Drumbeat: Sheets is going on the DL, outlook uncertain

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 7/24/2/10 11:48am

Ben Sheets said his right elbow has been so swollen after his past two or three starts that he is going to get checked out fully, and the A's placed the veteran starter on the DL on Sunday. Sheets said he believes he could be out anywhere from just the 15 days he must on the DL (it's retroactive to July 20) to the rest of the year, and Sheets hinted that he thinks it might be the latter when I asked him if it's potentially season-ending.

"I don't like the fact it's so swollen," Sheets told me this morning. "I just don't know. And it's been so up and down the last two weeks. Up and down the whole year, really."

General manager Billy Beane said that it's tough to keep Sheets off the mound and that Sheets still wanted to pitch Sunday, but with days off last Thursday and this coming Monday, and with Brett Anderson coming off the DL, Beane said, this was a good time to make sure that Sheets is OK.

Beane also said that the team doctors already have seen Sheets. When I asked what they'd said, Beane said that the A's will wait to detail that until after Sheets has seen his own doctor, orthopedist Keith Meister, in Dallas early next week.

That doesn't necessarily sound optimistic, and there were several times when I was speaking to Sheets today when he sounded, if not pessimistic, at least very frustrated.

"My velocity peaks, and then goes back, then it peaks and then goes away," Sheets said.

Scouts had remarked on Sheets' lower velocity lately, but they'd also noted that it tended to go up in the later innings, which wouldn't necessarily signal an injury problem. He was in the mid to upper 80s his last time out, but hitting 90-91 in his final inning.

Sheets missed all of last year after surgery to repair his right flexor tendon. The A's brass has said for weeks that there were no plans to trade him, so this injury doesn't squelch any in-the-works moves or anything. Unlike Matt Holliday last year, there never was a sense with Sheets that the team would move him for pieces at the deadline if the team wasn't in striking distance: Beane has said consistently since signing Sheets that the team wasn't looking trade him.

I know there will be a lot of criticism about signing Sheets in the first place, but the A's knew the risks and even though it is a \$10 million deal, the commitment is only for one year, and the upside seemed worth it. Also, they couldn't give their money away - they tried to sign Adrian Beltre, Marco Scutaro - no one was interested. They had it to spend, it's not like there's somewhere else that's suffering because they used that for Sheets. I don't get the worry about the investment. Where was it supposed to be going? It's not like ticket prices went up to sign Sheets. Maybe they get a little back from insurance now if he misses the rest of the season, if there's concern about the A's bottom line, but it's their budget, their risk, they're still at the bottom of the league in payroll....The Sheets money just doesn't even seem like much of an issue.

Also: The A's keep emphasizing how great Sheets is in the clubhouse, and it's really true. The pitching staff, especially the starters, are so young and Sheets is a very good leader. They need a role model, there's no doubt, and Sheets is a great fit for that. Even Dallas Braden, slightly older than the other four, pays close attention to everything Sheets does. On a generally pretty quiet team, except for Braden and maybe Jack Cust, Sheets stands out for his big personality and his rah-rah team-first spirit. Is that worth \$10 million? Or course not, but he has been good for the club in other ways than just on the mound, and Sheets definitely has given his all on the mound, which also is good for the young 'uns to see.

Cedric Bowers is coming back up to fill a spot in the bullpen, Dallas Braden is going tomorrow against the White Sox, and Brett Anderson will pitch for Triple-A Sacramento tomorrow at Tacoma, then it sounds as if he will come off the DL to pitch on Friday at Chicago.

Andrew Bailey told me he's unavailable today but he feels better (back spasms) and he is hoping he's OK for Tuesday at Texas. Rajai Davis remains day-to-day with what manager Bob Geren is calling a "minor" hamstring strain; with a day off tomorrow, he'll get two more full days to rest and then they'll re-evaluate.

Ryan Sweeney's knee surgery will be next Friday in Vail, Colorado.

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

A's cruise behind Cust's two jacks

Mazzaro shuts down White Sox, earns sixth victory

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- At the time, everyone was thinking it, but only Jack Cust would say it.

"Everybody hits more home runs than us," Cust said two weeks ago following an Oakland loss to a homer-happy Angels team.

That all-too-unfortunate sentiment is almost true, as the A's have compiled the third fewest long balls in the Majors this season.

Cust is ready to change that, though. And on Saturday, he continued to prove his mission is already under way by launching two homers -- his fifth and sixth in last nine games -- while also drawing three walks en route to a 10-2 A's victory over the visiting White Sox.

The A's slugger was designated for assignment just two days before the club's season opener to allow Eric Chavez the opportunity to become the team's everyday designated hitter. Now, almost five months into the season, Chavez is out of the picture due to injury and Cust is back in, looking mighty fine.

"It's a good feeling because I'm on the bases all day," Cust said. "I just feel like I'm seeing the ball a long time, just able to make some last-minute adjustments with the ball as it's on its way. When you're seeing the ball longer, you can do a little bit more. When you're not seeing it as well, you're just trying to hit the ball. You're trying to keep your approach and not do too much. But now I'm seeing it, know where it's going, and I can allow my swing to take over."

"Past history will predict the future most times," manager Bob Geren said. "He's led our team in homers the past few years, and I imagine he would again this year. He's put together a fine year."

With two on Saturday, for his seventh career multi-homer game and first since August of last year, Cust now has eight on the year. That puts him three behind the club's current long ball leader, Kurt Suzuki. The A's new \$16 million man, who came to terms on a four-year contract extension Friday, posted a three-hit day and, with a fourth-inning solo shot, proved he won't be giving way to the club's home run title too easily.

Suzuki's homer -- a shot to left that barely cleared the left-field wall -- was followed in consecutive order by Cust's first home run of the day, marking the A's third set of back-to-back homers this season and giving starter Vin Mazzaro a rather cushioned lead.

The A's came out of the gates rather strong against Chicago hurler Freddy Garcia, who exited after only 1 1/3 innings of work, having given up five runs on six hits with three walks and two strikeouts. The White Sox right-hander threw 44 pitches

in the first frame, as he allowed RBI hits to Daric Barton and Gabe Gross to give Oakland a 2-0 lead. He then was forced to toss 25 in the second, when Barton, Kurt Suzuki and Kevin Kouzmanoff combined for a handful of run-scoring hits.

"I couldn't make the pitches I needed," Garcia said. "I threw, what, almost 50 pitches in the first inning? After that I was pretty much done. That's a lot of pitches for the first inning and I couldn't get anybody out after that."

Mazzaro, meanwhile, offered up a two-run homer to Ramon Castro in the top of the second to tie the game, but Oakland's three runs in the bottom half of the frame made it 5-2, a lead further extended by Suzuki and Cust's sixth-inning blasts.

"I just kept filling the zone [after the home run]," Mazzaro said. "You can't be scared to throw your pitches. I had my slider working after that and got a little more comfortable with it, and I went from there.

"[Cust] is in the zone. He's swinging the bat really well. It's nice to get the run support. It makes it a lot easier on the pitching staff."

Mazzaro easily kept the A's in the game with a solid six-inning performance, representing the sixth straight start he's pitched at least six frames. The young righty -- who, like Cust, began the season with Triple-A Sacramento -- allowed just two runs on three hits while walking three and fanning five as he earned his sixth victory of the season.

With Saturday's news that Ben Sheets will be shut down for an indefinite amount of time with a strained right elbow, Mazzaro's place in the rotation is looking all the more safe. Continually tallying impressive innings doesn't hurt, either.

"I'm just taking one inning at a time, trying to make my pitches," he said. "My confidence is really high right now. I just want to stay focused, not let up. You want to keep your team in the ballgame and keep posting wins. That's what it's all about."

"He's been throwing the ball great," Cust said of his fellow New Jersey native. "We obviously know his abilities and what he's capable of doing, and now he's getting the opportunity to show it."

The A's handed Mazzaro two insurance runs in the sixth frame, courtesy of an RBI base hit from Mark Ellis and a sacrifice fly off the bat of Matt Carson, and Cust's eighth-inning shot solidified the A's eighth victory in their last 10 games -- making a failed sacrifice squeeze play with Gabe Gross at the plate and Kouzmanoff coming in from third irrelevant.

"[Gross] just didn't get the ball down," Geren said. "In the end, it didn't really matter. We were looking for an extra run there, but we got plenty today."

Sheets lands on DL with strained elbow

Left-hander Bowers recalled to take roster spot

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's right-hander Ben Sheets was gathering innings, but he was also compiling an unwelcome dose of familiar pain recently.

The veteran pitcher, who posted at least six innings in each of his last 14 starts, was placed on the 15-day disabled list Saturday with a strained right elbow following a pair of outings that brought about inflammation in his surgically repaired elbow.

"It's been up and down," a disappointed Sheets said Saturday morning, "but for the past two games it's been telling me something, and it's swelled up pretty good both times."

Surprisingly, the A's pitcher -- who missed all of 2009 following elbow surgery -- put together rather impressive numbers during those starts, which resulted in just a combined two runs. But those numbers, no matter how they read in a box score, didn't say as much as the one that read on the radar gun, Sheets insisted.

"I know last start it hurt," he said, "and somewhere in that long game against Anaheim, I think, didn't help me. If you notice my velocity in that game, it went down after that long inning."

Said frame was the third inning against Los Angeles on July 10, when the A's posted eight runs en route to a 15-1 win. Sheets allowed just two hits in six shutout frames that day, but that's when he also began experiencing the inflammation,

which resurfaced in his most recent start July 19 against Boston -- on a night when his fastball didn't reach 90 miles per hour until his last inning.

"I was still successful with the diminished velocity," he said. "It didn't fool me, but I was still able to pitch. When I knew my stuff wasn't there, I knew it wasn't going away."

Thus, Sheets was checked out by a handful of A's doctors this week. But, when asked of the results from those visits, the seasoned pitcher shook his head and simply said he's going to "wait and see" what orthopedist Dr. Keith Meister -- the Rangers' team physician in Arlington, Texas, -- has to say about it all. Sheets said he'll likely see Meister, who aided his past elbow troubles, early this week during the club's trip to Texas for a three-game set against the Rangers.

"I'm going to wait and let Meister tell us what's really going on," Sheets said. "He'll tell all."

A's general manager Billy Beane, who just Friday said "it would behoove us to keep a guy like that around" when directly addressing trade rumors surrounding Sheets, essentially expressed the same sentiment regarding the pitcher's future.

"You don't want to speculate anything until you have a more definitive diagnosis," said Beane, who in January signed Sheets as a free agent to a one-year deal worth \$10 million. "At times his velocity was better than others. We're concerned with the amount of swelling he had afterward, which is unique -- something he didn't have up to this point."

The club's recent off-day Thursday lent manager Bob Geren an opportunity to hand Sheets an extra day of rest rather than have him go Saturday. But even a Sunday start -- freshly deemed Dallas Braden's -- eventually proved to be out of the question.

"It's disappointing because Ben's been pitching well," Beane said. "He's been a great influence on these young guys. Everyone feels bad for him. He's such a competitor. He wanted to pitch on Sunday. ... He's the kind of guy that will tell you less because he wants to go out there. You have to sift through his competitiveness."

"I was going to pitch tomorrow," Sheets said, "but I don't know how smart that would have been. It's kind of like you're on borrowed time, too. There's a reason people don't throw 83 or 85 [mph] consistently in the big leagues."

"Swelling's no good. I know that. Your arm just doesn't swell. Things just don't swell for no reason."

Sheets said Saturday that the swelling is down "but still there," and he also recognizes a handful of symptoms relevant to his past elbow injury. At the same time, he noted, there are definite differences.

"You tend to forget what things felt like," he said. "Like when I was comparing it to the guys, it's similar but it's different to what I experienced. It's similar that I get some pain up in the forearm and my velocity's down. It's different in the spots that it hurts and the region. I even think the severity of it feels different."

When asked if the severity is of a lesser degree, a noticeably frustrated Sheets -- entering his seventh career DL stint -- paused before continuing.

"I don't know the diagnosis, but I know that my arm moves more free right now than it did," he said. "Two years ago, I couldn't move my arm at all. It was there all day, every day. Everything I do is pretty normal except throw the baseball over 85 miles an hour. That hurts."

In reality, though, Sheets knows at no point this season was he necessarily close to returning to his old self, the one that was a four-time National League All-Star while with Milwaukee. He was 4-9 with a 4.53 ERA in 20 starts for the A's and has allowed an American League-leading 57 extra-base hits.

"The whole year's been frustrating," he said. "From where I was before spring, it's never really taken any jumps you always hear about. To say I felt good for extended periods of time would be false. I felt good here and there -- a couple innings here, a couple innings there, but nothing sustained throughout the year."

The A's, who recalled left-handed reliever Cedrick Bowers to take Sheets' spot on the roster, have now used the disabled list 19 times this year and 83 times over the last four seasons. Only the Rangers, with 86, have used the DL more times over that span.

Not much consolation comes from these situations, Beane said, but knowing that lefty Brett Anderson is nearly ready to rejoin the rotation -- also boasting Trevor Cahill, Gio Gonzalez, Dallas Braden and Vin Mazzaro -- helps ease the burden of yet another injured player.

"The guys in there now," Beane said, "we like quite a bit. With Brett returning soon, we'll be able to pick up with a five-man rotation again. We've created a little depth in the past five months."

Hudson, Braden bring intrigue to finale

By John Schlegel / MLB.com

The A's figured out their own rotation before Saturday's game, and then finally showed that someone can figure out the White Sox rotation during it.

So with Ben Sheets going on the disabled list with elbow inflammation and Brett Anderson being given one more Minor League rehabilitation start, it will be Dallas Braden taking the ball for Oakland's rubber match against the White Sox on Sunday.

Braden will be facing off against rookie Daniel Hudson, who was called up two weeks ago to fill in for Jake Peavy, going 1-0 with a 5.06 ERA in his two starts since.

Meanwhile, the A's brought the tear of great pitching by the White Sox rotation to a screeching halt Saturday, tagging Freddy Garcia for five earned runs in just 1 1/3 innings. Prior to that outing, White Sox starters had allowed just one run in their previous 29 1/3 innings of work.

For the rubber match, the A's settled on Braden, who was activated from the DL Tuesday after a battle with elbow tendinitis. Still winless since his perfect game May 9, Braden gave up four runs (one earned) on 10 hits while walking one and fanning six in 4 2/3 innings against the Red Sox.

"The elbow is not out on the mound," Braden said after that one. "The elbow is still on the arm, so all signs are positive. It felt good. Just being a gun-watcher, the last fastballs came out clean. I feel pretty confident that it's there."

White Sox: Hudson trying to stick

Hudson picked up his first win of the season and second of his career in his previous start Tuesday, allowing an earned run on five hits and four walks while striking out six over 6 2/3 innings. At some point down the stretch, the White Sox might go to a four-man rotation, as they did in 2008 and their World Series year in '05. He'd appear to be the odd man out in that scenario, but Hudson is on Guillen's mind as an option heading into the most important games of the year. "I want this kid to be here and be the guy," Guillen said of Hudson. "Because it costs less money, we're going to have somebody for the future and we can have someone we can count on later. I'm pulling for this kid."

A's: Fallout from Sheets move

With Sheets going on the DL and another day off Monday, the A's don't really have to skip a beat in their rotation, with Braden going Sunday, followed by Gio Gonzalez, Trevor Cahill and Vin Mazzaro in the three-game series at Texas. That would make Braden or Anderson, if he's ready, available for Friday's opener in Chicago. ... With two homers Saturday, Jack Cust now has six home runs in 10 games after just two in his first 42.

Worth noting

The A's and White Sox meet one more time in Chicago next weekend before their final three-game meeting takes place when a lot could be on the line: Sept. 20-22 in Oakland.

Anderson ready for last rehab start

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Here today, gone tomorrow -- if you're Brett Anderson, that is.

The A's lefty roamed around the A's clubhouse Saturday morning, but he'll be back on the road for another rehab start with Triple-A Sacramento in Tacoma, Wash., on Sunday.

Anderson, along with Ben Sheets and Dallas Braden, was strongly being considered for Sunday's start against the White Sox. In the end, the club's decision to play it safe with Anderson, along with a disabled list stint for Sheets, made the decision rather easy.

Braden, who went 4 2/3 innings against the Red Sox on Tuesday in his first start in almost a month due to a bout with elbow tendinitis, will not be limited in any way come Sunday, A's manager Bob Geren said. The A's lefty will be looking for his first victory since throwing a perfect game May 9.

Anderson, meanwhile, will throw 85-95 pitches for Sacramento in what will likely be his final rehab start. The young lefty has been sitting on the DL since June 4 and, given the club's off-day Monday, could potentially rest until officially rejoining the rotation Aug. 2 for a start against the Royals.

"We felt one more outing would benefit him," Geren said. "This still keeps him on track with his rehab program."

Bailey, Davis need more rest

OAKLAND -- Andrew Bailey and Rajai Davis were both unavailable for Saturday's game against the visiting White Sox and, ultimately, deemed day-to-day by manager Bob Geren.

Bailey has been sidelined with upper back strain since experiencing a muscle spasm in his last outing Tuesday, when he gathered a win after tossing two shutout innings against the Red Sox. It marked just the third time all season he's been forced to throw two frames.

Davis, meanwhile, is still battling a left hamstring strain, which caused him to be a late scratch from Friday's lineup. Thus, Geren handed a struggling Gabe Gross the start in right field while also giving way to Matt Watson's third start in left.

Gross entered Saturday's game in a 0-for-16 funk, but he notched an RBI infield single in the first frame against Chicago's Freddy Garcia to snap the hitless streak.

Worth noting

Ryan Sweeney is officially scheduled to undergo season-ending right knee surgery July 30 in Vail, Colo., under the watch of Dr. Richard Steadman. ... The A's will offer a Brett Anderson jersey giveaway to the first 15,000 fans in attendance at Sunday's game.

Ratto: Sheets Exposes Crack in A's Universe

[Ray Ratto](#), CSNBayArea.com

The [A's announced that Ben Sheets](#) is the 83rd Elephant to go on the disabled list in the last four years, which makes it seem like they're just incredibly unlucky. It isn't, of course, because Sheets is one of those risks Billy Beane likes to take — the veteran with gaps in the baseball card.

So the question that needs to be asked here isn't, "Are they unlucky?" or "Is the medical staff failing to keep the boys upright?" or any of the other standard inquiries, but a more significant one, namely:

Has this strategy run its course?

Beane has a long list of guys who have lost their places on the corporate ladder because they broke down in one way or another, and he has brought them almost annually in as place-holders, stopgaps and low-risk gambles. Only they're low-risk and low reward, except for Frank Thomas the year the A's went to the American League Championship Series.

In fact, they usually lead to columns like this, in which those of us still want to think that the organization's biggest goal is to become an influential team in the American League. It may still be Beane's, but this is an idea that simply allows them to lose slowly.

So the way out, then, would be what exactly?

At the risk of dragging in their hated doppelgangers, maybe the answer is to do as the Giants did. Build from the starting rotation out, and stop wasting resources on the Band-Aid Brigade.

For the longest time, the Giants couldn't rebuild from within because of the organizational mandate that they could not go young until Barry Bonds retired. This wasn't Brian Sabean's idea, but he carried it out as employees do, with predictable results like Dave Roberts.

Well, that phase is done, and now they are the younger, sprightlier team people demanded of them. It isn't enough yet to make them look like a serious title contender, but as of this moment they are on pace for 90 wins and 760 runs. Go on, bitch about that.

It means drafting well, true, and it means throwing the kinds of financial resources needed to draft well at the problem. The A's work hard at not having those resources, but whether they get their stadium vote in November or not, this strategy has run its course.

Sheets didn't cheat the A's. He didn't try to bluff his way through, or extort money that wasn't rightly his. He went until his arm started to go south, and though we don't know how south it's gone (this could be more benign than we think, though that isn't the way to bet), it is clearly south of where it was when the season began.

But the pattern that began with, who, John Jaha maybe, is now too overwhelming to ignore. Beane claims that in the Coliseum, he will have to start parceling off all those good starters within five years as he did with Dan Haren, which is actually not true. The entire organization (whether under current ownership or not) can start spending money to make money, and more importantly, to make wins, or it can just keep cashing revenue checks and disappear into the same dustbin of history as the St. Louis Browns.

There. That's as stark as we can paint it. Eighty-three-DLs in four years looks bad, but the A's have courted that number by trying to defy the flaws of the human body, the basic element of baseball.

It's saved them money, but the reward for that is over.

Unless, of course, this is just one more revenue-share-until-we-sell strategy. It's not rewarding, but it will keep John Fisher and Lew Wolff from beans and weenies on Friday nights, and that, as we all know, is what makes the A's the A's these days. It isn't nourishing, but it works until the next plate of beans and weenies.

A's rout White Sox, 10-2

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Jack Cust's patience and penchant for power kept him from making a single out.

The Athletics enjoyed every moment of it as he hit two home runs and walked three times to help Oakland beat the Chicago White Sox 10-2 Saturday.

"Any time you're not heading straight back to the dugout, you have to feel good," Cust said. "I've been able to lay off close pitches and get myself into good hitter's counts. I've been able to make last-minute adjustments with the ball on its way and that means you're seeing the ball longer."

Cust hit two home runs and drew three walks in a game for the first time in his career. Kurt Suzuki, who agreed to terms on a four-year deal with the A's Friday, added a homer of his own and helped the A's win for the eighth time in 10 games.

Daric Barton also drove in two runs, and Kevin Kouzmanoff doubled twice and drove in a run.

Freddy Garcia (9-4) lasted a career-low 1½ innings and had his personal six-game winning streak snapped. He gave up five runs on six hits, walking three and striking out two as the White Sox lost for the fifth time in 17 games.

"He ran into trouble from the beginning," White Sox manager Ozzie Guillen said. "Freddy has been great for us all year long. He was around the plate. He just got hit. I'll take that from him and move on."

Vin Mazzaro (6-2) gave up Ramon Castro's two-run homer in the second. He allowed three hits over six innings, walking three and striking out five.

"Young players usually get better and that's the case with Mazzaro," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He has better command of his pitches, his walks are down and his strikeout ratio is up. He got into trouble early and did a nice job of settling down."

Mazzaro, who won his fourth straight decision, retired 14 of his final 16 batters, and did not allow a hit after Castro's home run.

"I kept pounding the zone," Mazzaro said. "You can't be afraid to throw any of your pitches. My slider started working after that and I went from there. I'm definitely doing a better job of damage control."

Garcia needed a fine running catch by left fielder Juan Pierre to get out of a first-inning, bases-loaded jam. The first four A's hitters reached base safely against the right-hander.

Coco Crisp walked, stole second and scored on Barton's double.

Suzuki singled and Cust walked before Garcia struck out Kouzmanoff and Ellis and nearly avoided further damage when Gross' foul pop landed safely between Omar Vizquel and Alexei Ramirez before driving in a run with an infield single.

"I started off with a walk and that's not the right foot to start on," Garcia said. "That was a lot of pitches for the first inning and I couldn't get anybody out. There's nothing you can do when you don't have it."

Castro's homer tied the game but the A's scored three times in the second on RBI hits by Barton, Suzuki and Kouzmanoff.

Suzuki and Cust homered in consecutive at bats leading off the fourth against Tony Pena. Cust added his second homer against Scott Linebrink in the eighth.

Cust started the season in the minor leagues and then hit two homers over his first 42 games following his May 15 call-up. He's hit six in his last 10 games and is three away from 100 in his career.

"He's in a zone," Mazzaro said. "He's swinging it well and seeing the ball. It's nice to get the run support."

Brad Ziegler threw two scoreless innings and Ross Wolf pitched a perfect ninth to complete the combined four-hitter.

Notes: The A's improved to an AL-best 23-10 in day games. ...

The White Sox had won 11 of their last 12 day games. ... Chicago OF Alex Rios went 1 for 2 and improved his AL-best day batting average to .434 (43-99). ... Garcia also had an eight-game winning streak against AL West teams stopped. ... Gross ended an 0 for 16 streak with his infield single in the first. ... A's RHP Ben Sheets was placed on the 15-day DL before the game with a strained right elbow. The A's recalled Cedrick Bowers to replace Sheets.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Tacoma jumps on Sacramento early for victory

By Kevin Poveda / Sacramento River Cats

The Sacramento River Cats snapped their five-game winning streak Saturday night as they fell 6-4 to the host Tacoma Rainiers.

The River Cats scored in the first when first baseman Chris Carter's double off Tacoma starter Andrew Baldwin scored Travis Buck. However, the River Cats then went five consecutive innings without scoring a run. In the meantime, Tacoma batters had a field day on River Cats pitcher Kyle Middleton.

Middleton, who came into the game at 6-5 with a 2.83 ERA, has been consistent throughout the entire season for Sacramento, and at one point pitched 23.0 consecutive scoreless innings. However, Saturday was not the right-hander's night, as he allowed six runs (all earned) off of nine hits through 3.2 innings of pitching.

Tacoma got things started in the first against Middleton on consecutive hits by Chris Woodward and Matt Mangini, scoring one run in the process. The inning didn't end there for the Rainiers, as first baseman Brad Nelson hit a two-run home run to extend the lead to 3-1.

Middleton allowed his second home run of the game in the following inning to Tacoma right fielder Mike Wilson. After giving up consecutive doubles in the third and two singles in the fourth, reliever Jared Lansford took over for Sacramento.

Despite a poor start from Middleton, and the absence of Sacramento's strong hitting, the River Cats gave up only two more hits and zero runs throughout the remainder of the game, setting things up perfectly for another late-game comeback.

After getting one run in the seventh, the River Cats came into the ninth trailing 6-2 and started things off on the right track with a Chris Carter single. Tacoma pitcher Levalle Speigner then walked Dallas McPherson before Jeff Baisley's single scored

Carter. The River Cats scored one more run, and had the winning run on first base in Corey Wimberly. However Travis Buck grounded out to second base ending the game.

The River Cats, who came into today's game 1.0 games ahead of the Fresno Grizzlies for the division lead, are now tied for first after the Grizzlies beat Reno 6-2. Sacramento will finish out their series with Tacoma on Monday before coming home on Tuesday to face Colorado Springs at Raley Field.

RockHounds top Missions in extra innings

Shawn Shroyer, Midland Reporter-Telegram

Regarded as the sleeping giant in the Texas League South Division, the Midland RockHounds are beginning to wake up.

With a 2-1 victory on Saturday at Citibank Ballpark in the 10th inning against the San Antonio Missions, the RockHounds claimed their fourth straight victory. The four-game streak is a season high for the 'Hounds, who got their offense clicking in the 10th inning after being one-hit the first seven innings by Missions starter Tyler Lumsden.

With one out, the bases loaded and Colt Hynes (0-1) on the mound for the Missions, RockHounds first baseman Val Majewski stepped to the plate and punched a 3-1 pitch through the middle to drive in Jemile Weeks for the winning run.

With the game-winning hit, Majewski extended his hitting streak to seven games.

"He's been swinging the bat good and he's been hitting when he gets a pitch to hit," RockHounds manager Darren Bush said. "He's having some good swings."

Weeks got the inning going with a one-out single to left, but nearly ended the rally before it got started.

With Josh Horton at the plate, Weeks got caught drifting too far between first and second and was hung out to dry, but after shifting back toward first base, he bolted for second and avoided the tag.

"With one out, he gets us going," Bush said. "He made a mistake there on the base paths, but he was able to make up for it with his speed."

With Horton still at the plate, Hynes uncorked a wild pitch to move Weeks up to third. So when Horton was hit by a pitch, the Missions elected to walk Cardenas intentionally for the second time in the game and set the table for Majewski.

The RockHounds benefited from another Missions wild pitch earlier in the game when starter Tyler Lumsden threw one to the backstop with runners on second and third. Alex Valdez came in to score on the play and give the RockHounds a lead that would last until the Missions tied it in the seventh.

Although Derrick Gordon allowed one run in his 1 2/3 innings of relief for the RockHounds, overall it was a solid outing for the bullpen. After Matt Wright's 5 1/3 innings of shutout ball, Gordon, Neil Wagner and Mickey Storey (3-3) combined to hold the Missions to two hits and a walk in 4 2/3 innings.

"They did a great job," Bush said. "They attacked the strike zone, kept the ball down and did just what we expected of them."

NOTEBOOK

ROCKHOUNDS BITES: Jemile Weeks returned to the lineup for the RockHounds on Saturday, starting at second base. After playing in back-to-back games on Wednesday and Thursday, Weeks took Friday off. He went 2 for 5 with a pair of singles. He also made a nifty stop on a hard grounder up the middle. With one out in the eighth and leadoff man Quintin Berry at the plate, Weeks made a diving stop to his right on a ball many second baseman would have come up short on. "That was a

great play right there with a player with above average speed at the plate," RockHounds manager Darren Bush said. "He came up with it and threw him out by two steps. That's an impressive play." ... After three straight solid starts to begin July, RockHounds starter Anthony Capra suffered a setback his last time out at Corpus Christi. Capra lasted just 1 2/3 innings, allowing two runs on three hits and four walks. In his three start leading up to that outing, Capra was 0-0 with a 2.08 ERA. He is in search of his first win since June 12, although he's only had three sub par starts since.

TODAY'S PROBABLE PITCHERS: San Antonio Missions (11-17) -- Corey Kluber (4-6, 3.53); Midland RockHounds (16-12) -- Anthony Capra (5-7, 4.14)

Stockton Victimized By Visalia 12-4

VISALIA, Calif. - The Stockton Ports will be very glad when their season-series with the Visalia Rawhide concludes following Sunday's game. On Saturday night at Recreation Park, the Rawhide scored 11 runs over the first three innings and took advantage of three Ports errors, handing Stockton a 12-4 loss which gives the Ports a record of 8-19 on the year versus Visalia. The loss also means that Stockton's series winning streak will end at four.

Visalia wasted no time in jumping on Ports starter Ben Hornbeck (3-3) in the first. After Hornbeck walked Dan Kaczrowski to start the frame, Alfredo Marte hit a two-run homer to left-center to put the Rawhide on the board. Hornbeck would give up two more singles in the inning, but get back-to-back strikeouts of Josh Ford and Kyle Green to end the frame.

In the second, Visalia kept the runs coming. With one out, Niko Gallego and Kaczrowski got back-to-back singles followed by a walk to Marte that loaded the bases. After striking out Marc Krauss for the second out, Hornbeck gave up a bases-clearing double to Paul Goldschmidt to make it a 5-0 ballgame.

The Rawhide broke the game wide open in the third. Ford reached on a Hornbeck throwing error to start the inning followed by a Green single to put two aboard. Alberto Diaz came up next and hit what looked to be a double-play ball to short, but the ball was misplayed by Ports shortstop Grant Green, an error that resulted in a run scoring. Two batters later, Kaczrowski drove in a run with a sac-fly to center. Marte followed with an RBI single to right to make it 8-0. After a Krauss single, Goldschmidt came up and hit his league-leading 27th home run of the season over the left field fence to give the Rawhide a commanding 11-0 advantage.

Hornbeck would take the loss and suffer his worst outing of the year, going three innings and allowing 11 runs (five earned) on 10 hits while walking two and striking out three. Goldschmidt had six RBI in the first three innings.

Stockton's offense attempted to chip away at the large deficit beginning in the fourth. After Rawhide starter Eric Smith (1-2) walked Stephen Parker to start the inning, Mike Spina hit his team-leading 19th home run of the season to put the Ports on the board.

The Ports added to their run total in the fifth. After back-to-back singles from David Thomas and Ryan Ortiz, Jermaine Mitchell doubled to left to score Thomas and make it 11-3. Green came up next and grounded out to short to drive in Ortiz and make it an 11-4 ballgame.

Four runs, however, was all the Ports would get on the night. All four runs came off Smith who earned his first Cal-League win, going five innings and allowing seven hits while striking out one.

Chase Anderson came on to start the sixth for the Rawhide and retired nine of the 10 batters he faced while striking out seven over three innings of work.

A bright spot on the night for Stockton was the continued success of reliever Lance Sewell, who tossed three near-perfect innings. Sewell retired nine of the 10 he faced. The only batter he didn't retire, Gallego, reached on a fielding error.

Visalia added a run in the seventh as Gallego drove in Green with an RBI single off Ports reliever Brett Hunter to make it 12-4. It was the only run allowed by Hunter in 1.1 innings of work. For the second time in four games, the Ports used infielder Brandon Pinkney to pitch. Pinkney came on in the eighth with the bases loaded and one out and induced an inning-ending double-play off the bat of Diaz.

The Ports and Rawhide will play the 28th and final game of their season series on Sunday night at Recreation Park. Justin Murray (6-3, 4.30 ERA) will try and help the Ports avoid the sweep, opposed by Rawhide left-hander Dan Taylor (4-3, 6.25 ERA). First pitch is set for 6:05 p.m. PDT.

Krol, Cougars Stumble vs. Loons

Kane County drops 4th straight as ace lefty struggles

MIDLAND, Mich. – The Kane County Cougars suffered their fourth straight loss Saturday night with a 6-4 defeat at the hands of the Great Lakes Loons at Dow Diamond. Ian Krol got touched for six runs in three innings, and the Cougars never recovered.

Krol (7-4) labored through his worst outing of the season. He had given up two homers all season entering the outing and allowed two Saturday against the Loons, who lead the league in round-trippers. Krol worked a 1-2-3 first inning but gave up three in the second and three in the third, giving up a season-high seven hits and failing to record a strikeout for the first time this season. Max Peterson and Ryan Doolittle combined for five innings of one-hit shutout relief to give the Cougars a chance.

Trailing early, the Cougars scored in three straight innings to make a run. Conner Crumbliss doubled home Jose Crisotomo in the second, Max Stassi launched a two-run homer -- his 12th -- in the fourth and Anthony Aliotti delivered a sacrifice fly in the fifth to make it 6-4, but that became the final. The Cougars stranded two in the fifth during that rally and also had two on with one out in the eighth but could not score. Elisaul Pimentel (9-3) won it, and Steve Ames notched his eighth save.

The Cougars (16-12, 48-49) and Loons (23-5, 66-31) play Game 2 of their series Sunday afternoon at 2:05 CT. Murphy Smith (5-0, 4.93) will oppose Josh Wall (7-4, 3.53). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at www.kccougars.com with pre-game coverage starting at 1:50 p.m.