

A's News Clips, Sunday, August 1, 2010

Mr. Perfect Dallas Braden finishes task at hand as Oakland A's stymie Chicago White Sox

By Joet Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

For the first time since his May 9 perfect game, Dallas Braden was still on the mound when the ninth inning rolled around.

And though there wasn't nearly as much at stake for the A's left-hander Saturday night, Braden's impressive work in a 6-2 victory over the Chicago White Sox reminded Oakland manager Bob Geren of that historic afternoon.

Braden threw his third complete game of the season as the A's halted the White Sox's 12-game home winning streak before 35,852 fans at U.S. Cellular Field.

"He really threw the ball as well as in his perfect game," Geren said. "He had that same kind of command of his pitches. That was as good as he's looked in a long time."

Braden followed up his perfecto against the Tampa Bay Rays with an eight-inning complete game in a 4-0 loss to the Los Angeles Angels on May 14.

Since then, he hadn't gone more than 6¹/₃ innings, struggling due to a combination of injuries, poor run support and flat-out ineffectiveness.

But he's showing signs of turning the corner.

After beating the White Sox on July 25 in Oakland to snap a nine-start winless streak, Braden came back and scattered eight hits Saturday, spotting his fastball to both sides of the plate and keeping the White Sox off-balance with his changeup.

More than anything, Braden (6-7) was pleased that Geren showed the confidence to send him out for the ninth inning even though his pitch count was at 101. He allowed Dayan Viciedo's one-out double but closed things out, finishing with a season-high 111 pitches.

"It's huge," Braden said. "That's the confidence we're all seeking from our manager. It's good to see it come out. More times than not, it's safe to go for the matchups (in the late innings)."

The A's provided Braden some cushion thanks to a four-run second against lefty John Danks (11-8), who lost for the first time against Oakland in six career starts.

Rajai Davis and Matt Carson each had an RBI single, and Daric Barton delivered a bases-loaded single to score two more for a 4-0 lead.

An inning later, Kevin Kouzmanoff drilled a solo homer deep to straightaway center, part of a 3-for-5 night that left him a triple short of the cycle.

A night earlier, Barton barely missed a grand slam when his deep drive was caught at the fence in right-center.

"That was a bomb," Geren said of Kouzmanoff's blast. "I thought Barton hit his ball equally well. Maybe Kooz has got a few pounds on him."

Braden made things stand, his only mistake coming when he surrendered Andruw Jones' two-run homer in the seventh.

That same inning, Juan Pierre hit a hard comebacker that deflected off Braden's glove but got him in the hip, as well. Geren and assistant trainer Walt Horn came out to check on Braden.

"Frankly, I was kind of irritated," Braden said. "I was bitter. ... I said, 'It hit me in the neck. Leave me alone.' "

Catcher Kurt Suzuki is well aware of that stubbornness in the lefty.

"He really wanted to go out and finish the game," Suzuki said.

The A's posted their first winning record in July (14-10) since 2006.

They'll send Gio Gonzalez to the mound this afternoon as they go for the series victory. Saturday's loss still left the White Sox 30-11 over their past 41 games.

A's update: What's in name? Don't ask Boof Bonser

By Joe Stiglich_Oakland Tribune

What's in a name? Don't ask Boof Bonser

CHICAGO — Right-hander Boof Bonser was promoted from Triple-A Sacramento on Saturday, giving the A's a long reliever for the bullpen and giving Coco Crisp a battle for most entertaining name on the roster.

Bonser, 28, was signed to a minor league deal July 2 after he was designated for assignment by the Boston Red Sox. He made five starts for Sacramento, going 2-1 with a 4.56 ERA, but he will pitch in relief for Oakland.

Left-hander Cedrick Bowers was sent down to Sacramento and Ben Sheets was transferred to the 60-day disabled list to clear a spot for Bonser on the 40-man roster.

"He gives me some experience and some length (to pitch multiple innings)," manager Bob Geren said before a 6-2 win over the Chicago White Sox.

Bonser was a first-round draft pick of the Giants in 2000 but was shipped to Minnesota in November 2003 with pitchers Joe Nathan and Francisco Liriano in exchange for catcher A.J. Pierzynski.

He went 18-25 with a 5.12 ERA with the Twins in 96 games (60 starts) from 2006-08, then missed all of last season recovering from shoulder surgery and was traded to Boston in December.

"I'm back in the Bay Area again, I guess you can say," Bonser said.

Born John Paul Bonser, his mother nicknamed him "Boof" at an early age.

Why?

"I have no idea," Bonser said. "I didn't want to ask either."

In 2000, he legally changed his first name since everybody called him Boof anyway.

There were a flurry of deals as Saturday's 1 p.m. non-waiver trade deadline approached, but the A's stood pat as expected.

A published report claimed the White Sox were trying to acquire reliever Michael Wuertz at the last minute, but the A's made it clear to suitors that they weren't keen on dealing Wuertz, who is signed through the 2011 season.

Infielder Adam Rosales stayed at his parents' house in nearby Park Ridge, Ill., on Thursday and Friday night. Among the other guests were his girlfriend, Callie, two sisters visiting from Salt Lake City, a niece and a nephew.

All told, there were nine people crammed into the four-bedroom home. It was déjà vu for Rosales, who grew up in the same house as one of five siblings.

"It's a packed house," he said. "But there's a lot of laughs and catching up on memories."

Chin Music: Boof Bonser joins A's bullpen, Cedrick Bowers sent down, and other tidbits

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 7/31/2010 3:27PM

Right-hander Boof Bonser — remember him? — was called up by the A's to fill a long relief role in the bullpen. He arrived shortly before batting practice today and should be available tonight against the White Sox. Lefty Cedrick Bowers was sent down, and to make room for Bonser on the 40-man roster, Ben Sheets was transferred to the 60-day DL. Never a dull moment on the A's transaction wire ...

Bay Area fans will recall Bonser, now 28, was a first-round pick of the Giants out of high school back in 2000. He cracked the big leagues with Minnesota in 2006 and pitched in both starting and relief duty through 2008. He missed all of last season while recovering from shoulder surgery and was traded to Boston in December. After making just two relief appearances with the Red Sox, he was designated for assignment, opted to become a free agent and signed a minor league deal with Oakland on July 2.

"He gives me some experience and some length (to throw multiple innings)," manager Bob Geren said. "He threw the ball well in Sacramento. The fact that he was starting there and threw 99 pitches in his last start, that's a bonus for me (because) he can go three, four, five innings."

As I've mentioned before, it's always interesting when new players arrive for the first time and walk through the clubhouse meeting people and getting acclimated. It's just like anybody's first day at the office ...

—Worth noting from today's lineup: Adam Rosales gets the start at shortstop and Rajai Davis moves up from eighth to seventh in the batting order. "He's been swinging the bat pretty well, especially against lefties," Geren said of Davis. Left-hander John Danks is starting for Chicago.

—Ryan Sweeney had right knee surgery Friday but Geren didn't have details on it.

Tonight's lineups:

A's — Crisp CF, Barton 1B, Suzuki C, Kouzmanoff 3B, Cust DH, Rosales SS, Davis LF, Ellis 2B, Carson RF; Braden LHP.

White Sox — Pierre LF, Ramirez SS, Rios CF, Konerko 1B, Quentin DH, Pierzynski C, Vicedo 3B, Jones RF, Beckham 2B; Danks LHP.

Herhold: A question and answer session on baseball in San Jose

By Scott Herhold, Mercury News Columnist

The dominant theme at San Jose City Hall over the past week has been baseball — specifically, the city's quest to land a ballpark for the A's. The better metaphor might have come from football: A seeming fumble by the offensive team was recovered and advanced down the field.

Is all well that ends well? Yes. But the head-scratching was inevitable when Mayor Chuck Reed announced he would pursue a ballot measure for an A's ballpark — only to reverse direction after Major League Baseball promised to help pay for a later election if necessary.

Here are a few questions and answers to elucidate the affair. (And a word about my bias: I'm for a downtown A's ballpark, even though I'm a National League fan. It would do much for San Jose's sometimes-beleaguered identity.)

Did A's owner Lew Wolff plan this as a deliberate ploy?

You have to assume the answer is yes. Wolff at least thought through the permutations before persuading Reed to push for an election (remember: The A's owner is driving this train). If Wolff got a reaction from baseball — which he did — it would help him. If it went to a vote in San Jose and won, it would give him leverage both with other owners and the city. Even a loss at the polls could help define the future. What Wolff, 74, could not take was more of the purgatory of waiting. He wants to see a ballpark in his lifetime.

Why was this played out in the open? Couldn't the threat of a ballot measure have been delivered privately to MLB?

Part of this has to do with the personality of Bud Selig, baseball's commissioner and Wolff's old fraternity brother. Selig is a busy man, with much on his plate. But he is sensitive to his image in the media, a fact Wolff knows.

An open announcement of a ballot measure push was thus designed to force his response. The most likely way that the A's will come to San Jose is in a brokered settlement with the San Francisco Giants, who hold Major League Baseball's territorial rights to the South Bay. And MLB's pledge to foot part of the bill for a future election implies that the brokered option is still on the table.

Did Reed lose political capital in reversing course so quickly?

You can't say, "It's now or never," as Reed did, and then back off without raising questions. It clearly is not now or never. But the loss of political capital is minimal. Reed can at least make the case that he got a response from MLB and thus moved matters forward. (A cynic would say the forward fumble theory applies.)

What was odd — but maybe explainable if you see the ballot measure as a gambit — was that the mayor's approach seemed to lean toward the passive.

After Reed first announced his drive for a ballot measure, he went off to celebrate his 40th wedding anniversary with his wife, letting aides explain one of the most momentous moves of his mayoralty. The mayor left a phone message for officials at Major League Baseball. But his top aide, Pete Furman, says he doesn't believe the message spelled out Reed's plans for a ballot measure.

How big were the risks for San Jose?

They were substantial. Although early polls favor a ballpark — particularly when language about "no new taxes" is thrown in — they cannot fully predict the effects of an organized opposition, which could have been funded by the Giants. That was one reason MLB criticized the mayor's move.

Unlike the 49ers ballot initiative in Santa Clara, San Jose's legalistic ballot language could easily have been attacked for leaving too many unanswered questions. And a defeat in November might well have doomed the chances of getting a ballpark for a decade or more.

How much does the Major League Baseball promise mean?

This depends on whether you judge a glass to be half-empty or half-full. Certainly, the MLB pledge to help with election costs doesn't commit Selig to San Jose. He could decide that it's too difficult to deal with the territorial rights issue.

But remember, the history of the Expos moving from Montreal to Washington, D.C., suggests that baseball can dither at length before a deal comes together. Once it does, it's in MLB's interests to get behind the deal squarely. That has to be San Jose's hope.

Braden's complete game cools White Sox at home

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Billy Beane had said for more than a month that the A's weren't going to wheel and deal at the trade deadline, and Saturday came and went without a peep from Oakland.

The A's made far more noise on the field, with a 6-2 victory that ended the White Sox's 12-game home winning streak. Many of the A's felt going into the break that getting back Dallas Braden, Brett Anderson and outfielder Conor Jackson would be like adding pieces via trades, anyway, and on Saturday, Braden, in his third start since coming off the disabled list, put together his best effort since his May 9 perfect game, with a complete-game win.

"He really threw the ball as well as the perfect game," Oakland manager Bob Geren said. "He had that kind of command. That's as good as he's looked in a long time."

"Dallas pitched a great game," said A's third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff, who had three hits, including a homer. "He was busting his tail, making pitches he was supposed to make."

Braden allowed eight hits, including a two-run homer by Andruw Jones in the seventh, and he walked one and struck out five. It was his second win in a row against Chicago.

He's usually good for one nervous moment per start, and on Saturday, it came on a Juan Pierre liner at Braden's midsection in the seventh. The ball got some of Braden's hip and some of his glove as he knocked it down. He got checked out, he was fine, and he made it all the way through with 111 pitches, big for a team with closer Andrew Bailey on the DL.

As usual, Braden helped himself with his control of the running game, picking off Jones in the fifth, and he made a very nice play to start the ninth, dashing to first to take the feed from Daric Barton on a grounder to first by A.J. Pierzynski.

Leading up to the deadline, there was interest in Oakland players, particularly relievers Michael Wuertz and Craig Breslow, but the A's believe they are building something for the next several years and didn't want to part with any key pieces.

"I think I made it clear leading up to this that we weren't planning on doing anything," Beane said by phone after the deadline. "The inquiries we had were on players we weren't interested in moving."

The A's did make one move Saturday, sending out left-handed reliever Cedrick Bowers and bringing up former Giants first-round pick Boof Bonser. Bonser, 28, had been starting at Triple-A Sacramento, but he'll provide long and middle relief for Oakland.

Bonser, who pitched for the Twins from 2006 to 2009, had declined a minor-league assignment with Boston before signing with Oakland, and he went 2-1 with a 4.56 ERA in five starts with Sacramento. He was the Giants' top pick in 2000, but he went to the Twins in the Joe Nathan deal.

"Back in the Bay Area, I guess," he said with a smile.

Breslow comes up aces

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Craig Breslow was a wanted man at the trade deadline, with more than a few teams calling about the left-handed reliever.

"It's better to be in this position than the guy who's getting waived or released," Breslow said with a grin. The A's picked him up on waivers from the Twins last season.

He's staying put, which makes sense, because Breslow has been effective in his time in Oakland, and he's affordable - that's the sort of player the A's are trying to get, not deal. And now that Breslow feels as if he's found a place where he might stay for a while, he'd like to add a local element to his Strike 3 Foundation, which benefits pediatric cancer research. Breslow's sister, **Lesley**, had cancer as a child but has recovered fully and recently had her first baby.

So Breslow is hosting a fun fundraising event from 7 to 10 p.m. on Wednesday at the Anchor Steam Brewery in San Francisco, with guest speaker **Jeff Ma**, blackjack expert and the basis for the main character in the movie "21." Ma will give a tutorial on card counting.

"It's fun whether you play blackjack or not," Breslow said. "His stories are amazing, if anyone is looking to be entertained and also help a worthwhile charity."

Appetizers will be served, and there will be brewery tours with unlimited tastings. There also will be a silent auction that includes items from local teams, as well as appearances from most of the A's team, including All-Stars **Andrew Bailey** and **Trevor Cahill**.

Tickets are \$100 and all proceeds help pediatric cancer research; see strike3foundation.org for more information.

Briefly: Ryan Sweeney had patella-tendon surgery on his right knee Friday, two A's sources said, but that doesn't preclude surgery on the left at some point. ... Triple-A Sacramento left-handers **Brad Kilby** and **Lenny DiNardo** have had season-ending surgeries, Kilby on his shoulder and DiNardo on his elbow.

A's leading off

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

No extra credit: The A's entered Saturday with 266 extra-base hits, second fewest in the league, and then all five of their hits in the second inning were singles. Kevin Kouzmanoff homered in the third, Oakland's first extra-base hit of the series.

Drumbeat: As expected, no deals - but Boof Bonser called up

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Chicago 7/31/2010 3:00PM

The A's passed the trade deadline quietly for just the second time in Billy Beane's 13 years as general manager. Not that there weren't rumors, including one erroneous suggestion on the MLB Network that had Michael Wuertz going to the White Sox. Wuertz shook his head and laughed at that one; I'm not sure if he's amused or irritated by the relentless Chicago media after playing for the Cubs, or maybe both.

Beane had said for more than a month, way before Ben Sheets was hurt, that the A's weren't planning to do anything. They would have to have been blown away by an offer to do something other than move a bit part, and no one was looking to overwhelm the A's for Craig Breslow or Coco Crisp it seems.

The main reason Oakland remained quiet: Beane and the rest of the A's front office like the way the A's are heading in the next few years and they want to hang onto their best pieces. Interest in Breslow was strong, but the A's looked at it like: He's good, he's relatively inexpensive - that's the kind of guy we want, why would we deal him?

The team did make one transaction, though; Boof Bonser, the onetime Giants No. 1 pick, was called up from Triple-A Sacramento and he'll be a long-man, middle-reliever type, plus provide a bit of experience for what is a very young staff now that Ben Sheets and Justin Duchscher are on the DL.

Last year, Russ Springer had the wise old veteran role in the bullpen until he was traded, and while Bonser isn't that old, he's got a similar look, just shorter and stouter. If you compressed Springer a little, maybe, you'd get Bonser. Same beard, similar features.

Bonser's available tonight, and with the bullpen doing some extra work the past two nights, we might well see him if Dallas Braden doesn't go more than five-plus. Bonser, 28, was 2-1 with a 4.56 ERA in five starts at Sacramento. Lefty Cedric Bowers, human yo-yo, was sent back to Sacramento.

Andrew Bailey won't throw for four days, at least, but manager Bob Geren said that doesn't preclude Bailey from rejoining the team for the Texas series on Friday.

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

It's nice Rosales is in; as usual in Chicago, he's got a huge number of family and friends in attendance. I waded through a sea of Rosales A's jerseys on my way out of the ballpark last night. Kinda neat, really - I don't think I've seen a turnout like that for a player since Tommy Everidge came up and Sonoma showed up at the Coliseum. (Jonny Gomes still brings much of Petaluma along to the Coliseum, too.)

Early outburst, Braden key A's win

Four-run second gives starter momentum to go distance

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

CHICAGO -- Dallas Braden's post-perfecto era, once a winless, injury-filled time for the A's lefty, has suddenly started to turn into something of a feel-good ride.

The A's lefty, following his perfect game on May 9, endured nine consecutive outings without a win and also missed a handful of starts due to a bout with elbow tendinitis.

But on Saturday, when the White Sox were looking for their 13th straight home victory at U.S. Cellular Field, Braden threw just his second nine-inning complete game -- his first and most recent being the perfecto -- while notching his second straight win and guiding the A's to a 6-2 victory in Chicago.

The wins are nice, he said, but -- aside from the elbow setback -- Braden insists he's "felt good all along" since that fateful May day.

"That's just the way the game is," Braden said. "Sometimes you go in there and feel like you have nothing and come out on top, and sometimes you feel great and don't see an out."

On Saturday, he felt great *and* saw lots of outs using a rather simple formula.

"Fastball, changeup -- the off-balance factor, not really giving them the opportunity to square it up," he explained. "A little slower, a little lower, a little higher, then blow it by them."

"He really threw the ball as well as his perfect game," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He had the same kind of command. That was as good as he's looked in a long time. He had a real good feel for both sides of the plate, and that's a real good hitting team."

Braden scattered eight hits while allowing two runs -- both courtesy of a seventh-inning, two-run homer from Andruw Jones -- and walking two with eight strikeouts.

"His ball had good movement, keeping it in and out," batterymate Kurt Suzuki said. "He made one mistake all game, and it got hit. I know he feels the best he's felt since after the perfect game, so if he feels good, that's the main thing."

"Dallas was outstanding," White Sox manager Ozzie Guillen said. "I could have bet we would have a better game against him today than we did in Oakland. He threw the ball very well, and his changeup was outstanding. We kept chasing changeups behind in the count. His cutter was very good. He did very well."

Braden's efforts were aided early by a pesky A's offense, which strung together five hits and a walk in a four-run second against Chicago's John Danks, who gave up five runs in 6 2/3 innings of work. Oakland's fifth run came courtesy of a first-pitch solo shot from Kevin Kouzmanoff -- his 10th long ball of the year -- to center field.

The A's third baseman fell a triple shy of hitting for the cycle with family in attendance, and his eighth-inning double eventually resulted in a run, thanks to a sacrifice fly from Mark Ellis. It also represented a dose of insurance following Jones' blast in the previous frame.

"We always want the momentum on our side offensively and defensively," Kouzmanoff said. "In that situation I was just looking for a pitch to handle up over the plate and fortunately I got it and hit it for a double. We were all just trying to get on base so the guy behind us would drive us in."

It proved to be quite enough for Braden, who tossed 111 pitches in the effort while also shaking off a seventh-inning liner hit right at him -- near his hip -- off the bat of Juan Pierre. The incident, which put Pierre on first base, forced Geren and assistant trainer Walt Horn out to the mound, where Braden nicely shooed them away.

"Frankly, I was kind of irritated," he said. "I was bitter. They asked me where it hit me, and I said, 'It hit me in the neck. I feel fine. Leave me alone.' Obviously, they have to make that trip out there, and I understand. I was just [upset] because it's one of those unnecessary mound visits at times that just throws off the rhythm. ... I would like to think, unless I'm on the ground and not moving or dead, then don't pull me out."

It didn't shake Braden one bit, nor did it influence Geren to resort to his bullpen -- an overworked one missing the injured Andrew Bailey.

"That was important, especially with a day game the next day," the A's skipper said. "He threw the ball as well as anyone in the bullpen was throwing."

"That's huge," Braden said. "That's always a big relief when we can give those guys a day. That's probably the biggest thing I'm happy about -- we're fresh."

He also called the opportunity to finish the game "the confidence that we're all seeking from our manager."

"He really wanted to go out and finish it," Suzuki said. "He's a competitor. Everyone knows that about him."

At the same time, it's one start. And even though it came against the hot-hitting White Sox within the confines of their own home, the win wasn't exactly of the special sorts for Braden, always keeping things in perspective.

"We've got a long road ahead," he said. "I don't think we're ready to start putting emphasis on one single game. We like to win a series, and you play a series at a time. And in order to do that, you play one game at a time, but it's not Game 7 every time out."

A's maintain status quo past Deadline

'Continuity' important for second-half development

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

CHICAGO -- Card games and phone apps, rather than live television coverage of the impending Trade Deadline, proved to be the form of entertainment in the A's clubhouse Saturday at U.S. Cellular Field.

Their no-fuss attitude toward baseball's anticipated Deadline was rather fitting, as Oakland came out of the ordeal the same way it entered, with no trades attached to its name.

It was just a month ago general manager Billy Beane expressed an interest in staying the course with his young talent through Saturday's non-waiver Trade Deadline and beyond. Given Beane's well-documented history in the trade market, though, most everyone in the baseball community knew nothing could be ruled out, especially in July.

So for Beane not to pull the trigger may have simply continued a trend of expecting the unexpected.

However, manager Bob Geren believes that, even though Oakland's head honcho didn't partake in his usual wheeling and dealing, the feeling in the clubhouse is that he did in a sense.

"It feels like we have new additions, really, with Brett Anderson back and Conor Jackson coming back," Geren said. "We have guys that are going to get stronger."

That doesn't mean trades still can't happen, though.

Over the next month, deals involving players on the 40-man roster cannot be made unless the players already have cleared waivers. A player exposed to waivers can be claimed by any team and -- if there are multiple claims -- the player would be offered to the team with the worst record.

At that point, a team has 48 hours to either work out a trade with the claiming club or pull the player off waivers. A player can only be pulled back from waivers once, but if he clears waivers either the first or a second time through, a team can attempt to trade him to any club.

Still, Beane and Co. like where this young A's team is headed.

"I'd like to provide a little bit of continuity going into the end of the season and give us a chance to see some of the guys that we originally thought were going to play more to actually play together," Beane said recently. "We've hung in there pretty well."

That's a credit to several impact players, among them relievers Craig Breslow and Michael Wuertz, both of whom swirled the rumor mill in past weeks but remained in green and gold. Assistant general manager David Forst confirmed earlier in the week that both received heavy interest, but the A's weren't willing to part with either.

The only other possible trade candidate was Ben Sheets. But the veteran righty, owner of a \$10 million contract and looming free-agent status, learned Wednesday he's out for the year with yet another torn flexor tendon, subsequently putting an end to any potential interest.

Thus, the A's feel confident in moving forward with the youthful band of brothers currently in tow. That will only continue, Beane has said, with improved health -- something the A's hope to see more of in the second half.

South Side rubber match pits young hurlers

By Matt Fortuna / MLB.com

Perhaps the only thing rarer than a White Sox home loss recently is a bad outing from Gavin Floyd.

Following the White Sox 6-2 loss to the Athletics at U.S. Cellular Field on Saturday, Floyd will try to ensure that lightning doesn't strike twice on the South Side on Sunday against Oakland.

The 27-year-old right-hander has not given up more than two earned runs in any of his past 10 starts, a stretch that has seen him go 4-2 with a 1.04 ERA.

Floyd has not given up a run in either of his last two outings, both of which were seven-inning gems against the Mariners. He has yet to face the A's this season, but in four career starts, he is 2-0 with a 1.33 ERA.

Oakland's win Saturday snapped the White Sox 12-game winning streak at U.S. Cellular Field and was just their second home loss in their last 21 home games.

Gio Gonzalez will try to turn that into a losing streak when he takes the hill for the A's, who will look to finish their six-game road trip through Texas and Chicago 3-3.

Gonzalez, who has not lost since July 7, will be put to the test for the second straight start after getting outdueled by Cliff Lee on Tuesday. The 24-year-old southpaw enters 3-1 with a 2.53 ERA over his last seven starts.

Drafted by the White Sox in the first round in 2004 (38th overall), Gonzalez is in his first full season as a starter. He is 0-2 with a 12.96 ERA against the White Sox for his career, although he has not faced them this season.

Gonzalez's season ERA (3.64) is actually lower than Floyd's (3.66).

A's: Bonser back in Majors

Right-hander Boof Bonser was promoted from Triple-A Sacramento on Saturday and left-hander Cedrick Bowers was optioned back to Sacramento. Ben Sheets was transferred to the 60-day disabled list to make room for Bonser on the 40-man roster. Sheets is out for the season with a torn flexor tendon in his right elbow. Bonser, claimed off waivers July 2, went 2-1 with a 4.56 ERA in five starts with Sacramento. Manager Bob Geren said Bonser will be used out of the bullpen.

White Sox: Teahen begins rehab assignment

Mark Teahen started his Minor League injury rehab assignment with Triple-A Charlotte as a designated hitter against Rochester on Saturday night. Teahen expects the assignment to last at least part of the White Sox's upcoming eight-game road trip to Detroit and Baltimore, which starts with a doubleheader Tuesday against the Tigers. Teahen was placed on the 15-day DL on June 1 (retroactive to May 31) with a fractured right middle finger. ... General manager Kenny Williams said the White Sox had a deal in place on Friday to acquire first baseman Lance Berkman from the Astros, but Berkman used his no-trade veto power to squash the deal before moving on to the Yankees.

Worth noting

Dallas Braden's complete game Saturday was his third of the season. ... Oakland's 14-10 record in July was its best since 2005, when it went 20-6, and was its first winning July since 2006 (14-13).

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Buck homer, solid pitching lifts Sacramento

By Kevin Poveda / Sacramento River Cats

The Sacramento River Cats won for the second time in as many nights at Raley Field, defeating the Las Vegas 51s 4-1 in the first of a four-game series.

River Cats starter Tyson Ross, who dominated in his previous two starts throwing 5.0 shutout innings in both, entered Saturday with an 11.0 inning scoreless streak.

Ross started strong, retiring the first three batters, two on strikeouts. However, the right-hander found himself in trouble in consecutive innings, loading the bases in both the second and third. Ross, however, worked out of both jams and finished after allowing one run in 4.2 innings, walking three and striking out two.

Las Vegas got on the board in Ross' final inning of work. After giving up a single to Las Vegas shortstop Mike McCoy, Ross hit Jarret Hoffpauir with a pitch, putting Ross in a sticky situation again. After J.P. Arencibia grounded into a double play, Mike Jacobs followed with a single to center field to score Jarret Hoffpauir.

The River Cats wasted no time making their comeback, as Travis Buck and Adam Heether both got on base in the fifth with a single and a walk. A Josh Donaldson single loaded up the bases for Sacramento catcher Anthony Recker. Recker singled to center, scoring Adam Heether and tying the game.

Sacramento took the lead in the seventh after left fielder Travis Buck homered on a fly ball to right field. The home run was the first for Buck since coming to the River Cats from Oakland, and it couldn't have come at a better time.

The River Cats put the game out of reach in the eighth, putting two more runs on the board on Michael Taylor's single scoring Corey Wimberly and Buck's sacrifice fly to left field that brought home Chris Carter.

Carter, who went 2-for-3 on the night with one walk and a strikeout, has now reached base in 28 consecutive games dating back to July 1. Sacramento is no stranger to streaks such as Carter's. Corey Wimberly reached base in 31 consecutive games for the River Cats this season in games from May 3 to June 3. Wimberly remains one steal shy of tying Eric Patterson's single-season record of 43, set last year.

Sacramento, which improved its record to 60-48, is still 1.0 games behind Fresno after the Grizzlies defeated Colorado Springs 3-1. The River Cats continue against Las Vegas at Raley Field on Sunday with a 6:05 p.m. start.

Late Rally Comes Up Short in Corpus Christi

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

For the first five innings Friday night at Corpus Christi, the RockHounds had yet to collect a hit. In the last four innings, the 'Hounds had three tremendous chances to tie or better, the last of those trailing by one with the bases loaded and no outs in the ninth. All three chances went by the boards, and the Hooks hung on for a 4-3 win.

Jeremy Johnson walked four batters, but did not allow a hit, through 5.0 innings, and the Hooks built a 3-0 lead largely on the bat of Jonathon Fixler. The Hooks catcher belted a solo home run in the third and drove in a run with a single in the fifth, with Johnson blanking the 'Hounds in that time.

Josh Horton and Adrian Cardenas collected the 'Hounds' first hits of the night, back-to-back lead-off singles in the sixth. Alex Valdez then got his club on the board with an RBI single, but Johnson would strike out Shane Peterson and Archie Gilbert with the tying runs in scoring position.

Matt Sulentic's "hustle double" set up a run in the seventh, bringing in the 'Hounds to within 3-2, but an inning-ending double play with two men on ended that threat.

Corpus added what would be the winning run on a play disputed by manager Darren Bush on a close play at first with two out in the eighth. Peterson hauled in a high throw from third baseman Cardenas, but Jhon Florentino was called safe and a run scored.

The 'Hounds loaded the bases and scored on an infield single by Jemile Weeks in the ninth, but Hooks closer Evan Englebrook rebounded to get three consecutive outs with the bases still full to end the game.

Peterson lost his 16-game hit streak, going 0-for-2 with a pair of walks, and belted a ball 400 feet to the wall in center in his last at bat.

The 'Hounds maintained a one game lead in the South thanks to San Antonio's 6-run rally late at Frisco. The Missions and Hooks gained a game in the potential wild card standings, where the 'Hounds now lead San Antonio by six games and Corpus by eight.

Ports Rally Falls Short in 9-6 Loss

Grant Green ends hitting streak at 14 games

STOCKTON, Calif. – The Stockton Ports (50-56) scored five runs in the final two innings, but their late push fell short, as the Modesto Nuts (54-52) took Game 2 by a 9-6 final.

Justin Marks picked up the loss in his Stockton Ports debut, allowing seven runs on seven hits in 4.0 innings with three walks. Mike Hart tossed two scoreless frames in his Ports debut, and Jose Pina didn't give up any runs in two innings of work either. Rob Scahill picked up his eighth win of the year in the contest.

The Ports totaled just six hits in the game. David Thomas collected a pair of triples in the game, and both Stephen Parker and Tyler Ladendorf ended the game with two RBI. Stockton shortstop Grant Green finished the game 0x5 with a strikeout to snap his hitting streak at 14 games.

The Nuts took a quick 3-0 lead in the first inning. After issuing back-to-back walks, Marks gave up a three-run home run to first baseman Ben Paulsen.

Modesto piled on three-more home runs in the third inning. Catcher Jordan Pacheco walked to start the inning. He moved to second on a wild pitch as Paulsen was at the plate. Paulsen struck out swinging, but the third strike got past Ports catcher Yusuf Carter, so Paulsen was safe at first. Shortstop Thomas Field hit an RBI single to make it 4-0. Paulsen scored on a sacrifice fly by third baseman Joe Sanders. A wild pitch to David Christensen allowed Field to take third. Christensen hit the ball to shortstop Green, who threw it to first baseman Mike Spina for the out. Spina dropped the ball for an error, allowing Christensen to be safe at first and Field to score the sixth Modesto run.

A solo home run by center fielder Tim Wheeler in the fourth inning put the Nuts ahead, 7-0.

The Ports didn't get their first hit until the fifth inning. Spina walked to start the fifth, and stole second while Todd Johnson was batting. Right fielder Jeremy Barfield hit an RBI single to center field to score Spina and end Modesto's shutout bid.

While Hart and Pina held the Nuts scoreless in the middle of the game, the Ports worked to chip away at the Modesto lead. In the eighth inning, the Ports made it a 7-3 ballgame. With one out, Thomas tripled to center field. Modesto pitcher Kurt Yacko then walked the next two batters to load the bases. Green next struck out swinging. Parker then singled through the hole at second base to score two runs.

In the top of the ninth, Field hit a two-run home run off southpaw Trey Barham to left field to pad the Modesto lead. It was his fourteenth home run of the season.

But the Ports offense wasn't finished yet. With one out, Modesto reliever Alan DeRatt walked Johnson. Barfield then struck out for the second out of the inning. Thomas slammed an RBI triple past the two outfielders in left-center field, which brought home Johnson, and made it 9-4. DeRatt then walked Jermaine Mitchell and gave up a two-RBI double to Tyler Ladendorf. With the score now 9-6, and a runner in scoring position, Green stepped up to the plate for his final chance to extend his hitting streak. He grounded out to second baseman Erik Wetzel to end the game.

The Ports will look to secure the series victory on Sunday at 6:05 PM PST at Banner Island Ballpark. RHP Brett Tomko (0-1, 8.50) will start on the hill for Stockton, while RHP Juan Nicasio (8-8, 4.20) will start for Modesto. Fans can follow the game live on KWSX 1280 AM.

Cougars Enjoy More Home Cooking

Kane County has won 13 of 16 at home in 2nd half

GENEVA, III. – The Kane County Cougars continued their dominance at Elfstrom Stadium on Saturday night, beating the Burlington Bees, 4-2, in front of 10,947 in the opener of a seven-game homestand. The Cougars are 13-3 at home in the 2nd half and maintain a three-game lead for the top playoff spot in the Western Division. They also finished July with a mark of 18-10, the third-highest July win total in team history.

The Cougars never trailed in the contest, thanks to a two-run second inning. Jose Crisotomo singled home Rashun Dixon, and Leonardo Gil scored on a wild pitch. The Bees scratched out single runs in the third and fifth against starter Murphy Smith, but the Cougars regained control in the seventh against Starling De La Rosa (0-1). Mike Gilmartin squeezed home Anthony Aliotti, and Max Stassi scored on a Dixon single to make it 4-2.

Smith gave up two runs on four hits over six innings in a no-decision, his sixth quality start in 10 starts as a Cougar. Josh Lansford (1-1) picked up the victory with two perfect relief innings, and Ryan Doolittle saved his first game of the year with a 1-2-3 ninth.

The Cougars (20-14, 52-51) and Bees (14-18, 36-65) continue the series Sunday afternoon at 1 CT when Jonathan Joseph (0-3, 4.67) starts for the Cougars against Sugar Ray Marimon (2-3, 7.31). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at www.kccougars.com with pre-game coverage starting at 12:45 p.m.