

A's News Clips, Sunday, April 17, 2011

Dallas Braden has to leave Oakland A's win early with shoulder stiffness

By Ben Enos, Oakland Tribune

A big fourth inning helped the A's pick up a 6-2 victory against visiting Detroit on Saturday, but Dallas Braden lasted only five innings.

The left-hander had to leave the game because of shoulder stiffness.

Braden worked long enough to pick up his first win of the season, and at times he looked very impressive. He struck out five thanks to his trademark changeup, and he allowed only an unearned run in the second.

Those good feelings faded soon, though, as a glum Braden remained on the bench while Brad Ziegler took the mound for the sixth. Braden missed time last year with an elbow injury and offered only short answers after the game.

"After the fifth, I knew I couldn't continue. The shoulder tightened up," Braden said.

Manager Bob Geren added: "He was throwing the ball well. That inning, he started going to his changeup a lot more and gave you maybe the indication that he didn't want to use his fastball for one reason or another. When the inning was over, that was pretty much what he said."

Even with Braden's early departure, there were plenty of positives as the A's (7-8) got their second home win of the season.

The bullpen delivered a tremendous effort to cover for the short outing, with Ziegler, Craig Breslow, Grant Balfour and Brian Fuentes combining on four innings of one-run relief.

"Balfour and Fuentes are pretty much my best late-inning guys, and they've been kind of running on fumes," Geren said. "I've been relying on them a lot. ...

"I'd love to get a bigger cushion some time and not have to use either one of them, but a win's a win, and they got it done."

Offensively, the A's carried the load, using, of all things, the double.

Their first and biggest rally came in the fourth, when David DeJesus, Josh Willingham and Hideki Matsui became the first A's to hit three consecutive doubles since Mark Ellis, Ryan Sweeney and Daric Barton did it Sept. 5, 2009, against Seattle.

The three-double outburst against Tigers ace Justin Verlander plated two runs. Matsui eventually scored when Kurt Suzuki singled to left and Ryan Raburn couldn't field it cleanly, allowing the A's designated hitter to score without a throw.

"That was a big inning for us to get the lead against him, because they had an early lead on Dallas," said DeJesus, who went 2 for 3. "To come back, and then keep adding on as the game goes on, that's huge for us."

The A's (7-8) scored one more run in the sixth, again using the double as the catalyst -- first Kevin Kouzmanoff's double to center to get it started, and then Coco Crisp's double to right-center that brought Kouzmanoff around to make it 4-1.

Sweeney's pinch triple in the eighth that drove in Suzuki helped the A's finish things up offensively. Sweeney scored on a sacrifice fly by Kouzmanoff for Oakland's sixth run.

Verlander had an odd moment in the fifth. With Barton on first, the right-hander stepped off as if he were going to throw to first. Instead though, he threw home, hitting DeJesus in the process.

The umpires ruled it a balk, awarded Barton second and sent DeJesus back to the plate, where he later walked.

A's update: Detroit Tiger and Cal product Brennan Boesch glad baseball program was saved

By Ben Enos, Oakland Tribune

Cal alum Boesch grateful program got the save

Count Detroit Tigers outfielder Brennan Boesch as one of many interested parties during the recent fight to reinstate Cal's baseball program.

Boesch called Evans Diamond his baseball home from 2004-06 and showed some of the skills he learned in Berkeley by cashing in the game-winning hit in Friday's 8-4 win over the A's.

He followed along from afar as Cal first cut its baseball program, then reinstated it. On Saturday, Boesch gave his take on the drama surrounding the Bears.

"It didn't make any sense to us. Budget or not, baseball seemed like the sacrificial lamb from the beginning," Boesch said. "The 'Save Cal Baseball' effort was actually a 'Save Cal Sports' effort, and that was also unfair. When we realized it was kind of a save your own hide situation, people rallied together and got it done."

Boesch expressed his gratitude for the local alumni that worked to save the program, saying he was "grateful to those guys so I can still be a Cal baseball alum with pride."

Of course, he has plenty to be proud of in his second year with Detroit, especially with the start to the season he's had. He's hitting .304 and has forced his way into a crowded Tigers outfield with good play.

Boesch, a Los Angeles native, had some interested parties in the crowd this weekend, as his parents were in town, along with former Cal teammates Chris Errecart, Travis Howell and Michael Cooper.

A's prospect Chris• Carter had his best game of the season for Triple-A Sacramento on Friday, collecting three hits, hitting his first home run of the season and driving in five in a 6-5 win over Tacoma. Even with the 3 for 5 night, Carter is batting .182 through nine games.

Two A's relievers• made progress on the injury front. Michael Wuertz (hamstring) pitched an inning for Single-A Stockton on Saturday, allowing three runs and throwing 24 pitches. Andrew Bailey (forearm) also continued his rehab work, throwing long toss on schedule. He is scheduled to throw a bullpen session today.

Braden leaves early in A's 6-2 win over Tigers

Steve Kroner, Chronicle Staff Writer

Bizarro World seemingly took over the Coliseum after the A's 6-2 victory over Detroit on Saturday night.

Bizarro in that the losing pitcher held court as if he were the headline comedian for "An Evening at the Improv," and the winning pitcher - who's usually as witty and verbose as they come - gave terse responses to every question posed to him.

Actually, Dallas Braden's unhappiness was easy to understand. He had to leave the game after five innings (allowing one unearned run) with what he and the team termed only as shoulder stiffness.

Three different questions to try to get Braden (1-1) to expound on his ailment drew these answers:

"Shoulder's stiff."

"Shoulder was stiff. Couldn't continue."

"After the fifth, I knew I couldn't continue. The shoulder tightened up."

Through three turns in the rotation, the A's starters own a 2.25 ERA. Oakland certainly would be hurt if Braden is out for any extended period of time.

The game's What Was That? moment came in the fifth. With Daric Barton on first and David DeJesus at the plate, Justin Verlander (1-2) endured a mind cramp. With the count 2-1, he stepped off the rubber, and for some reason, threw the ball past DeJesus and to the backstop.

DeJesus originally was awarded first on a hit by pitch, but the umpires huddled and correctly ruled that because Verlander was off the rubber, it was no pitch. Barton did get to move to second on what was ruled a balk on Verlander for throwing an illegal pitch.

Verlander explained that he had wanted to make a pickoff move to first but didn't get his hips turned fully. He didn't want to risk a wild throw to first because of the huge expanse of foul territory.

Verlander continued: "So, my thought was, 'Hey, you know, maybe if I throw it home, they won't call anything.' "

When it was suggested to Verlander that that was the first time that had ever happened to him, Verlander responded, "That might be the first time that's ever happened in general."

That drew laughs from not only the dozen or so reporters surrounding Verlander, but from some of his teammates as well.

Verlander wasn't done. He was asked how many times he expects to see the incident on blooper reels.

"I don't care," he said. "Who cares? If I go out and do my job and get outs, I can laugh at myself. I'm OK with that."

The right-hander looked OK through the first three innings, striking out five, but the A's got to him for three in the fourth and one in the sixth.

Doubles did in Verlander. He gave up consecutive two-base hits to DeJesus, Josh Willingham and Hideki Matsui in the fourth. Kevin Kouzmanoff and Coco Crisp each doubled to produce the run in the sixth.

An RBI triple by pinch-hitter Ryan Sweeney off reliever Enrique Gonzalez keyed the A's two-run eighth.

Before Saturday, the Tigers had won four in a row overall and four straight at the Coliseum. They haven't had a five-game winning streak overall since April 2006. They haven't ever won five in a row in Oakland.

Cal alum in familiar air

A'S BEAT

By Steve Kroner, CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Detroit outfielder **Brennan Boesch** entered Friday night's game at the Coliseum 0-for-14 in his career against the A's.

He proceeded to go 3-for-5, including tagging an 0-2 pitch from **Brian Fuentes** for a two-run double to break a 1-1 tie in the 10th inning.

Following the Tigers' 8-4 win, Boesch — who played three seasons (2004-06) at Cal — got to enjoy the evening with his parents and some former Cal teammates.

"It was a good memory for us," Boesch said Saturday.

Actually, in the eighth inning, he got reminded of how unforgiving the Bay Area air can be to well-hit flyballs.

Boesch thought he had taken **Grant Balfour** deep to center,

but **Coco Crisp** grabbed the drive just in front of the fence.

Said Boesch: "I had to deal with that for three years at Cal. The air has just got some extra stuff in it." Boesch referred to Edwards Stadium, the track facility beyond the right-field wall at Evans Diamond.

"I would hit it over the track and it would come back and get caught at the fence," he said. "This is something that's not new to me here."

Though he kept himself informed about the tribulations of the Cal program, from the announcement of its demise in September to its reinstatement April 8, Boesch said he "was not on the front line, so to speak" of those involved in saving the program.

"Honestly, I've had a lot on my plate with playing in the major leagues," he said.

He gave credit to those who did the work in preserving a program that began in 1892.

"I'm grateful to those guys so I can still be a Cal baseball alum with pride," Boesch said.

Briefly: Andy LaRoche got a start at second base Saturday night, replacing **Mark Ellis**, who was riding a 6for-35 funk. LaRoche went 0-for-3. Ellis entered the game in the ninth as a defensive replacement. ... The Tigers have not allowed a home run in nine straight games, their longest such streak since a nine-gamer in April 1976. ... **Michael Wuertz** (hamstring) gave up three runs on four hits, including a homer, in one inning in a rehab outing for Class A Stockton against Modesto.

A's leading off

Steve Kroner, San Francisco Chronicle

Schedule twist: Since interleague play began in 1997, there have been some unavoidable scheduling oddities, but the Tigers-A's season series this year takes the cake: They meet eight times - this four-game series and another in mid-September - in Oakland and all of twice (July 19, 20) in Detroit.

Al Saracevic, sports editor

Sports radio wars heat up on FM dial

Looks like the A's have finally found a comfortable new home. Unfortunately, it doesn't involve a new stadium.

Instead, the A's broadcasts will reside on SportsRadio 95.7 on the FM dial for the next four

seasons, together with the Sharks on the Bay Area's newest all-sports radio station.

Entercom Communications Corp., one of the five largest radio broadcasting corporations in the country, announced Friday that it would take its FM station, previously known as "The Wolf," and convert it from country music to sports.

In doing so, Entercom joins a long list of competitors who have tried to come in and compete with KNBR 680 and 1050 for sports listeners in the Bay Area. Unlike in previous attempts, the newcomers have a pretty strong track record and deep pockets. Entercom, based in the Philadelphia area, runs 110 stations in 23 markets across the country, including New England's AM juggernaut, 850 WEEI in Boston. They also own 96.5 KOIT, a light rock station, and 102.1/98.5 KUFX ("KFOX"), a classic rock station, in the Bay Area.

By snagging the A's and Sharks game broadcasts, and retaining the current announcers, SportsRadio 95.7 hopes to draw listeners who feel those teams have been underserved by KNBR, which leans heavily in the direction of the 49ers and Giants.

"We love those teams and we feel they are underappreciated in this market," said Entercom market manager and vice president **Dwight Walker**. "But we'll be talking about all the teams."

Walker said the new sports talk station will operate 24/7 and will populate the airwaves with local talent. He also thinks FM is a good place for regional sports talk, despite the genre's history on AM radio.

"Nearly 80 percent of radio listeners tune into FM stations," said Walker. "KNBR does a wonderful job, but we feel there is a significant market gap here."

I asked Walker if he might target Stanford football next.

The Cardinal have languished in relative obscurity on 860 KTRB, much as the A's did prior to this deal.

"One of my next calls will be to Stanford," said Walker.

"Pac-12 football is huge in the Bay Area. Stanford and Cal, absolutely."

It will be interesting to see if sports listeners will gravitate to an FM signal. Perhaps Entercom learned something in Boston, where WEEI has a serious FM competitor?

More of the same: **Larry Riley** survived the cut this week, hanging on to his job as general manager of the Warriors, even as the team's new ownership hired his prospective replacement, agent-turned-exec **Bob Myers**.

It remains to be seen whether coach **Keith Smart** can hang on to his job, too. As we've said in this space in the past, both Riley and Smart are classy, intelligent professionals who are highly qualified.

The problem is one of perception.

Joe Lacob and **Peter Guber** bought this team last year, bringing with them much fanfare and expectation. If **Don Nelson** ends up being the only guy in the organization who was asked to leave, I'm afraid the fans will perceive the situation to be more of the same.

Let's face it. Nelson left the building two years ago. And the fans are left with the same high-priced seats and lousy team. The Warriors gained 10 games in the win column this season, but that's not enough.

Lacob and Guber have promised the playoffs next year. To get there, they should overhaul an

operation that has not produced results.

Matsui's world: A's slugger **Hideki Matsui** lives his life smothered in media attention, constantly surrounded by his very own press corps.

Watching him give postgame interviews to the Japanese media is a sight. Standing outside of the clubhouse, up against a concrete wall below the stadium, 20 reporters and cameramen crowd in to ask questions and snap photos.

Matsui is pinned, yet calmly answers all queries with a benign resignation. The slugger known as "Godzilla" appears smaller and younger when you see him up close, dressed casually chic in jeans and a parka and giving off a decidedly different vibe than his grizzled on-field countenance. At 36, he comes across as a young, hip guy from Tokyo, even if he has been playing ball on the world's biggest for nearly two decades now.

As the crowd dispersed, I had a chance to chat with Matsui through an interpreter, and he seemed relieved to be free of the crowd.

We talked about the crisis in Japan and the burden it has been for both him and his countrymen in the media.

"During the quake and the crisis, I've been able to focus on baseball," said Matsui. "That's something I can control."

He became animated when we discussed the Bay Area's large Japanese population, expressing an interest in getting some new fans out to the ballpark. And he turned serious when we transitioned to baseball, saying, "The primary goal is to help my team get to the playoffs. Personally, it's just to stay healthy."

So far, he's managed to stay in the lineup, although he had a decidedly slow spring. My colleague, A's beat writer **Susan Slusser**, tells me that Matsui started to look like a dangerous hitter again on the team's recent road trip, putting together two straight multi-hit games in Chicago and raising his batting average to a respectable .262 before coming home.

Perhaps most important, he homered against a left-handed pitcher in the last game of the trip, always a good sign for lefty hitters.

Joltin' Joe: The Sons of Italy gathered in their hometown of Martinez on Saturday to show off the work they're doing on **Joe DiMaggio's** old boat, the Joltin' Joe.

The civic group has been working with the local carpenters union for more than a year to restore the 22-foot Criss Craft given to DiMaggio by Yankees fans after the 1949 season. But they have a long way to go. They're still working on raising funds to finish the project, and they're also looking for information on what the boat's original finish looked like, having no color photos from its early days.

The restoration of the Joltin' Joe reminded me of some angry e-mails I received last month after I wrote a piece on a new book about DiMaggio and his legendary 56-game hit streak.

In my column, I referred to DiMaggio as San Francisco's favorite native son.

That didn't go unnoticed by a number of proud Martinez residents, who were quick to point out that Joltin' Joe was born in their hometown. Indeed, DiMaggio was born in Martinez, but he grew up in San Francisco.

Should we split the difference and say he's from Richmond?

A's bats wake up in victory over Tigers

Series of doubles power win: Braden leaves game early

By Eric Gilmore / Special to MLB.com | 4/17/2011 2:00 AM ET

OAKLAND -- The music was blaring in the A's clubhouse on Saturday night after their 6-2 win over Detroit. But there was a somber undertone to this victory celebration.

Earlier in the night, veteran left-hander Dallas Braden was forced out of the game after five innings with stiffness in his throwing shoulder.

The normally loquacious Braden was grim-faced when he met the media in the interview room. In an interview that lasted 90 seconds, he answered a handful of questions with just a handful of words.

Did your shoulder start acting up in that inning or did it bother you earlier?

"Shoulder's stiff," Braden said.

Did you ask to come out of the game or were you told to come out?

"Shoulder was stiff," Braden said. "Couldn't continue."

Then, Braden was asked if he had an idea of whether the problem was serious.

"Show up tomorrow, we'll evaluate then," he said.

A's manager Bob Geren wasn't able to shed much light on the situation, either.

"He [just] has stiffness in his left shoulder and was removed from the game for that reason," Geren said. "Don't really have any more information, at this point. I'm sure he'll be checked out. I don't have an exact time or date for that, but I'm sure he'll be checked out."

Geren said Braden seemed to be throwing well early in the game, but that he could tell something was wrong in the top of the fifth by the Braden's pitch selection. He all but abandoned his fastball.

"That inning, he started going to his changeup a lot more," Geren said. "Gave you maybe the indication he didn't want to use his fastball for one reason or another. When the inning was over, that's pretty much what he said, 'Stiff. I didn't feel like I had my fastball. I was trying to rely on my changeup.'"

Braden, who threw a perfect game last season, has never spent time on the disabled list during his Major League career because of shoulder problems. But in 2006, he made only 10 appearances in the Minor Leagues while recovering from what the A's media guide called a

"humoral defect" in his left shoulder. Asked whether he has had shoulder trouble since reaching the big leagues, Braden simply shook his head no.

Braden allowed just three hits and an unearned run, while striking out five and walking two. He threw just 67 pitches, 45 of them strikes, and evened his record at 1-1. When he left the game, the A's were ahead, 3-1, and they extended their advantage to 6-1 through eight innings.

Trailing 1-0, the A's erupted for three runs in the fourth inning off Tigers right-hander Justin Verlander. David DeJesus, Josh Willingham and Hideki Matsui opened the inning with consecutive doubles, putting the A's ahead, 2-1. Catcher Kurt Suzuki then singled sharply to left, and Matsui raced home as the ball got past left fielder Ryan Raburn for an error.

"Justin's going to be around the plate," said DeJesus, who went 2-for-3. "He was hitting the corners a lot today, it seemed like. But when it was over the plate, we were able to take advantage of it. Hitting's one of those things, when guys are going, I think the team goes. That was a big inning for us to get the lead against him, because they had the early lead on Dallas. To come back and keep adding on as the game goes on, that's huge for us."

Oakland added a run in the sixth when Kevin Kouzmanoff hit a one-out double and scored on Coco Crisp's two-out double.

Then in the eighth, pinch-hitter Ryan Sweeney tripled home Suzuki, who had walked, then scored on Kouzmanoff's sacrifice fly.

"Our starting pitchers have been throwing unbelievable, so anytime we can go out there and throw five or six runs up, we're going to win the ball game," Sweeney said. "We've just got to try to do that every game."

Sweeney's concern now is over Braden's health, a pitcher who once stayed in a game after taking a line drive off his throat.

"I didn't really talk to him very much," Sweeney said. "I think his arm was a little sore, and his fastball wasn't where he wanted the last inning. So I don't know. We'll see what happens."

After Braden exited, A's relievers Brad Ziegler and Craig Breslow each pitched a scoreless inning. Grant Balfour pitched a scoreless eighth but ran into trouble in the ninth, giving way to Brian Fuentes after allowing a leadoff single to Jhonny Peralta and walking Brennan Boesch.

Fuentes, who blew a save and took the loss on Friday night, allowed only one Tiger to score -- but he was hardly sharp. He walked a batter and got the final out with two runners on base,

when Crisp caught Raburn's blast on the warning track in center field, two steps in front of the 400-foot sign.

"Got it done," Geren said. "It got a little hairy at the end. Balfour and Fuentes are pretty much my best late-inning guys, and they've been kind of running on fumes. I've been relying on them a lot. We've had a ton of close games. Before tonight, we had four-out-of-five extra-inning games. They've been doing a heck of a job. I'd love to get a bigger cushion at some time, and not have to use either one of them. But a win's a win, and they got it done."

The A's entered the game hitting .236, ninth in the American League. But their bats came alive on Saturday, when they pounded out nine hits -- six of them for extra bases. Five of those extra-base hits came against Verlander, who was throwing mid-90s heat.

"The first couple [of] innings, the shadows are out there. It's a bright day, and Verlander was real tough," Geren said. "We did battle some at-bats, got his pitch count up a little bit. We linked three doubles together at one time. Really nice job, right there. ... That was a big pinch hit by Ryan Sweeney, made a huge difference."

Braden exits with stiffness in shoulder

By Eric Gilmore / Special to MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's left-hander Dallas Braden left **Saturday's game** against Detroit after five innings because of stiffness in his throwing shoulder.

Braden allowed just three hits and one unearned run, while striking out five and walking two. He threw just 67 pitches, 45 of them for strikes.

The A's had a 3-1 lead when Braden was replaced by Brad Ziegler to start the sixth.

Cahill vs. Cabrera key battle in finale

By Jesse Sanchez / MLB.com | 4/17/2011 2:30 AM ET

Oakland starter Trevor Cahill lasted just 4 2/3 innings against the White Sox in his last start. He also walked three batters.

He says the answer to his recent woes on the mound is obvious.

In fact, it's really quite simple.

"I've just got to work on throwing strikes," he said. "I felt like I had a good command of the ball [against Toronto in my first start], but I don't know. That's just one start. I need to figure out how to be consistent, even when I'm not feeling good."

Cahill will take the mound on Sunday in the series finale against the Tigers with some momentum on his side. Including Saturday's 6-2 victory, the A's have won six of 10 games since opening the season with a 1-4 record.

By contrast, Saturday's loss also snapped a four-game winning streak for the Tigers.

However, it could be Detroit slugger Miguel Cabrera who provides the difference between a victory and a defeat for his club on Sunday. Overall, Cabrera is hitting .347, with 10 home runs and 27 RBIs, against Oakland since joining the Tigers in 2008. He went 1-for-2 on Saturday, and is hitting .327 for the season.

"He's one of the top hitters in the game, and they've got speed guys around him," Cahill said. "It's like a good little mix, as far as speed and power go. And they've got that huge threat in Miguel Cabrera. You definitely don't want to get guys on base when he's coming up."

It will also be up to Detroit starter Brad Penny to shut down an Oakland offense that has struggled at times this season.

"Our pitching has been so good that we've been in every game and had a chance to win every game," Oakland second baseman Mark Ellis said. "So when we start swinging the bats, we're going to be just fine, we're going to win a lot of ballgames. Hopefully, sooner rather than later."

Tigers: Guillen making progress

- Tigers infielder Carlos Guillen (left knee soreness) is working his way back to health. Guillen, who had a setback in his rehab late in Spring Training, is working with a physical therapist in Tampa, Fla. three days a week and spending the rest of his time at the Tigers' Spring Training facility in Lakeland. He's not ready for baseball activities.

- Magglio Ordonez, who missed four games this week with fluid in his right ankle, returned to lineup on Saturday and went 1-for-4 as the designated hitter.

"I'm trying to get bats into the lineup," Tigers manager Jim Leyland said. "I'm trying to get creative with my positions, as well as the bats. If Ordonez is going to hit against right-handed pitchers, then he'll have to play right field. I'm going to DH [Victor] Martinez against right-handers."

A's: Ellis gets night off

- Second baseman Mark Ellis was out of the lineup on Saturday, with utility infielder Andy LaRoche getting the start at second after playing the previous two games at third base. Ellis was given the night off and could return to play on Sunday.
- Injured closer Andrew Bailey (strained right forearm) played long toss on Saturday, and is scheduled to throw another bullpen session on Sunday. There is no timetable for his return.
- The A's love day games. The club is 4-1 in day games this season, and 3-7 at night. They went 35-21 in day games last season, third-best in the Major Leagues.

Worth noting

The A's have eight errors in their past five games, after going six consecutive games without an error. The club had nine errors in the first four games. ... The Tigers have at least one double in each of their first 16 games. No Tigers team had doubled in more than 14 consecutive games to start a season since at least 1919.

Strange balk sequence provides light moment

By Eric Gilmore / Special to MLB.com

OAKLAND -- After 30-plus years in professional baseball, A's manager Bob Geren said he has seen almost everything on the diamond.

But he had never before seen anything like the bizarre balk committed in the top of the fifth inning on Saturday night at the Coliseum by Tigers starter Justin Verlander.

With Daric Barton at first base and David DeJesus at the plate, Verlander went into his stretch. He stepped back off the mound, intending to throw to first, but apparently caught a cleat in the dirt. So instead of making an off-balance throw to first, he threw toward home plate -- and hit DeJesus.

Home-plate umpire John Hirschbeck ruled it a balk and awarded second base to Barton. DeJesus' at-bat continued, and he eventually walked.

"That was the strangest [thing] I've ever seen," Geren said. "I had to ask everybody what they saw, too, because everybody was like, 'Did I see that right?' It took like six coaches to try to figure out what he did. It was the most bizarre balk, or illegal pitch or whatever. Explanations were sketchy, everything. Ultimately, he did step off the mound, so it wasn't a pitch. You could not get a hit batter."

Even though Verlander actually did hit a batter.

Verlander said he intended to throw to first, but "didn't get my body turned" and changed plans.

"The way I thought -- and this was all in milliseconds -- if I just throw it home, they won't call anything. If I throw the ball straight to [catcher] Victor [Martinez] maybe they don't call anything." said Verlander.

"I saw the video of it, and I couldn't help but laugh at myself. It might be the first time that has happened, in general. I thought nothing could happen at the plate. It was a weird circumstance. It was funny talking to the umpires. They gave me a hard time about it, too."

"It was strange," Geren said. "It's a rule that I don't think you could even find it in the rule book. If somebody sees that in the rule book, show me where it is. That was very strange."

DeJesus enjoys facing familiar foes

By Eric Gilmore / Special to MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's right fielder David DeJesus has been seeing plenty of familiar faces in this series against Detroit -- and the past two against the White Sox and Twins.

For DeJesus, that's a good thing.

After spending the first eight seasons of his big league career with Kansas City in the American League Central, DeJesus was traded to A's during the offseason. But since April 7, DeJesus and the A's have faced nothing but AL Central foes.

"I've seen these pitchers, so it definitely helps out," DeJesus said before Saturday's game against the Tigers. "I played them so many times, so you know their coaching styles and things like that. It's all right."

The A's play the Royals at Kansas City in a three-game series from May 2-4 -- and yes, DeJesus has that circled on his calendar.

"My wife is already lining up suites and getting all of our friends from Kansas City to come to the games," DeJesus said. "So that will be fun to go back there and play against the old team that I spent so much time with. I'm definitely looking to beat them, that's for sure. They're playing good baseball, right now. They're winning a lot of games. I'm happy for them. But when we go out there, I want to beat them."

DeJesus hit .318 for the Royals last season, but he entered Saturday's game hitting .234 -- after going 3-for-5 with three RBI on Friday night against Detroit.

"We're 14 games into the season, right now," DeJesus said. "Yesterday was a better sign. I feel like my swing's getting better. It's just being consistent with it, having a consistent approach at the plate that I haven't had so far. But overall, we'll be OK. There's 150 games left. We're not pressing. We just have to go out there and compete every at-bat, and win some games. That's all it comes down to."

DeJesus certainly has no concerns about his defense. He entered Saturday's game with a 252-game errorless streak, the longest active streak among Major League outfielders. His last error came on Sept. 15, 2008.

DeJesus said he doesn't dwell on the streak.

"Just play -- and whatever happens, happens," he said. "I just want to be a guy out there that when the ball's hit to me, the pitchers know that I'm going to be out there and try to make a play for them. And hopefully they respect that. That's my job."

Defensive woes plaguing A's early on

OAKLAND -- The defensive numbers paint a grim picture for the A's.

They committed 16 errors in their first 14 games -- the most in the Major Leagues -- and were on pace to commit 185 errors this season, entering Saturday's game against Detroit.

Just don't expect the A's, a typically solid defensive club, to panic over their troubles in the field.

"I think we've got guys that can play pretty good defense," said second baseman Mark Ellis, who has yet to commit an error. "We haven't played good defense, not as good as we'd like to play. When you don't score a lot of runs, everything gets magnified a little bit -- and we haven't scored a lot of runs.

"When you do that, your defense kind of sticks out a little bit more. We'll be fine. Playing defense, I don't think it's something we need to worry about. We need to play better, absolutely. But in the long term, we'll be fine."

First baseman Daric Barton and third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff entered Saturday's game tied for the team lead in errors with four apiece, while utility man Andy LaRoche had two. The A's committed three errors in the 10th inning on Friday night against Detroit, one each by LaRoche, Barton and pitcher Brian Fuentes.

Last year, the A's finished fifth in the American League with a .984 fielding percentage, and had 99 total errors -- totaling less than 100 for the sixth time in the past seven years. This year, their fielding percentage is .971, worst in the Major Leagues.

"You can get in slumps on defense," Ellis said. "You can absolutely get in slumps on defense. Maybe that's going on with some guys, right now. But I'm not too worried about it. I think we'll be just fine."

Worth noting

- Second baseman Mark Ellis was out of the lineup on Saturday, with utility infielder Andy LaRoche getting the start at second after playing the previous two games at third base. Manager Bob Geren said he was just giving Ellis a night off.

"I'm using everybody," Geren said. "Tonight's a good night for him. He's completely fine."

After two nights off, the struggling Kevin Kouzmanoff returned to the lineup at third.

- Right-handed reliever Michael Wuertz had a rough outing on Saturday when he began a rehab assignment for Class A Stockton. Starting against Modesto, he allowed four hits and three runs (all earned) in one inning of work. He gave up a home run, struck out one and had a wild pitch. Wuertz has been sidelined since injuring his left hamstring while lifting weights on April 2, one day after pitching a scoreless inning against Seattle in the A's season opener. He was placed on the disabled list on April 6, retroactive to April 2.

- Injured closer Andrew Bailey (strained right forearm) played long toss on Saturday, and is scheduled to throw another bullpen session on Sunday. Geren said he doesn't know how long Bailey will continue his three-day rotation of playing catch one day, then long toss the next and throwing off the mound on Day 3.

"When he is completely feeling great, he'll go right into [facing] hitters," Geren said. "Hopefully, it's sooner rather than later, but no dates for that."

Bailey opened the season on the disabled list.

- As it turned out, center fielder Coco Crisp's afro hair style lasted one game. His hair was back in braids on Friday and Saturday against the Tigers.

"It could come back," Crisp said of the afro.

A's defeat Tigers, 6-2

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Published: Saturday, April 16, 2011 at 7:43 p.m.

OAKLAND — Dallas Braden allowed an unearned run in five innings before leaving with stiffness in his pitching shoulder, and the Oakland Athletics beat the Detroit Tigers 6-2 on Saturday night for their second home win this season.

David DeJesus and Hideki Matsui had two hits apiece as Oakland knocked around Detroit ace Justin Verlander (1-2) with five doubles.

The Athletics, who committed their major league-leading 17th error, dropped the first two games on this homestand and were 1-4 at the Coliseum before ending Detroit's four-game winning streak.

Victor Martinez doubled and singled for the Tigers.

Braden, who pitched a perfect game on Mother's Day in 2010, wasn't as crisp as he has been this season and had to pitch out of jams in the second and fourth.

Coming off six sharp innings against the Chicago White Sox on Monday, Braden (1-1) struck out five and walked two. He left when his shoulder tightened up after only 67 pitches.

The A's relievers had come under scrutiny after failing to support strong outings by starters Gio Gonzalez and Brandon McCarthy in the first two games of this four-game series. This time, the bullpen didn't give in.

Brad Ziegler, Craig Breslow, Grant Balfour and Brian Fuentes pitched one inning apiece to complete the six-hitter.

Oakland needed the strong outing to help overcome a throwing error by first baseman Daric Barton that gave the Tigers a 1-0 lead.

Miguel Cabrera led off the second with a walk and moved to third on Martinez's double. Braden struck out Jhonny Peralta, then got Brennan Boesch to hit a grounder to first. Barton fielded the ball cleanly but bypassed the easy out at first and instead threw wildly toward home, allowing Cabrera to score.

It was the A's eighth error in their past five games.

Fortunately for Oakland, the offense got to Verlander in the fourth.

DeJesus, Josh Willingham and Matsui hit consecutive doubles to open the inning and give the A's a 2-1 lead. Kurt Suzuki followed with a single and when left fielder Ryan Raburn bobbled the ball for an error, Matsui raced around third to score.

The game took a quirky turn in the bottom of the fifth.

Verlander walked Barton, then was on the mound when he suddenly jumped off the rubber and fired the ball at DeJesus, who was in the batter's box. The ball appeared to hit DeJesus in the foot and he was initially awarded first base while Barton moved to second.

Detroit manager Jim Leyland came out to question the call, and after the four umpires conferred, the play was ruled a balk. DeJesus was sent back to the box and Barton remained at second.

Verlander retired the next three hitters to get out of the jam but was gone an inning later, after an RBI double by Coco Crisp. The right-hander allowed eight hits and four runs — three earned — in six innings, finishing with six strikeouts.

Oakland scored a pair of insurance runs in the eighth off reliever Enrique Gonzalez. Ryan Sweeney hit a pinch-hit triple to drive in Suzuki, then later scored on Kevin Kouzmanoff's sacrifice fly.

The Tigers couldn't get anything off the A's relievers until the ninth. Peralta singled and Boesch followed with a walk. Fuentes relieved Balfour and later gave up a walk to load the bases but pitched out of the jam to preserve the win.

Designated hitter Magglio Ordonez went 1 for 4 in his return to Detroit's lineup. Ordonez had been out since Monday with a tight Achilles' in his right foot.

NOTES: The Tigers have doubled in all 15 games this year, the franchise's longest streak to start a season since at least 1919. ... Verlander needs eight strikeouts to reach 1,000 for his career. ... Leyland said he plans to give 3B Brandon Inge the day off Sunday. ... The seven runs scored by Detroit in the 10th inning Friday were the most the Tigers have scored in extra innings since 1991. ... Barton's error was his fifth this year. The first baseman had 10 total in 2010. ... Oakland had not hit three consecutive doubles in one inning since Sept. 5, 2009, against Seattle. ... A's RHP Michael Wuertz got knocked around during a rehab assignment with Class-A Stockton. Wuertz, on the disabled list with a hamstring strain, started and gave up three runs and four hits in one inning.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Sogard provides late-inning magic in Tacoma

Sacramento River Cats

It took a trip to the Northwest for Sacramento to find its late-inning magic.

Eric Sogard's one-out double in the eighth inning scored Jai Miller and Josh Horton to give Sacramento a 2-1 lead en route to a 3-1 victory.

Through eight games, Sacramento had scored seven runs after the third inning. Friday and Saturday nights in Tacoma, the River Cats have scored nine runs after the third while recording come-from-behind wins in both games.

Jai Miller and Josh Horton were both hit by pitches to open the eighth, and were then advanced to second and third by a Jemile Weeks bunt. Sogard then connected on a two-run double to left field and then scored on a Steve Tolleson single.

River Cats starter Travis Banwart allowed one run through 6.0 innings, with his only blemish being a Dustin Ackley home run in the third inning. Sacramento reliever Vinnie Chulk (2-1) pitched 2.0 scoreless innings and Joe Bateman pitched a scoreless ninth inning for his first save of the season.

River Cats third baseman Adrian Cardenas extended his hitting streak to six games, going 2-for-4 and improving his average to .448.

River Cats right-hander Graham Godfrey (0-0, 5.40) will face Tacoma left-hander Luke French (0-2, 8.00) on Sunday at 1:35 p.m. in Tacoma.

Travs Win 10-2 To Take Midland Series

04/16/2011 10:58 PM ET

North Little Rock - The Travelers defeated the Midland Rockhounds, 10-2, on Saturday night at Dickey-Stephens Park in taking its second series of the year. The Travs scored a season high 10 runs in front of a season-high crowd of 5,840.

Arkansas starter left-hander Andrew Taylor (1-0) picked up his first win of the year, pitching five innings and giving up one run on two hits, while striking out four. Righty Eddie McKiernan relieved Taylor to start the sixth and pitched the final four innings for the save, giving up one run on three hits.

The Travs matched its season-high total in hits with 12, led by second baseman Ryan Mount's 3 for 3 effort, while scoring two and knocking in two. Arkansas got two hits apiece from centerfielder Mike Trout, shortstop Darwin Perez and catcher Orlando Mercado.

Midland starter right-hander Shawn Haviland (0-1) got hit early, giving up four runs in the first two innings on the way to his first loss of the year. He pitched three and two-third innings giving up six runs (four earned) on seven hits, and walking four.

The bottom of the first began with Trout beating out an infield single to shortstop. He moved to third when Perez slapped a single to right field. After designated hitter Luis Jimenez flied out to left field, Mount continued his hot hitting with an RBI double to right that scored Trout. Angel Castillo walked to load the bases, but, first baseman Jay Brossman struck out looking for the second out. Mercado flied out to centerfield to end the inning.

Trav third baseman Adam Younger started the bottom of the second with a walk and scored when Trout hit a triple to the right-centerfield gap. Perez walked the next at bat and Trout scored when Jimenez grounded out to short. Mount singled for his second RBI scoring Perez before Castillo grounded out to third base for the last out of the inning. Midland scored its first run when Taylor walked first baseman Michael Spina with one out. After Taylor walked right-fielder Jeremy Barfield with two outs, left-fielder Matt Sulentic hit a single to center to score Spina.

Midland scored its second and final run in the seventh inning when centerfielder Jermaine Mitchell hit an RBI groundout to first base. The Travs added two runs each in the fourth, sixth and eighth innings to add to the rout. Arkansas left 11 men on base, opposed to Midland's eight. The Travs also stole a season-high eight bases. Trout, Perez and Jimenez swiped two bags, while Brossman and Castillo each stole one.

The Travs start a three-game series with the Frisco RoughRiders on Sunday afternoon at Dickey-Stephens Park. Righty Kyle Hurst (1-0, 3.60) will start for the Travs, and righty Carlos Pimintel (0-1, 9.00) goes for the Riders.

Hurst picked up the win on April 11 against Frisco, pitching five innings and giving up two runs on six hits, while striking out three. Pimintel got the loss in the same game. He pitched four innings and gave up four runs on nine hits, striking out five.

Bo-h No!

By Alessandra Bifulco / Stockton Ports

Stockton, Calif. - On a night that started with more runs on the board in the first inning than the entire game the night before, the Modesto Nuts battled the Stockton Ports in the finale of a three game series in Stockton, Calif. The Nuts won the series finale 10-6, in a game which looked tight until a big inning for the Nuts in the seventh where they surged ahead, scoring 6 runs to silence the Ports.

Making a rehab appearance to start the game off for the Ports was Oakland Athletics righty, Michael Wuertz. Wuertz pitched 1.0 inning, and gave up three runs (all earned) on four hits, including a Kent Matthes home run that sailed over the left field wall.

The Ports returned the favor that same inning, grinding out three runs with timely hits from the middle of the Ports order. Michael Gilmartin, who went 4-for-5 on Friday night, started the evening strong with a leadoff single. Gilmartin, Max Stassi and Mitch LeVier would all cross home plate in the first, before a struggling Conner Crumbliss grounded out to end the inning.

The Nuts would demonstrate their speed in the contest, stealing six bases in the Saturday finale, bringing their stolen base total to a shocking 20 bases through nine games thus far this season. However, it would be the Ports that jumped out to the lead in the second, behind a Dusty Coleman home run blasted over the mini-monster wall in left field.

In the fourth inning, the Nuts scored one run to come within one of the Ports with an RBI by Joe Sanders to score Kent Matthes from second. The Ports responded in the bottom of the sixth with a blast by Rashun Dixon on a 3-2 pitch to once again extend their lead to two.

The top of the seventh turned the game into the Modesto Nuts show with a monster six-run inning and a collapse of the Ports' bullpen. Max Peterson started the inning for the Ports, replacing Murphy Smith, who had pitched from the second to the sixth inning after Wuertz's rehab appearance in the first. The Nuts recorded two doubles, a stolen base and forced a pitching change by the Ports to Bo Schultz. Schultz lacked control on the mound and proceeded to walk three straight and to bring in a run before Scott Deal replaced Shultz and became the third Ports pitcher of the inning. In all, the Nuts recorded four hits and six runs and left two on base.

The rest of the game was scoreless and the Ports and Nuts finished the series with the Ports taking two of three. The Ports will open up a four game series against the Visalia Rawhide tomorrow with a 2:09 p.m. start as left hander Fabian Williamson gets the start on the mound for the Ports.

Bees and River Bandits Twinbill Cancelled

By Jon Versteeg, burlingtonbees.com

DAVENPORT, IA-The Burlington Bees and Quad Cities River Bandits doubleheader was cancelled on Saturday because of cold weather and poor field conditions at Modern Woodman Park. The two teams will play a doubleheader at on Sunday afternoon beginning at 2:00 p.m.

In game one RHP Blake Hassebrock (0-0, 0.00) starts on the mound for Burlington against RHP Seth Blair (0-0, 2.25) for Quad Cities. In game two LHP Jacob Brown (1-0, 3.00) gets the

start for Burlington against LHP Anthony Ferrara (0-0, 3.00). Pre-game coverage begins at 1:40 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at gobees.com