

Trevor Cahill takes first loss of season as Oakland A's fall to Chicago White Sox

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Trevor Cahill's perfect record finally fell by the wayside Sunday.

But as the A's right-hander reflected on a 4-3 defeat to the Chicago White Sox, he wasn't kicking himself over any one pitch.

Cahill instead pinpointed his error on Omar Vizquel's seventh-inning bunt with Alex Rios on second base, when the pitcher airmailed a throw down the right-field line that allowed Rios to score.

That aided a two-run rally that gave the Sox a 4-1 lead, which was crucial as the A's answered back with two runs in the bottom of the seventh but got no closer.

"I threw the ball away, and it kind of made the difference in the game," said Cahill (6-1), who was trying to become the first A's starter since Dave Stewart in 1988 to win his first seven decisions.

The defeat featured some traits of previous A's losses, including a lack of timely hits, as Oakland stranded 10 base runners.

Josh Willingham, who struck out four times, grounded into a game-ending fielder's choice with the tying run at third base in the ninth to cap his 0-for-5 day.

But the A's have another less-scrutinized problem to iron out: The defensive mistakes by their pitchers are piling up and proving costly.

Cahill's bad throw was the 10th error by an Oakland pitcher this season. That's the most in the majors, and it accounts for nearly one-third of the A's 32 errors overall.

On Friday, Brandon McCarthy made a throwing error that contributed to a four-run White Sox rally in a 4-3 Chicago win.

"We need to keep getting better at that, for sure," A's manager Bob Geren said. "There's a lot of outs, all 27, that pitchers are involved in. They have to be as good of fielders as everybody else."

Defense aside, Cahill was not sharp. He allowed a season-high 10 hits and gave up four runs (two earned). Cahill entered the day having given up one run or fewer in five straight starts.

His ERA rose from 1.72 to 1.82, dropping him from first in the league among starters to second behind Boston's Josh Beckett (1.75).

"Considering that stuff-wise it was probably the least he had all year, he still pitched well, and that's the sign of a quality pitcher," Geren said.

White Sox shortstop Alexei Ramirez went 3 for 4 with a leadoff homer in the fourth.

Though Cahill's bad throw hurt the A's, his teammates turned in some sterling defense.

Second baseman Mark Ellis started two inning-ending double plays and had a highlight play in the fifth, making a barehanded grab on Rios' slow chopper and throwing him out.

Even more spectacular, Ellis retrieved Adam Dunn's smash down the right-field line and threw out the slugger at first.

Ellis, hitting .194, also singled three times.

Coco Crisp's solo homer off Mark Buehrle (3-3) in the fifth put the A's on the board. They trailed 4-1 before Daric Barton's two-run single in the seventh pulled them to within a run.

Willingham hit with runners on the corners and two outs in the ninth against Sergio Santos. He grounded the first pitch to third, and Vizquel threw to second for the game-ending force play.

DH Matsui becoming a fixture on Oakland bench

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Hideki Matsui is spending more time on the bench than anyone could have predicted for the A's designated hitter.

Matsui, hitting just .236 with three homers and 15 RBIs, was out of the lineup Sunday for the fourth time in the past six games.

Kurt Suzuki served as DH in a 4-3 loss to the Chicago White Sox, with Landon Powell catching.

The left-handed hitting Matsui is hitting .171 against lefty pitchers and came in just 3 for 16 lifetime against White Sox lefty Mark Buehrle, who started Sunday.

The A's are scheduled to face four right-handed starters in their next four games against the Los Angeles Angels and Minnesota Twins.

"We've got a string of (right-handers) coming up, and he's going to get in there a lot," A's manager Bob Geren said.

But it appears Matsui will head back to the bench for this weekend's interleague series at AT&T Park against the Giants, when no DH is available.

Geren was asked if he envisioned Matsui getting any outfield starts in that series.

"We'll see how the next few games go," Geren said. "More than likely, not."

Geren did say he'd be comfortable using Matsui as part of double switches in interleague play.

Matsui was signed in the offseason to help anchor the middle of Oakland's lineup. It's safe to say he has yet to make the impact the A's anticipated.

"The results aren't there, that's the bottom line," Matsui said through his interpreter. "If the results are there, then eventually I'll work myself back into the lineup."

Matsui pinch-hit for Conor Jackson with two outs in the ninth and the tying run on third Sunday and walked.

Closer Andrew Bailey (forearm strain) likely will throw again Tuesday, Geren said. But the team hasn't decided whether that will be with Single-A Stockton, Triple-A Sacramento or perhaps another extended spring-training game in Phoenix.

Bailey said his arm felt good after Saturday's extended spring game, in which he threw 18 pitches.

Dallas Braden's shoulder surgery, scheduled for Monday in New York, has been pushed back because Braden's flight Sunday was canceled. The A's were hopeful of rescheduling the procedure for Tuesday, but that wasn't guaranteed.

Chin Music: Time is right for A's to make their move

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 5/15/2011 12:48pm

Take a glance at the AL West standings, and you wonder where the A's might be if they can just put a sustained hot streak together. No one in the division is playing great baseball yet. The Angels will be without Kendrys Morales for the rest of the season, and another of their best hitters, Vernon Wells, is on the DL with a groin injury. The Texas Rangers are without outfielders Josh Hamilton and Nelson Cruz, but both could return soon. You figure Texas will be a better team in a month or so than they are right now, simply because they'll be healthier.

Now is the time for the A's to make a move. They haven't put together a win streak of more than three games, and they haven't won more than two in a row for nearly a month. They've got their ace going today in Trevor Cahill (6-0), who's trying to become the first A's starter to win his first seven decisions since Dave Stewart went 8-0 in 1988. And the A's welcome the Angels for a two-game set starting Monday, so there's a chance to get something going ...

Today's lineups:

A's – Crisp CF, Barton 1B, Jackson RF, Willingham LF, Suzuki DH, LaRoche 3B, Ellis 2B, Powell C, Pennington SS; Cahill RHP.

White Sox – Pierre LF, Ramirez SS, Dunn 1B, Konerko DH, Quentin RF, Pierzynski C, Rios CF, Vizquel 3B, Beckham 2B; Buehrle LHP.

–Hideki Matsui is out of the lineup for the fourth time in the past six games (can't count Wednesday's rainout, when he did start). I think it's safe to say no one expected Matsui to be sitting the bench this much when he signed with the A's. Kurt Suzuki is the DH today, and A's manager Bob Geren explained that he wanted to keep Suzuki's bat in the lineup while getting Landon Powell a start at catcher (Suzuki is 8 for 21 against White Sox starter Mark Buehrle). Geren, looking ahead to the right-handers the A's will face coming up, said Matsui will get back in there on a more regular basis.

But Geren also was asked if he envisioned Matsui drawing any outfield starts when the A's play interleague games in National League parks. "We'll see how the next few games go, but more than likely not," Geren said. Perhaps Geren was only referring to next weekend's Giants series. The A's won't play in NL stadiums again until a six-game stretch from June 21-26, and if Matsui starts hitting, I'd expect him to get some outfield time then. But bottom line is, right now it's no given that Matsui will be in the A's lineup on any given day, and that's not something we would have thought back in spring training ...

There's weakness in the A's bats

Scott Ostler, San Francisco Chronicle

Sunday was Little League Day at Overstock.com Coliseum, and at least half of the announced crowd of 19,018 was churro-chomping, sugar-buzzing youngsters.

On entry, each kid was given an A's cap and was asked to sign a pledge that he or she would not take any of the A's hitters' bad habits back to his or her team.

The A's just don't hit much. They are at or near the bottom of the American League in most categories, including a .236 team batting average, third lowest in the league. Only 24 homers.

It's a case of undersock at Overstock.

On Sunday, the A's hit the ball OK - 10 hits, including a Coco Crisp homer, against the Chicago White Sox.

And the A's trotted out their undefeated (6-0) starter, Trevor Cahill.

Result: a 4-3 loss, dropping the A's back to .500 (20-20).

The A's did come back from a 4-1 deficit, but they went down with the potential tying and winning runs on base in the ninth.

If this had happened 5 miles away, it would be called torture.

The A's don't do torture. It's something lighter they offer, more of a sustained frustration.

On Sunday, it was Cahill pitching well, but not quite up to his own impossibly high standards. Yet Cahill probably would have walked away with another win had he not picked up Omar Vizquel's sacrifice bunt in the seventh and rifled it wildly past first.

Even looking not-quite-superb, Cahill picked up some Cy Young Award love. After the game, White Sox manager Ozzie Guillen praised the A's right-hander.

"He's the best pitcher in the American League," Guillen said.

Expound, please ...

"Strikes," Guillen said. "He throws a lot of strikes."

Coming into Sunday, Cahill was riding a seven-game winning streak, going back to the last start of the 2010 season.

Quietly, because that's his style, Cahill has been dominating.

"If my sinker is half as good as his, I'll take it," Sox starter Mark Buehrle said. "I don't have to face him, but I hear guys coming back to the bench talking about how much his stuff moves, and it's not just the sinker, it's also his changeup."

What has to be maddening to opposing hitters is how easy Cahill makes it look when he's rolling.

"Does he look real ferocious and intimidating?" A's manager Bob Geren asked before the game. "No. But does he look consistent every pitch? ... I like his style and demeanor. If he's retired eight or nine in a row, or he's given up two or three hits, you can't tell.

"That consistency over a long haul, that's what you want. There's some people who pitch with a lot of emotion on their sleeve, and it works for them. But having that consistent (calm) approach, it's a lot like his pitches. They're consistent."

But you knew Cahill was going to have a hard time running the table this season. No matter how easy he makes it look, he's still backed by the A's hitters. Or not.

Sunday's Oakland lineup featured eight hitters hitting between .177 (Mark Ellis) and .256 (Crisp). Ellis busted out of an 0-for-12 funk with three hits and had a spectacular day in the field, with three gems. He robbed Alex Rios of a chop hit in the fifth with a barehanded snatch and fling. Ellis ended the inning by starting a double play, with speedy Juan Pierre gunned down at first.

Niftiest of all, in the seventh, Ellis threw out Adam Dunn at first base from the outfield, 100 feet down the right-field line. The A's put on a big shift for Dunn, who pulled a liner just inside the first-base bag. Ellis, playing short right field, scooted to his left and threw out the plodding Dunn, an almost comical groundout.

Ellis' performance Sunday doesn't erase the A's on-going problem: lack of punch. Cleanup man Josh Willingham, the A's main power source (six homers, 22 RBIs), struck out four times, twice looking. He didn't whiff in the ninth, but he did bounce into a game-ending fielder's choice with runners on first and third, his average plummeting to .228.

What has to be discouraging is that, Sunday's 10 hits notwithstanding, it's hard to see the A's thriving offensively for any sustained period of time. Where's the dynamite?

The biggest offensive threat is Crisp, but the leadoff man is a fragile player, and much of his game is getting on base and making things happen, which requires cooperation from the men hitting behind him.

What do you get when you combine great pitching and poor hitting? So far, a perfect balance: .500.

A's reliever Andrew Bailey making progress

Scott Ostler, Chronicle Staff Writer

Andrew Bailey pitched to eight batters in an extended spring training game in Arizona on Saturday, then flew to Oakland and threw on the side before Sunday's game.

The session went well, and now manager **Bob Geren** and pitching coach **Ron Romanick** will decide what comes next - probably another appearance Tuesday in Arizona.

Surgery delayed: Dallas Braden was scheduled to fly to New York on Sunday and undergo shoulder surgery today, but his flight was canceled. The plan is for Braden to fly today and have the surgery as soon as possible.

Unhittable of late: Michael Wuertz pitched the ninth inning and struck out the side, including hot-hitting **Omar Vizquel**. It was Wuertz's eighth appearance since being reinstated from the disabled list April 25. Opposing batters are 1-for-28 against him this season.

Bring it on: In the eighth, with one out, **David DeJesus** was sent up to pinch-hit for **Andy LaRoche**, who had made four outs in three at-bats and was in a 2-for-26 funk. DeJesus had tripled Friday and Saturday. As DeJesus was announced, White Sox manager **Ozzie Guillen** went to the mound to bring in lefty **Matt Thornton**. From across the diamond, DeJesus gave Guillen a playfully dismissive hand wave. Thornton then struck out DeJesus.

Super starts: Eight A's starting pitchers have started a season 6-0 or better. How did they fare for the season? **Chuck Dobson** (9-0 in '71) 15-5, **Dave Stewart** (8-0 in '88) 21-12, Stewart (6-0 in '90) 22-11, Stewart (6-0 in '89) 21-9, **Moose Haas** (6-0 in '86) 7-2, **Mike Norris** (6-0 in '81) 12-9, **Matt Keough** (6-0 in '81) 10-6.

A's leading off

Scott Ostler, San Francisco Chronicle

Fountain of youth: Omar Vizquel is enjoying a second childhood. The Chicago infielder is hitting .350 as a part-time starter. But in his 23rd season, his memory is shot. Vizquel forgets he is 44.

Drumbeat: Sunday's A's game -- Cahill v. Buehrle

A note from the Chron Sports Desk as the A's get under way in Oakland: 5/15/2011, 1:09pm

We're a little blog and Twitter challenged out at the Coliseum today, as your faithful scribe Susan Slusser is home sick (our thanks to her for persevering through yesterday's game).

Chron columnist Scott Ostler is at the ballpark, figuring a Trevor Cahill no-hitter would be an ideal topic for his column. Maybe he'll get a Mark Buehrle perfect game instead, though.

Here's the lineup, courtesy of the Twitter feed of the MLB.com's Jane Lee ([@JaneMLB](#)). Crisp CF, Barton 1B, Jackson RF, Willingham LF, Suzuki DH, LaRoche 3B, Ellis 2B, Powell C, Pennington SS. That's right, no Matsui, again.

Twitter also is alive with Andrew Bailey updates. His arm is feeling good. According to [@joestiglich](#), Bailey likes where his fastball is at, but not his off-speed stuff.

Cahill suffers first loss as A's fall

By Jane Lee / MLB.com | 5/15/2011 8:15 PM ET

OAKLAND -- The path of perfection is no easy journey, but entering Sunday's series finale against the White Sox, A's hurler Trevor Cahill had traversed it rather effortlessly.

The A's right-hander, carrying a 6-0 record and American League-best 1.72 ERA into the contest with just 10 earned runs attached to his name through his first eight outings, appeared ready to stay the course and become the Majors' first starter to seven wins this season, facing just one over the minimum through his first three innings.

His previously perfect work appeared anything but that over the next four frames, though, as a handful of hard-hit balls, along with a consequential throwing error, broke open the game and ultimately led to a 4-3 A's defeat.

Overall, Cahill surrendered four runs -- two earned -- on a season-high 10 hits while walking two and striking out just one over seven innings, as he was subsequently handed his first loss, one which moved the A's (20-20) back to the .500 mark on the eve of a two-game home set with the division-rival Angels.

"His stuff wasn't quite as sharp as normal," manager Bob Geren said. "His velocity was down a bit, but it's not something to be concerned about. You can't feel great every time out. Stuff-wise, it was probably the least he's had all year. But he still pitched well, and that's the sign of a good pitcher."

Oakland's starting nine couldn't do much to help the hurler, going just 1-for-8 with runners in scoring position and stranding 10 on base, including two in the ninth. With runners on first and third, Josh Willingham looked to put aside a four-strikeout day but merely managed to ground out to end the game.

"You take away the error, and if the offense could have taken advantage of a couple opportunities, it would have been a different day," catcher Landon Powell said. "Trevor has pitched well all year for us, and he still gave us seven strong innings today, even though he didn't have his best stuff. That's a pretty good start for a lot of guys. I think if we take that start from every starter every game, we could win some games."

Cahill's miscue came in a two-run seventh, when he watched Omar Vizquel place a bunt down the first-base line. Cahill picked it up only to throw the ball wide to Daric Barton, allowing Alex Rios to score from second base and Vizquel to reach second.

It represented his first miscue of the season but the 10th committed by an A's pitcher, the most in the Majors.

"We need to keep getting better at that, that's for sure," Geren said. "There are a lot of outs and every 27 the pitcher is involved in, so they have to be as good a fielder as everyone else to help the team."

The damage caused by the error escalated when Cahill surrendered a run-scoring hit with two outs to Alexei Ramirez, who tallied three hits -- including a fourth-inning homer -- against the righty.

"I thought I made some decent pitches, he just hit them," Cahill said of his battles with Ramirez.

Cahill, who was the first A's pitcher to win each of his first six decisions since Jim Corsi did so in 1996, was looking to become the first A's starter to win his first seven decisions since Dave Stewart went 8-0 in 1988. Instead, he snapped a career-high-tying seven-game winning streak dating back to Oct. 1.

Of the 12 earned runs he's allowed through nine starts this year, six have come against a 17-24 White Sox team. Still, those numbers haven't fooled Chicago manager Ozzie Guillen, who very much recognizes Cahill's talent level, even deeming him "a serious candidate for a Cy Young Award."

"This kid has some of the best stuff in the game," Guillen said. "I don't know about the National League, but in the American League, I don't think anybody out there has better stuff than him. He throws a lot of ground balls, throws a lot of strikes. We tried to run a little bit more today against him just because he throws a lot of ground balls. I don't think we did anything different. I guess we just got lucky."

In a sense, Cahill did too on Sunday, thanks to a handful of impressive defensive performances behind him, particularly from Mark Ellis, who helped complete three of the A's four double plays.

"They're awesome," said Cahill of his teammates. "I can't say it enough, when I don't have my best stuff, they're there to pick me up."

"It was like web gems all over the place today," Powell added. "It was fun sitting back behind the plate and watching those."

At the plate, the A's struggled early against White Sox starter Mark Buehrle, garnering just five hits through the first six innings. One, though, was a solo shot to left field off the bat of Coco Crisp, his second long ball of the season.

"First two previous at-bats were 3-0, 3-0, so I just figured he was going to try to get ahead of me and kind of bear down and throw that first-pitch strike," Crisp said. "He threw a good pitch -- it wasn't a straight pitch, it was a slider, and I just got some good enough wood on it."

After knocking Buehrle out with one out and two runners on in the seventh, the A's narrowed Chicago's lead to one, courtesy of a two-run single from Daric Barton. Conor Jackson's ensuing hit moved Barton to third, but Willingham's fourth swing-and-miss ended the threat.

"We just didn't get the big hit, obviously," Geren said.

"We played some good ball today," Crisp said. "It just didn't go our way this time."

Bailey amped up for return to game action

By Jane Lee and Tom Green / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's right-hander Andrew Bailey reported no problems on Sunday from the extended spring training outing he underwent on Saturday, meaning the closer could begin a Minor League rehab stint as early as Tuesday.

Bailey was slated to throw in Oakland on Sunday morning, and the team is likely to decide his next step -- be it another inning in Arizona or a Minor League game -- thereafter.

The two-time All-Star closer appears geared for multiple Minor League appearances before being reinstated from the disabled list, and at one point the A's likely want him to pitch in back-to-back games as part of an effort to make sure he's completely ready for Major League action -- which he could still see by month's end.

"Based on yesterday's outing, we can definitely describe it as a success," manager Bob Geren said on Sunday. "Now, we'll see where he's at and go from there."

Bailey, who has been nursing a strained right forearm since mid-March, threw 1 1/3 innings on Saturday, giving up two hits and one run in an 18-pitch outing while flashing 92 and 94 mph on the radar gun.

"It felt good coming out," he said. "I was kinda surprised I was throwing that hard, but I'll take it."

It marked the first live game action for Bailey, who had been progressing via multiple bullpen sessions, live batting practice and, most recently, a simulated game.

"It took me two or three hitters to realize there was a count," said Bailey, laughing. "I finally realized at one point it was 1-2 and I should probably strike him out. It was fun. It was nice to have a defense behind me and players around me and actually be in a game. It's definitely better than throwing behind a cage or to our guys here."

Bailey noted he wasn't as sharp as he'd like to be, but the A's know that will come with time, much like it does for any pitcher during a typical Spring Training. The team will keep close watch on his performance while also remaining mindful of his health, so as to avoid a setback.

"I have to be patient with it, but my fastball feels good, my arm feels good," he said. "We don't really know how many innings it's going to take for me to get back, but we'll figure it out and which direction we'll go."

Matsui sits against tough Chicago lefty

OAKLAND -- Hideki Matsui was held out of the A's starting lineup for a second straight game on Sunday with lefty Mark Buehrle on the mound for the visiting White Sox.

Matsui is batting just .171 against southpaws this season, compared to a .261 mark when facing right-handers. Overall, he's struggling in the early portion of the 2011 campaign, with a .236 batting average and .288 on-base percentage.

He did enter the ninth inning of the A's 4-3 loss as a pinch-hitter for Connor Jackson. With the tying run at third base and two outs, Matsui drew a six-pitch walk against closer Sergio Santos.

Matsui has started just two of the club's past six games but is expected to play on a more regular basis in the coming week with the A's slated to go up against a handful of right-handed pitchers, manager Bob Geren said.

On Sunday, the A's skipper elected to utilize Kurt Suzuki in the DH slot, while handing Landon Powell his ninth start of the season behind the plate. Suzuki entered 8-for-21 (.381) lifetime against Buehrle -- numbers that are far superior to Matsui's career .188 average and four strikeouts against the southpaw.

Matsui has started 32 of the club's 40 games this season but isn't expected to see much playing time next month during Interleague play aside from maybe double-switch duty. When asked if he envisioned Matsui receiving any outfield starts when the team plays in National League parks from June 21-26, Geren said, "We'll see how the next few games go, but more than likely not."

Little Leaguers enjoy day at the ballpark

OAKLAND -- On an overcast Sunday morning, A's shortstop Cliff Pennington and first-base coach Tye Waller helped brighten the day of thousands of local youth on Little League Day at the Coliseum.

Pennington and Waller each fielded questions from Little Leaguers along the first-base line prior to Sunday's rubber match with the White Sox. Growing up in Corpus Christi, Texas, Pennington said he never got the chance that the kids in attendance had on Sunday.

"I went to a couple Major League games growing up, but never like this," the A's shortstop said. "We didn't have access to something like this, but it's a pretty cool thing for the kids who live in the Bay Area to be able to come out and do this."

Aside from getting a chance to ask Pennington and Waller questions -- which ranged from what it was like to hit their first home run to the biggest difference between being a Major Leaguer and a Minor Leaguer -- the Little Leaguers had the opportunity to walk a lap around the ballpark and be greeted by other A's players.

Pennington enjoyed the opportunity to interact with the kids, and said it evoked memories of when he played Little League ball growing up.

"My memories of Little League are just having fun, playing baseball with the guys that are still some of my best friends today," Pennington said. "I think back to the guys I've played with that I'm still close to and just how much fun we used to have."

It was the second time this season the A's hosted such a day, and they have now brought in a combined 11,000 Little Leaguers -- up 40 percent from last season's total.

Worth noting

Dallas Braden's scheduled flight to New York was canceled on Sunday, so the A's lefty is now slated to travel on Monday, when he was supposed to undergo surgery to repair a torn capsule in his left shoulder. The A's are hoping the surgery can be rescheduled for Tuesday or soon after.

Braden's recovery time is to be determined following the procedure, to be performed in New York City by Mets medical director Dr. David Altchek. However, it's likely that the southpaw will miss the remainder of the season.

Pineiro, Anderson open key AL West series

By Tom Singer / MLB.com | 5/15/2011 8:51 PM ET

Canvassing the Major League landscape as the season approached, most experts were in agreement that the tightest, most balanced of the six divisions would be the American League West.

So far, so right on. The AL West is the only division to feature three clubs on top bunched within a game-and-a-half, and two of those bump into each other Monday night in search of some daylight.

Neither the Angels or the A's, meeting in the first of a two-game series in the Coliseum, figure to run away and hide any time soon. The teams are simply too similar, both reliant on slump-preventing starting pitching.

Monday night's duelists, Angels right-hander Joel Pineiro and Oakland lefty Brett Anderson, are two cases in point.

"Similar teams, actually. Very strong pitching staffs," said Oakland skipper Bob Geren. "[The Angels] are not scoring as many runs as they would like, I'm sure, similar to us. They're relying a lot on their starting pitching to keep them in games.

"[Our offenses are] very similar," Geren added. "They'll run, they'll do a few things like we do and play pretty good defense like we do. A lot of similarities."

Pineiro came off the disabled list two weeks ago, just in time to pick up some of the slack in the wake of the admirable paces that had been set by fellow righties Jered Weaver and Dan Haren.

Weaver and Haren, in fact, are winless in six starts since Pineiro made the first of his three starts, on April 30. Besides winning two of them, Pineiro allowed only one run and four hits in seven innings for a no-decision in the other.

"Getting Joel back throwing well is huge for us," said Angels manager Mike Scioscia. "He really has four pitches he can use. When he mixes them up, he can be effective. He has the changeup working with the two-seamer, and a good curveball and slider, too."

"I've been having good outings," said Pineiro, who missed more than a month with tightness in the shoulder blade area. "I'm keeping my sinker down -- that's the biggest key. It's no secret what I want to do out there. I'm going to work fast and keep the ball down in good locations with good movement. I feel normal, like nothing happened [physically]."

Normal for the A's young rotation has been quite exceptional. Oakland starters have claimed 16 of the team's 20 wins, and collectively lead Major League rotations with an ERA of 2.72.

Anderson, the 23-year-old left-hander who came from Arizona in the December 2007 trade for Dan Haren, is keeping fast company. He ranks a solid 18th in the American League with his 3.21 ERA -- but is only fourth on his own staff.

Angels: Abreu chasing The Iron Horse

- Bobby Abreu remained two doubles shy of tying Lou Gehrig for No. 32 all time at 534 as he sat out Sunday's start against

Texas lefty C.J. Wilson, then fanned as a sixth-inning pinch-hitter. The Angels will see lefties in both games -- with Gio Gonzalez following Anderson -- but the lefty-hitting Abreu has typically hit southpaws on a par with right-handers.

- The series loss in Texas was only the Angels' fourth of the season out of 13. Even after dropping two of three to the Rangers, the Halos have 12 wins in their last 18 road games.
- Erick Aybar is riding a 13-game hitting streak, best of his career, after a three-hit Sunday that included a home run -- his seventh against Texas out of his 16 career homers.

A's: Almost always on Sunday

- The 4-3 loss to the White Sox was Oakland's first in seven Sunday games this season.
- Trevor Cahill has allowed more than one run only twice in his last nine starts -- both times to the White Sox, who had dented him for four runs in 4 2/3 innings on April 12 prior to handing him his first loss on Sunday.

Worth noting

The standoff between winners of nine AL West titles since 2000 is turning into a bona fide home-and-home rivalry. The Angels have dropped six of their last 10 games in Oakland, and have won eight of the last nine in Anaheim.

A's Cahill loses his first game of season

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Oakland's Trevor Cahill lost his undefeated record and gained the respect of Chicago manager Ozzie Guillen and lefty Mark Buehrle.

Shortly after the White Sox beat the Athletics 4-3 on Sunday and handed Cahill his first loss of the season, Guillen sat in his office and declared the Oakland right-hander one of the best pitchers in baseball.

Around the corner in the Chicago clubhouse, Buehrle also fawned over Cahill's pitches.

Even on a bad day, the ace of the A's rotation is too good to ignore.

"He has some of the best stuff in the game," Guillen said. "We got lucky. He can be a serious candidate for the Cy Young Award. I know it's early but he has the stuff."

Cahill (6-1) gave up four runs, just two of them earned. One came on a solo home run to Alexei Ramirez, who had three of the season-high 10 hits Cahill allowed.

It could have been worse, too. The A's turned four double plays while second baseman Mark Ellis made several stellar defensive plays to shut down Chicago threats.

Still, Cahill was good enough that Guillen couldn't stop gushing about the right-hander.

"To hear him say that, especially on a day like today when I didn't feel I wasn't as sharp, definitely is a confidence booster," Cahill said. "I wouldn't say it was my best start. I kind of battled through it."

Buehrle (3-3) won for only the second time in 15 appearances at Oakland. He gave up three runs, seven hits and struck out a season-best six, then later joined Guillen in praising Cahill.

"If my sinker is half as good as his I'll take it," Buehrle said. "I don't have to face him but I hear guys coming back to the bench talking about how much his stuff moves.

And it's not just the sinker, it's also his changeup."

Sergio Santos pitched the ninth for his fifth consecutive save, extending his scoreless streak to 19 innings for the White Sox who went 6-3 on their road trip, winning all three series.

It was anything but routine, though. Santos walked Cliff Pennington to lead off the inning and walked pinch hitter Hideki Matsui with two outs before Josh Willingham grounded out.

"The big hit, when we needed it, eluded us," Oakland manager Bob Geren said. "What was outstanding today was our defense. We just didn't get the big hit."

Daric Barton drove in two runs and Coco Crisp homered for the A's, who have lost three of their last four.

Ramirez drove in two runs and Omar Vizquel had two hits.

Ramirez hit Cahill's first pitch of the fourth inning over the left field fence.

Crisp tied the game with a solo shot in the fifth after Carlos Quentin put the White Sox ahead for good with a sacrifice fly in the sixth.

Chicago added two unearned runs in the seventh, when Cahill threw wildly to first on Vizquel's sacrifice bunt, allowing Alex Rios to score. Ramirez added an RBI single.

Barton hit a two-run single in the seventh.

The A's four double plays included a 9-3 and a 4-3-6-3.

NOTES: The last time the A's turned four or more double plays was Aug. 2, when they had five against Kansas City, also with Cahill on the mound. ... LHP Dallas Braden's flight to New York on Sunday was cancelled, so he'll fly out on Monday. That also means his shoulder surgery will be pushed back at least one day.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Game-winning homer ends River Cats streak

By Veronika Tafoya / Sacramento River Cats

An explosive eight-run second inning by Sacramento was fizzled by a steady Nashville offense as the visiting River Cats fell 9-8 on a Jeremy Reed game-winning home run Sunday afternoon.

Sacramento struggled to break a seven-inning scoreless streak, which turned into a tie in the sixth inning and was broken open with Reed's solo homer in the ninth.

River Cats right-hander Yadel Marti was looking to come back after his last rocky outing against Memphis, in which he gave up seven runs in only 3.0 innings. Unfortunately for Marti, it wasn't much of an improvement. He gave the Sounds a three-run lead in the first inning after Brett Carroll knocked a three-run home run.

Nashville starter Mark Rogers was also off to a rough start, and the River Cats took full advantage in a lengthy second inning. Jai Miller singled, Josh Donaldson walked, Michael Taylor doubled home a run and Shane Peterson homered for a 4-3 lead with one out.

Jemile Weeks kept the rally going by walking to first, stealing second and scoring on a ground ball by Steve Tolleson, who later stole second. Rogers gave up back-to-back walks to Matt Carson and Anthony Recker, his third and fourth of the inning, to load the bases and end his outing. Sounds reliever Sam Narron came in and immediately walked in a run. Josh Donaldson sent a ground ball to center field to score Carson and Recker, bringing the score to 8-3.

The eight runs were the most scored in a single inning by River Cats this season. Five Cats walked and five got RBIs in the inning.

The Sounds had their work cut out for them going into the third. Back-to-back hits put both Reed and Edwin Maysonet on base, and both were sent home on a two-run, two-out single by George Kottaras that brought the score to 8-5. In the fourth, Carroll picked up his second home run to cut the River Cats lead to 8-7. The game was tied 8-8 in the fifth as Nashville's Jordan Brown knocked out a solo home run, his first of the season.

In the sixth inning, Sacramento rallied to break their scoreless streak. Steve Tolleson bunted to get to first base, and Carson sent him to second with another base hit. Recker loaded the bases with his base hit, but Miller failed to move the runners any further as he struck out at the plate.

Narron dominated, pitching 7.1 scoreless innings with six strikeouts and only one walk, despite giving up eight hits.

River Cats reliever Jerry Blevins held the Sounds from scoring through his 2.1 innings pitched. Vinnie Chulk replaced Blevins during the bottom of the eighth, but gave up a final home run to Jeremy Reed in the ninth, ending the game at 9-8.

The loss breaks the River Cats' four-game winning streak.

The River Cats will take on the Sounds in the third game of the series Monday at 5:05 p.m. at Herschel Greer Stadium in Nashville, Tenn. with right-handers Graham Godfrey (4-0, 2.43) of Sacramento and Frankie De La Cruz (0-1, 3.25) facing off.

Missions force 'Hounds to split

Jordan Mason, Midland Reporter-Telegram

The San Antonio Missions scored nine runs in the fourth and fifth innings, eight of them coming with two outs, to turn a close game into a 10-2 blowout victory against the Midland RockHounds at Citibank Ballpark on Sunday.

The win allowed the Missions to split the four-game series with the RockHounds after losing the previous two.

"It was great," Missions catcher Eddy Rodriguez said. "We had a couple tough games, but we came back, and we made a little statement here at the end."

Rodriguez, playing in his first game with the Missions since being reassigned from Single-A Lake Elsinore, broke open a 1-0 game in the fourth inning with a two-run home run to left field.

The maddening part for the RockHounds was that the homer came after catcher Petey Paramore dropped the apparent third out on a pop up right in front of the San Antonio dugout.

Rodriguez made Midland pay on the very next pitch.

"You just want to come and add to a team like this," Rodriguez said. "Whatever role I need to do and whatever job I need to do that's what I'm here to do."

That he did, starting a rally that culminated with Beamer Weems launching a three-run homer of his own into the left field bullpen three batters later to put the Missions up 6-0.

"They're a good hitting club," RockHounds manager Steve Scarsone said. "Two swings and all of a sudden it's not a close game anymore."

But San Antonio wasn't done after the fourth, scoring four runs on five hits in the fifth to end starter Justin Murray's day and put the game away. Murray allowed eight runs on nine hits and remains winless on the season.

Anthony Bass, meanwhile, pitched a solid game for the Missions, allowing just one run and three hits over six innings. He also had the help of four double plays turned by his defense.

"He was keeping our hitters off-balance," Scarsone said. "The first three or four innings I don't think we had many real comfortable at-bats."

Midland begins an eight-game road trip at 7 p.m. today against Frisco, and despite the loss on Sunday, remains confident after splitting its series with first-place San Antonio.

"I think we should be going on the road here thinking these are ours to win," Scarsone said. "If we play the way we should and the way we can they should be ours."

'HOUND BITES: Adam Heether, playing his second game for Midland since being reassigned from Triple-A Sacramento, went hitless in two at-bats but scored the RockHounds' first run in the bottom of the fifth. ... RockHounds center fielder Jermaine

Mitchell stole his seventh stolen base of the season in the bottom of the third. ...Midland begins a four-game road series against Frisco today. The RockHounds were two games ahead of Frisco in the Texas League South standings entering a home series against the RoughRiders May 7 but are currently a game behind the second-place RoughRiders. ...Rangers outfielder Nelson Cruz will be joining Frisco today for what is expected to be a four-game rehab stint

TODAY'S PROBABLES: Midland will start Carlos Hernandez (4-1, 6.31 ERA), while Frisco will start top prospect Martin Perez.

Giants Blank Ports 2-0

05/15/2011 5:30 PM ET

SAN JOSE, Calif. - For the third time in 2011 and the second time in a week, the Stockton Ports were shut out; this time on a Sunday afternoon in San Jose. The San Jose Giants pushed across two runs in a low-scoring affair that was delayed 26 minutes at the start due to heavy rain and hail, handing the Boys of Banner Island a 2-0 loss and reclaiming first place in the North Division.

Both starting pitchers, Dan Straily (3-2) for Stockton and Chris Heston (4-1), pitched around early jams. Heston pitched around a two-out double from Michael Choice in the 1st, a one-out single from Anthony Aliotti in the 2nd, and a one-out triple from Michael Gilmartin in the 3rd to keep the Ports off the scoreboard. After Gilmartin's triple, Dusty Coleman grounded out to first and, two batters later, Mitch LeVier struck out to end the inning.

Straily, with two on and nobody out in the bottom of the 1st, got Jarrett Parker to hit into a 5-4-3 double-play and struck out Hector Sanchez to end the Giants threat. Straily pitched around a one-out double from Chris Dominguez in the 2nd and a two-out walk in the 3rd to keep the Giants off the scoreboard through the first three innings.

After setting the side down in order in the 4th, Straily was tagged for a run on one swing of the bat in the 5th. With one out, Luke Anders hit a high fly ball toward the right field corner that cleared the fence and stayed fair by a few feet to give the Giants a 1-0 lead. Straily would go on to retire five of the next six batters to end his outing.

Straily would suffer the tough-luck loss for the Ports, going six innings and allowing just the one run on three hits while striking out five.

Stockton's offense, meanwhile, couldn't get much started against Heston. After Gilmartin's triple, Heston retired 14 of his next 17 hitters, allowing only one hit in that span, to complete his outing.

Heston matched a season-long outing by going seven innings, allowing four hits while striking out a season-high eight.

Over the final two innings, the Ports had opportunities to plate their first runs of the game, but ultimately fell short. After Giants reliever Chuck Lofgren retired the first two batters he faced in the 8th, he allowed back-to-back walks to Choice and pinch-hitter Max Stassi. The Giants then called upon their closer Heath Hembree (SV, 12) to face Myrio Richard, who flew out to right to end the threat.

The Giants added an insurance run in the bottom of the 8th off Ports reliever Brett Hunter. With two outs, Parker reached base on a broken-bat infield single to the right side. Parker then stole second and went to third on a throwing error made by Ports catcher Ryan Lipkin. Sanchez came up next and singled to right to plate the insurance run and give the Giants a 2-0 cushion. It was the only run Hunter allowed in two innings of relief.

Stockton again faced Hembree in the 9th and had the first two hitters reach base. After Aliotti walked and Leonardo Gil singled to put the possible-tying runs aboard, Hembree got Rashun Dixon to fly to center, Lipkin to fly to left, and Gilmartin to strike out swinging on a 3-2 pitch to end the ballgame.

The Ports went 0-for-9 with runners in scoring position on the afternoon and stranded 10 baserunners. Aliotti was the only Ports player with more than one hit, as he went 2-for-3 and reached base three times.

With the series tied at one game apiece, the Ports and Giants will play a crucial series finale on Monday night at Municipal Stadium. Rob Gilliam (3-3, 4.43 ERA) will head to the hill for Stockton, opposed by Santiago Casilla (0-0, 0.00 ERA) who will be starting the game on Major League rehab for San Jose. First pitch is set for 7 p.m. PDT.

Bees Sweep Doubleheader: Now 27-9

By Jon Versteeg, burlingtonbees.com

BURLINGTON, IA-The Burlington Bees (27-9) beat the Cedar Rapids Kernels (20-17) 2-1 in game one of the doubleheader at

Community Field. In the nightcap, Burlington RHP A.J. Griffin (4-0) took a no-hitter into the sixth inning as the Bees won 2-0 before 351 fans at Community Field.

Burlington scored two runs in the third inning of game one. CF Tyreece House (1-2) singled and scored on a double by C John Nester (1-1). Nester moved to third base on a groundout by RF Royce Consigli (0-3) and scored on a groundout by 2B Nino Leyja.

Cedar Rapids cut the Burlington lead to one with a single run in the fourth inning against Burlington starter Blake Hasebrock (3-0).

Hasebrock surrendered one run in five and two-thirds innings pitched. He allowed just four hits to get the win. RHP Zach Thornton pitched an inning and a third to get his first save of the season.

The Bees scored first in game two with a single run in the second inning. LF Douglas Landaeta (1-3) hit a two-out single and moved to second base on a walk by RF Jose Rivero (1-2). CF Tyreece House (2-3) hit a single through the right side of the infield to score Landaeta and make it 1-0 Burlington.

The Bees added a run in the fifth inning. 2B Nino Leyja (3-4) singled and went to second base when 3B Tony Thompson (0-2) was hit by a pitch. 1B Josh Whitaker (0-3) popped out to center field and Leyja moved to third base. SS Yordy Cabrera (0-3) grounded out and Leyja scored to make it 2-0.

Griffin pitched five and two-thirds innings and allowed no runs on three hits. Chris Mederos pitched the final inning and a third to get his fifth save.

The Bees take Monday off and open up a three-game series with the Clinton LumberKings on Tuesday at 6:30 p.m. It's KRAFT Singles Tuesday Night Tickets: Buy 1 Ticket, Get 1 Free from KRAFT Singles by bringing your package wrapper to the Community Field Box Office. It's also Hawk Eye Two-for-Tuesday: Look for the coupon good for two-for-one general admission tickets in the Hawk Eye newspaper brought to you by 101.7 The Bull. RHP George Mieses (1-3, 5.05) gets the start for Clinton while Burlington sends RHP Josh Bowman (4-0, 2.97) to the mound. Pre-game coverage begins at 6:10 p.m. on Newsradio 1490 KBUR and online at www.gobees.com.

2011 Bees tickets are on sale now! To purchase season tickets, bonus books or single game tickets, please give the Bees a call at (319) 754-5705, go online to www.gobees.com, or stop by the box office at Community Field during normal business hours.