

Oakland A's split series with Detroit Tigers after 3-0 loss

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

When Kurt Suzuki found himself in a nasty first-half slump, he tried hard to work his way out of it.

Perhaps that was the problem.

The A's catcher, a workaholic even when things go swimmingly, logs even more hours when the going gets rough. Often that digs a deeper hole.

"I think I put too much work in," Suzuki conceded. "I was trying to figure stuff out. I could say it pretty much jumbled my brain up. It really got me away from doing what I do. You've just gotta hit the ball hard, hit the ball into the gaps."

Suzuki has found his stride at the plate in recent weeks. But as will be the case with many A's hitters, his overall numbers won't be pretty when the season wraps.

Suzuki is batting .241 after Sunday's 3-0 loss to the Detroit Tigers, and it's taken a turnaround for him just to get to that point. He was hitting .215 as late as July 2 but has batted .279 over his past 53 games.

He's shown good power with 14 homers, one off his career high from 2009, but he's driven in just 42 runs.

That's down from a team high-tying 71 RBIs last season and a career-best 88 in 2009.

"All players who are around for a while, they're going to have good years, they'll have average years, and years that aren't so good," said A's manager Bob Melvin, himself a former catcher. "It's how he responds the next year. I think he'll have that much more tenacity going into next year knowing that, for the most part, he hasn't had the type of year he'd like to have."

Suzuki's team didn't have the day it was looking for Sunday against Justin Verlander (24-5), the Tigers' Cy Young favorite who allowed just three hits over eight innings.

Detroit got the only offense it needed with Austin Jackson's sixth-inning solo homer off Guillermo Moscoso (8-9) that broke a scoreless tie.

Defensively, Suzuki is one of the game's best at blocking pitches in the dirt. He continues to earn raves inside Oakland's clubhouse for his work ethic and preparation in game-planning for opposing hitters.

But Melvin and bench coach Joel Skinner, another former catcher, have worked with him on his throwing.

Suzuki, in the second year of a four-year, \$16.25 million contract, has thrown out just 20 of 113 attempted base stealers this season. That 17.7 percent success rate ranked fourth-lowest in the American League entering Sunday.

To put it in context, Baltimore Orioles catcher Matt Wieters entered Sunday leading the A.L. with a 35 percent success rate. The A.L. average was right around 25-26 percent.

One scout said that he thinks Suzuki's footwork has improved as the season has progressed and that his throws have gotten better as a result.

Skinner says Suzuki sometimes tries to be too quick to unload the ball and loses his mechanics. But Skinner adds: "I don't care what your percentages are, there's a lot that goes into that equation."

It's worth noting that A's pitchers, as a whole, haven't been as diligent about holding runners as in recent years.

Suzuki's 93 stolen bases allowed led the A.L. entering Sunday, but on many of those attempts he hasn't had a prayer of nailing the runner even with a good throw.

"I let you guys (reporters) take care of those numbers," Suzuki said. "I feel like when I've had a chance to throw somebody out, I've done a pretty good job of it."

Oakland A's update: Going up against Justin Verlander a tall order for Guillermo Moscoso

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

A's right-hander Guillermo Moscoso had his work cut out in opposing the Detroit Tigers' Justin Verlander on Sunday.

Moscoso was up to the task for the most part, giving up just one hit in six innings during the A's 3-0 loss at the O.co Coliseum. But that one hit was costly, as Austin Jackson's homer leading off the sixth inning broke a scoreless tie.

The Tigers added insurance runs in the eighth and ninth off Craig Breslow and Josh Outman.

The A's have been shut out 15 times this season. The only times they've been blanked more in Oakland history came in 1978 (19 times) and 1979 (17).

Moscoso (8-9) has started in five of those 15 shutouts, and he's twice pitched in games the A's lost 1-0. He lowered his ERA to 3.35.

Moscoso knew he was up for a challenge against Verlander (24-5), who allowed just three hits over eight innings.

"He's had a great year," Moscoso said. "My job is trying to keep us in the game and try to go deep in the game."

Verlander's 24 wins are five more than any other pitcher in the majors, and they're the most by any major leaguer since Randy Johnson notched 24 in 2002.

"He's not just a thrower," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "He pitched with his breaking ball today. You saw a lot of 91, 92, 93 (mph). He was using his curveball in all counts. That's what makes him tough."

With Hideki Matsui getting a day off, Chris Carter -- recalled from Triple-A Sacramento on Saturday -- drew the start at D.H.

Facing Verlander wasn't the easiest task for Carter in his first action back from the minors, but Melvin said he wanted to get Carter in the lineup quick because he was swinging a hot bat at Sacramento.

Carter went 0 for 3 with three strikeouts. Verlander got him looking on a slow curve and then swinging on fastballs that clocked 97 and 98 mph on the stadium radar gun.

Melvin said he's considering giving Carter another start soon at first base to give Brandon Allen a day off.

Melvin said reliever Joey Devine battled some back soreness recently, one reason the pitcher wasn't brought up from the minors.

Chin Music: Carter draws a start at DH vs. Verlander

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 9/18/2011 12:19pm

Here's the lineups for the A's-Tigers series finale:

A's — Weeks 2B, Sizemore 3B, Crisp CF, Willingham LF, DeJesus RF, Carter DH, Allen 1B, Suzuki C, Sogard SS; Moscoso RHP.

Tigers — Jackson CF, Kelly 3B, Young LF, Cabrera 1B, Martinez DH, Avila C, Guillen 2B, Dirks RF, Santiago SS; Verlander RHP.

—Just regular days off for Hideki Matsui and Cliff Pennington, as Bob Melvin said he wanted to use Monday's off-day as a chance to get those guys two days of rest. So Chris Carter draws a start against Justin Verlander. Not the easiest assignment, but Melvin wanted to get him in the lineup sooner rather than later. Melvin had said previously he'd wait to play Carter against a lefty.

That's all for now ...

Mercury News editorial: Just make a decision, Selig -- any decision

Mercury News Editorial

In a stalemate, any kind of change can turn into an opening for resolution. So with Pollyanna optimism, we hope the departure of Bill Neukom as the San Francisco Giants' managing general partner provides an opening for Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig to finally decide whether or not the A's can move from Oakland to San Jose.

Approving the move, contingent on a financial settlement with the Giants, would be the right choice. It would turn the A's into moneymakers instead of a financial drain on other team owners, and it would directly benefit Major League Baseball: The other likely homes for the team would be far less profitable than San Jose, and Selig's mission is to act in the best interests of the game.

But at this point, any decision on the move is better than no decision. If Selig can't bring himself to say yes to San Jose over the Giants' objections, then he needs to say no. Period. The city, if not A's owner Lew Wolff, needs to move on.

This wearying saga began in 2009, when Wolff gave up on plans for a stadium in Fremont and turned to San Jose. City officials scrambled to assemble land, work the ballpark into its downtown plan and prepare to float a ballot measure, since voter approval would be required for the project.

But Major League Baseball first had to approve the move, since the Giants had been granted territorial rights to the South Bay when they explored building a stadium here in 1989. Selig clearly has been caught between, on one side, the Giants, who are rolling in dough since their World Series win last year and don't want South Bay competition; and on the other side, along with Wolff, some other team owners who are tired of subsidizing the low-attendance A's in their current, clunky baseball-football stadium in Oakland.

So Selig named a task force to give him cover. Er, wait, we mean to carefully analyze the facts and make a well-grounded decision. Yeah, that's the ticket.

That was two and a half years ago. Either it's a task force of snails, or Selig lacks the courage to act on the facts.

South Bay political leaders, a community coalition and some captains of industry have been lobbying Selig to bring the A's here. But he is beholden only to his board, which is made up of team owners, including the Giants.

Neukom was a formidable board member, a dynamite litigator who seemed to relish the prospect of a legal fight. Team president Larry Baer, taking over for him, is as vocal an opponent of the San Jose A's, but some think he might be more open to a deal.

If not, and Selig can't approve the move, then he might as well just come out with it and say no.

Wolff most likely will sell the team, and a new owner will move it outside the Bay Area. And cash-strapped San Jose can make other plans for that downtown land.

It would be an unfortunate resolution, but it would be better than none.

A's get shut out for AL-most 15th time

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

OAKLAND -- Guillermo Moscoso, firmly in the rotation discussion for next season, worked another strong outing Sunday, but he was on the wrong end of yet another shutout.

Moscoso gave up only one hit, Austin Jackson's solo homer to lead off the sixth, in Oakland's 3-0 loss to the Tigers at the Coliseum. The A's have been shut out 15 times this season, the most in the American League and the most by an Oakland team since 1979, when they were blanked 17 times.

"It surprises me when we're shut out," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "It doesn't feel like that many."

Detroit starter Justin Verlander earned his 24th victory, most in the majors by five and most in the big leagues since Randy Johnson's 24 wins in 2002. He has won 12 starts in a row, a Detroit record.

Moscoso, the starter five times when Oakland has been shut out, tied his career high with eight strikeouts, and he is 2-1 with a 1.74 ERA in September. Opponents are batting .138 against him this month.

"He was up for the task today," Melvin said.

Not in the lineup for Oakland on Sunday: shortstop Cliff Pennington and designated hitter Hideki Matsui, who both got days off, giving them a good stretch of rest when combined with today's off day.

With Matsui on the bench, Chris Carter, recalled a day earlier, got the start at DH - and the assignment wasn't necessarily the easiest for a prospect just back in the big leagues with Cy Young Award favorite Verlander on the mound. Carter went 0-for-3 with three strikeouts.

Pennington is hitting .212 over his past 13 games, but he's having a solid season, particularly in the second half, during which he is batting .309 with five homers and 35 RBIs. Melvin mentioned what a good clutch hitter Pennington is becoming, and the numbers support that: He's hitting .487 with men in scoring position over his past 40 games and .351 for the season, fifth best in the American League.

Pennington is emerging as one of the A's better position players, and he's proved to be a versatile hitter - he has batted in every spot in the lineup except fourth and fifth.

"The fact is, he knocks runners in, he's getting big hits, he puts the bat on the ball," Melvin said. "He's a switch-hitter, so you always get the matchup with him."

Almost by necessity, Pennington is turning into a team leader. He's the only member of the infield who opened the season with the club.

"We definitely have a young infield," Pennington said. "So you have to be a leader a little bit. We're all trying to learn from each other, though, and we're jelling together. We've got some good building blocks."

"He really has become the quarterback of the infield," Melvin said. "He's really taken charge."

The one area Melvin and Pennington would like to see improve next season is Pennington's baserunning. Though he's been successful on his past seven stolen-base attempts, he's 13 for 22 on the season, the lowest success rate in the league. Last year, he was 29 for 34.

"That's an area I'll be emphasizing this offseason," he said. "Speed, conditioning, working on jumps, doing drills."

Briefly: Ryan Sweeney has not yet resumed baseball activity since straining his right quadriceps on Wednesday, but he is hopeful he'll be allowed to hit in the batting cage Tuesday. ... Reliever Joey Devine didn't pitch in Triple-A Sacramento's playoffs and was not recalled by the A's because of back issues that occasionally flared up the past month or two, according to Melvin.

Drumbeat: Chris Carter in A's lineup vs. Verlander; skinny Jonah Hill alert

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at the Coliseum 9/18/2011 1:01pm

Manager Bob Melvin said yesterday that he thought Chris Carter might get a start or two against Texas this week because the Rangers are throwing two left-handers here, but Carter slipped into today's lineup against Detroit. Melvin said that he wanted to give Cliff Pennington and Hideki Matsui the day off, so they get two in a row with tomorrow's offday. That allowed him to plug in Carter, and he thinks Carter might fill in for Brandon Allen at first base on Tuesday or Wednesday.

So....Carter's first start after being recalled comes against Justin Verlander, who will be this year's AL Cy Young winner.

"Verlander's give up some home runs, Chris is a home-run guy and he's swinging the bat well," Melvin said. "When a guy is having success like he is, you want to get him in sooner than later."

Here's the lineup, with Guillermo Moscoso on the mound: Weeks 2b, Sizemore 3b, Crisp cf, Willingham lf, DeJesus rf, Carter dh, Allen 1b, Suzuki c, Sogard ss.

Jonah Hill is warming up his arm on the field pre- first pitch, and Scott Hatteberg, the real one, is on the field. Some actors playing David Justice and Chad Bradford (we think it must be the Chad Bradford – he's wearing his number) are also out there. Jonah Hill has lost so much weight, he's unrecognizable. Skinny! No wild hair! Are we really sure that *is* Jonah Hill? I'd have guessed Ryan Gosling, maybe. Jonah Hill? No way.

If you didn't see it in today's paper, [Michael Lewis told me last week](#) that he believes "Moneyball" the book might have cost the A's an opportunity or two, and many others weigh in on "Moneyball" and what it meant for the A's then and now.

In the [other A's story in the Chronicle today](#), a look at the A's possible trip to Tokyo next April, and the increasing likelihood that Hideki Matsui will be back as Oakland's DH. At the bottom of that story: Daric Barton has had right shoulder surgery; there was no tear in the labrum, but anchors were inserted to strengthen it. He's expected to be ready for spring training, though his future with Oakland is very unclear. Brandon Allen is looking very much like the A's first baseman.

Melvin said this morning that reliever Joey Devine is not back up because of some back issues that have cropped up occasionally the past month or two.

Moscoso loses no-no, game on one pitch

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Six months ago, it would have seemingly been laughable to imagine Guillermo Moscoso -- once considered a long shot to land in the A's rotation -- engaging in a pitching duel with the likes of Justin Verlander.

But there he was on Sunday, countering with the soon-to-be American League Cy Young winner, no-hitting the Tigers through five innings. Verlander, meanwhile, was his usual dominant self, limiting the A's to two hits without a run in that span.

But a sixth-inning leadoff shot off the bat of Austin Jackson rid Moscoso of his second no-hit bid in his last three tries and, ultimately, left him on the wrong end -- again -- of a 3-0 game.

"It was a fastball down and away," Moscoso said. "It was the second pitch, and I was trying to get ahead in the count, but he got me. And that was it."

For Verlander -- who finished the day with just three hits to his name through eight innings -- it marked his AL-leading 24th victory and 12th straight. For Moscoso, who exited after six while fanning a career high-tying eight and allowing the lone run on 110 pitches, it marked the third 1-0 contest he's departed with either a loss or a no-decision this season.

Moreover, the A's have now been shut out 15 times this year -- five of which coming when Moscoso has been on the hill.

It doesn't exactly seem fair, but nothing really is when Verlander takes to the mound.

The Tigers ace, who lowered his AL-leading ERA to 2.29, continued to make his case for AL MVP, completing the six-inning mark for the 33rd time in as many tries while fanning six to bump his Major League-best strikeout total to 244.

"He's not just a thrower," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "He wasn't just pitching 97, 98 [mph] and blowing everybody away with his fastball. He pitched with his breaking ball and tuned it up a couple times, but for the most part was using that breaking ball in off counts, using all four pitches. That's what makes him tough to deal with. You know the plus-velocity is there, and he's throwing other pitches in those counts when you have to look for his fastball."

Oakland quickly put a runner on base against the right-handed hurler in the first, as Scott Sizemore singled with one out. But the A's third baseman was caught stealing, representing one of two times the club faltered on the basepaths. In the second, Josh Willingham led off with a walk before getting doubled off first base after trailing away a few feet too far on David DeJesus' fly ball to left field.

The A's had three more baserunners against Verlander through the next five frames, but none moved past first base, as they ended the day without once landing a runner in scoring position.

Moscoso proved equally effective until Jackson's long ball in the sixth, as he didn't surrender another hit before handing duties over to Brian Fuentes in the seventh. The A's lefty compiled one scoreless inning, and Craig Breslow attempted to do the same in the eighth but instead gave up back-to-back hits to Jackson and pinch-hitter Brandon Inge, with the former bringing in a run courtesy of an RBI double.

The Tigers added a run off southpaw Josh Outman in the ninth when Alex Avila singled, moved to third on Ryan Raburn's double and scored on Ramon Santiago's squeeze bunt -- only extending a Detroit lead that proved unshakeable in the bottom half of the inning, as closer Jose Valverde notched his 46th save by garnering three quick outs.

It was a disappointing finish to yet another tremendous start for Moscoso, who is 2-1 with a 1.71 ERA in four starts this month.

"He threw the ball really well," Melvin said. "The one hit he gives up is a home run, and you know when you go out there against a guy like Verlander, you're going to have to pitch well and keep runs to a minimum, and he did, but his pitch count got up there a little bit. They fouled off a lot of balls, and that's the way they were able to do that."

The A's, who split the four-game set with Detroit, are set to enjoy an off-day Monday before embarking on their final home series of the season, a three-game affair with the visiting Rangers -- a time during which the club can continue forging building blocks for the 2012 season.

Their most recent showing against the potent Tigers -- who were held to just eight runs over the four games -- represented just that.

"[Moscoso] is a good pitcher," Avila said. "He's got a sneaky fastball, a good curve and a good change. He's deceptive. To keep our lineup off balance like that shows you something. ... It shows you Oakland has a good pitching staff, because we weren't able to get completely comfortable this whole weekend."

Pennington quietly emerging as club leader

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Perhaps making his case as the club's second-half MVP is A's shortstop Cliff Pennington, who has quietly but consistently provided a steady offensive and defensive presence.

Pennington received his first day off since Aug. 13 on Sunday, capping a stretch of 33 consecutive games played. He's handled the grind just fine, though, hitting .309 with five home runs and 39 RBIs since the break.

Those numbers reflect a needed turnaround, as Pennington batted .235 with only three homers and 23 RBIs in the first half.

"You don't have to hit home runs to knock in runs, but he's done some of that here recently, too," manager Bob Melvin said. "He puts the bat on the ball, he switch-hits, so you're always going to get your matchup with him and his numbers, left-right, are pretty close. If he's knocking in runs, it means he can hit anywhere in the order."

Pennington's done just that, starting games in every spot of the lineup except the No. 4 and 5 holes. His splits, as Melvin suggested, are close in numbers -- .261 average as a right-handed hitter and a .273 mark from the left side. More power, though, has come about from the former position, as Pennington's hit seven home runs while batting right-handed, compared to just one left-handed.

Defensively, Pennington has committed 21 errors, which ranks second most in the American League behind Texas' Elvis Andrus (25). But the A's have never been surprised by the high numbers, as they note that means he's also getting to more balls than others would.

The club also covets the leadership skills Pennington has gained in a year that's seen a myriad of changes to Oakland's infield.

"He's really become the quarterback of the infield," Melvin said. "We have three different spots where we've had new players at third, second and first, as opposed to where this team started. He's really taken a leadership role in the infield. On top of the offensive highs he's had, he's really taken charge of the infield. I really think he's intent on being a leader here down the road."

Back woes sum up Devine's frustrating year

OAKLAND -- The A's have brought aboard six September callups since rosters expanded, but Joey Devine -- who spent most of the first half in Oakland -- was kept off the list.

The reason, manager Bob Melvin said Sunday, stems from back issues Devine first began experiencing in July, when he left a game after tossing just four pitches because of spasms. The right-hander made a visit to team orthopedist Dr. Will Workman last week, and assistant general manager David Forst, who noted the issue is "muscular in nature," said the team expects him to be fine.

Devine did not pitch for Triple-A Sacramento during its playoff run that ended Friday, and he hadn't made an appearance for the River Cats since Sept. 2, marking a shortened season in what turned out to be another frustrating year. Devine was forced to miss the 2009 and '10 campaigns while rehabbing from Tommy John surgery.

Devine is no stranger to back issues, though each time they've been in different places. While with the Braves organization in 2006, he learned a disc in his lower back had virtually no cartilage left, which painfully left bone grinding against bone. Then, in April of this year, he suffered spasms similar to those he experienced in July.

Worth noting

- Hideki Matsui, though a career .333 hitter against Detroit ace Justin Verlander, received the day off Sunday as Chris Carter received a start at designated hitter.

A's manager Bob Melvin had noted Saturday that he believed Carter would draw a start or two during the Texas series with two lefties slated to pitch for the Rangers, but said Sunday, "He's been swinging the bat really well, and one of the things you like to do is when the guys are having the success he is, get him in there sooner than later."

Carter was hitting .289 with 13 home runs and 51 RBIs in 52 games for Triple-A Sacramento following his July 15 demotion.

- Actor Jonah Hill, who plays former A's executive Paul DePodesta in "Moneyball," threw out Sunday's ceremonial first pitch to Scott Hatteberg.

Texas looking to reduce magic number in Oakland

Holland set to square off against Harden in opener

By Doug Miller / MLB.com

Texas had a magic number of six entering Monday's off-day, and Derek Holland has been the Rangers' most magical starter in the last six weeks.

The young left-hander has a chance to further reduce that number as the American League West-leading Rangers take on the A's on Tuesday at Oakland Coliseum, and A's right-hander Rich Harden will try to play spoiler for the home team in the opener of a three-game series.

Holland has been outstanding of late. The mid-90s fastball from the left side was always there, but the command wasn't, which led to inconsistent stretches this year, but that all seems to be a distant memory. Holland, who is riding a personal three-game winning streak, is 8-1 with a 2.74 ERA in his last 13 starts.

"The big thing was using my offspeed pitches more and throwing strikes," Holland said. "Just mixing my pitches in general."

Holland figures to be huge for the Rangers if they can eliminate the Angels and make it to October for the second consecutive year. He said he's still yearning to improve.

"I just want to finish strong," Holland said. "This year may be good in some people's eyes, but to me it was OK. I was disappointed with the walks. But if I give my team a chance to win, that's all that matters."

Getting back to the big picture, third baseman Adrian Beltre agreed.

"We're confident we can do the job, but we're not done yet," Beltre said. "We still have to keep winning."

For the A's, all that matters is playing good baseball in the late stages of 2011 while examining who might be on the club moving forward. Harden, who came up with the A's and returned this year, has had spots of success and could be a huge factor for Oakland next year if he stays healthy. His stuff remains nasty, but his consistency has been spotty.

In his last start on Wednesday, Sept. 14, Harden was the epitome of that scouting report. He pitched a scoreless first five innings against the Angels, taking advantage of good defense behind him, but he then gave up three runs in the sixth inning and took the loss.

"It's really frustrating," Harden said. "That's kind of been the story of my year, so far -- making pitches late in the game and mistakes here or there that have cost me. That's what I gotta change.

"That's just kind of the way our season's gone. It's been up and down."

Rangers: Big year for Young

Michael Young has 102 RBIs and 40 doubles in 2011, marking his second 100-RBI season (103 in 2006) and his third campaign with 40 or more doubles (52 in 2006, 40 in 2005).

Young matched Rusty Greer (1996-97 and '99) for the most seasons with 40 or more doubles in team history. Young needs two hits for his sixth season with 200-plus hits. He would become the 16th player in Major League history with as many as six 200-hit seasons, and the third active player (Ichiro Suzuki, 10; Derek Jeter, 7).

- Second baseman Ian Kinsler leads the Rangers with 29 homers, two shy of his 2009 career high. He would become the second Ranger ever with 30 homers, 30 doubles, 100 runs and 80 walks in a season, joining Alex Rodriguez, who accomplished the feat in his 2003 MVP season.
- Closer Neftali Feliz has a 0.48 ERA (one earned run in 18 2/3 innings pitched) in 23 games against the AL West this season, converting all 11 save tries. In his career, Feliz is 3-0 with a 1.31 ERA (eight earned runs in 55 innings) with 25 saves in 26 tries over 54 games against division foes.

A's: One-run blues

The A's are 18-24 (.429) in one-run games, which is the second-worst record in the AL (Texas, 17-23, .425). The 24 one-run losses match the most by an A's team over the last 24 years.

Oakland has not lost more one-run games since 1987, when it went 20-27. The A's have finished with a losing record in one-run games just once over the previous 12 seasons (15-23 in 2009).

- Outfielder Josh Willingham has a career-high 27 homers and 92 RBIs. The RBIs are the most by an Athletic since Frank Thomas had 114 in 2006. Willingham is batting .317 (19-for-60) with four home runs and 13 RBIs over his last 17 games.
- Closer Andrew Bailey has recorded 20 or more saves in each of his three seasons, joining Kazuhiro Sasaki and Billy Koch as the only relievers in Major League history with at least 20 saves in each of their first three seasons.

Worth noting

- Beltre has seven homers and 13 RBIs in his last nine games, going deep in six of his last eight. He's hitting .368 (32-for-87) over his last 22 contests and .335 (73-for-218) over his last 55 games to raise his batting average from .247 to .287.
- A's reliever Grant Balfour has a 2.03 ERA (six earned runs in 26 2/3 innings pitched) in 26 games since being reinstated from the 15-day disabled list on July 7.

Verlander beats A's, improves to 24-5

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Justin Verlander won his 12th straight start, pitching three-hit ball over eight innings to become the first pitcher in nine years to reach 24 wins and lead the AL Central champion Detroit Tigers over the Oakland Athletics 3-0 Sunday.

Verlander (24-5) struck out six and walked three, extending his scoreless streak to 17 innings. He has a 2.28 ERA with 91 strikeouts in 87 innings over his streak, becoming the first pitcher to win a dozen starts in a row since Minnesota's Johan Santana in 2004, according to STATS LLC.

Verlander has the most wins in a major league season since Arizona's Randy Johnson in 2002. With another victory, he would become the winningest pitcher in a season since Oakland's Bob Welch went 27-6 in 1990.

Guillermo Moscoso (8-9) took a no-hit bid into the sixth but had thrown 90 pitches by then. Moscoso lasted six innings and matched his season high with eight strikeouts.

Austin Jackson, who had two hits and scored twice, led off the sixth inning with his 10th home run of the year, a drive that just cleared the center-field fence.

Pinch-hitter Brandon Inge doubled in a run against Craig Breslow in the eighth, and Ramon Santiago drove in a run in the ninth with a squeeze bunt.

Jose Velvarde pitched the ninth to remain perfect in 46 save chances his season.

Verlander pitched to the minimum 11 batters until giving up a two-out single to Coco Crisp in the fourth. Scott Sizemore singled in the first, but was thrown out attempting to steal.

NOTES: /b Oakland has been shut out in five of Moscoso's starts. ... Tigers INF Carlos Guillen left in the bottom of the fourth because of a strained right calf. He was to be reevaluated Monday. ... RHP Rich Harden (4-3, 4.76) starts for the A's against the Texas Rangers on Tuesday. He's 0-1 with a 6.97 ERA over his last four starts. ...

RHP Brad Penny (10-10, 5.07) will start for the Tigers at Kansas City on Tuesday. The Tigers have won his last three starts, and Penny is 3-1 over his last seven starts. He lost his only career start in Kansas City. ... A's OF Hideki Matsui (1-for-19 on the homestand) and INF Cliff Pennington were given the day off. ... Jonah Hill, who plays Peter Brand in the upcoming "Moneyball" movie, threw out the ceremonial first pitch. He was accompanied by Chris Pratt (Scott Hatteberg), Casey Bond (Chad Bradford), Stephen Bishop (David Justice) and the real Scott Hatteberg.

Memories fade of former Oakland baseball owner Charles Finley

Lance Williams California Watch

Charles O. Finley moved the A's to Oakland and won the World Series three years in a row, from 1972 to 1974.

He spearheaded changes that transformed the sport – the designated hitter rule, night World Series games – and pushed for others that didn't get any traction, like orange baseballs and designated runners.

Finley also inadvertently helped bring about baseball's big-money era of free agency by losing a particularly bitter contract dispute with star pitcher Catfish Hunter.

Along the way, this hard-charging Chicago insurance tycoon drove a lot of people – players, fans, other owners and especially the baseball establishment – to distraction.

Now, 39 years after his ball club began its brilliant run, and 15 years after his death, baseball is trying to pretend the Finley era never existed, complains Nancy Finley, who is Finley's cousin and who spent her girlhood in Oakland with her father, Carl Finley, the team's longtime vice president.

"I've had so many people say, '(Baseball) should do this or do this or do that to honor your family,'" she says. "I have tried and tried, and what I get from Oakland is total silence."

The Athletics dispute her contentions, saying the club honors its history and regards Finley as a remarkable innovator.

But Ms. Finley, who now lives in the East Bay suburbs, cites a series of slights, oversights and public misstatements that by her account reflect baseball's attempt to write the Finleys out of the game's history.

For example, in 2008, there was a pre-game event at the Oakland Coliseum marking the 40th anniversary of the team's move to Oakland from Kansas City. But the Finleys weren't included, she says, and it was the same story at an Old Timers' game the following year.

The club has created a tribute jersey to honor the memory of Walter Haas Sr., the wealthy sportsman who bought the A's from Finley and built the team that won the 1989 World Series over the San Francisco Giants.

But she says there's no jersey for Finley, even though his teams won more championships and weren't implicated in steroid abuse, as were the '89 A's.

"I had an e-mail from someone in Japan who's a 1970s A's fan," she says. "He said, 'I don't see a Finley tribute jersey.' "

Meanwhile, the baseball Hall of Fame credits the late Commissioner Bowie Kuhn with initiating night World Series games, she complains, even though everybody knows Kuhn fought the idea tooth and nail when Finley first pitched it.

Then there's the matter of a recent "80's Night" promotion featuring famed Oakland rapper M.C. Hammer.

Once again, the Finleys weren't involved, she claims, even though her father discovered Hammer when he was a kid hanging around the Coliseum parking lot looking for odd jobs.

At Charles Finley's insistence, the teenage Hammer later was brought into the radio booth to broadcast an inning of an A's game, she recalls.

In an e-mail, Athletics spokesman Bob Rose said he didn't understand Ms. Finley's complaints.

"We absolutely appreciate the role Charles O. Finley has played in our franchise's history," he wrote. The club has had a number of events honoring players from the great teams of the 1970s, he noted.

Of the M.C. Hammer event, Rose wrote: "M.C. held court with the media before the game and perhaps his main message was 'Charlie Finley belongs in the Hall of Fame.'

"We concur."

With her other concerns in mind, Ms. Finley says she has come to dread the upcoming release of "Moneyball," the new Brad Pitt film celebrating the Oakland Athletics of a decade ago. The low-budget team won 20 games in a row in 2002 but didn't make it into the World Series. She fears the film will give no sense of the team's glorious winning history.

"There was as commercial on TV, a preview of 'Moneyball,' and I just wanted to go in the corner and lay in fetal position for a few weeks," she says.

Ms. Finley speculates that baseball and the A's want to downplay the success of the '70s because they want to give up on Oakland.

For years, present owner Lewis Wolff has pushed to move the team to San Jose, but so far the effort has stalled because of opposition from the San Francisco Giants.

"I don't think he wants to be here," she says. "I don't even know if he knows about the Finley years."

Ms. Finley acknowledges that her complaints may be so intense because she has such fond memories of Oakland and the A's.

When the team moved West, her father came along to run day-to-day operations, while Charles Finley remained in Chicago. Ms. Finley went to Westlake Junior High School and then Oakland High. Ms. Finley acknowledges that her complaints may be so intense because she has such fond memories of Oakland and the A's.

For a time, she and her father lived in an apartment on the top floor of the 1200 Lakeshore highrise on Lake Merritt.

Another top-floor unit was occupied by Black Panther leader Huey Newton, who had been freed from prison after appealing his conviction for killing a police officer. A nearby unit was occupied by an FBI surveillance team, she recalls.

Newton, whom she often saw in the elevator, was "very nice," she says, and his bodyguards were "very polite."

Ms. Finley says she often helped out in the A's front office. She got to know the stars of the era – Hunter, slugger Reggie Jackson, relief pitcher Rollie Fingers and manager Dick Williams, all later elected to the Hall of Fame.

On a visit to Oakland when she was 16 or 17, Mr. Finley was so pleased with her work that he announced he was promoting her to vice president, she says. Her father took the title away the following day.

Now she has created a [website](#) devoted to A's history and hopes to write a memoir of the team.

The definitive book on the A's of the 1970s is sportswriter Ron Bergman's "[Mustache Gang](#), the Swaggering Saga of Oakland's A's." It features a brittle portrait of Finley as a penny-pinching, wheeler-dealer sports executive.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Storm Wins It All with 10-3 Win Over Ports

The Stockton Ports made it all the way to the California League Championships series but could not bring home the trophy, falling 10-3 to the Storm on Sunday night.

It looked like the Ports might use their solid pitching and strong defense to muscle out a win after Leonardo Gil hit a leadoff home run in the second inning to give the Ports the first run of the game.

But trouble came soon after for the Stockton Ports pitchers, as the Storm took it to starter Dan Straily in the fourth inning, slapping him with five runs. Jonathon Galvez led off with a single, before Straily hit Tommy Medica, and then gave up another single to series MVP Nate Freiman to load the bases. Edinson Rincon singled to score the first run of the inning. Jacob Blackwood followed with a single of his own scoring Medica and Freiman. This brought Galvez back up to the plate, hitting a double to score Rincon and Blackwood.

AJ Huttenlocker would replace Straily with just one out in the fourth, and pitch the Ports out of the inning. However, the Storm wouldn't let Huttenlocker go unscathed, as in the fifth, Medica and Freiman would hit back-to-back jacks off the lefty from the pen.

The Ports looked like they might rally back in the fifth as they put up two runs of their own. Anthony Aliotti led off with a walk, before Rashun Dixon reached on a throwing error and Myrio Richard was hit by a pitch to load the bases. Conner Crumbliss drove in Aliotti with a sac fly to right and Michael Choice drove in one more on a single through the hole at second base. But that would be all for the Ports rally and the Storm would continue to tack on runs from there.

Connor Hoehn came in to relieve Huttenlocker to begin the sixth inning, and made quick work of the Storm, getting two quick strikeouts and a groundout to end the inning. Hoehn would not be so lucky in the seventh, where the Storm knocked in two more runs.

Mike Benacka replaced Hoehn after 1.2 innings of work, inheriting a runner, which scored for the second run charged to Hoehn. Benacka would be the only Ports pitcher of the evening to exit the game without a run charged to his name.

Jose Guzman came in to finish the game for the Ports. Guzman gave up just one run, a towering home run by Freiman, his second of the night.

Be sure to check in with the Ports in the offseason as they prepare to make another run at the California League Championship in 2012.