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Detroit 4, Oakland 1: Michael Fulmer strong yet again in Tigers' win

May 28, 2016

By Anthony Fenech/ Detroit Free Press

OAKLAND, Calif. – Gene Lamont guessed he would probably get a call about it.

Maybe from general manager Al Avila or maybe from manager Brad Ausmus.

But when the Detroit Tigers bench coach reflected on rookie right-hander Michael Fulmer's latest spectacular start, he couldn't help himself.

The question, posed to the baseball lifer and acting manager for the past two games with Ausmus out, was simple: Fulmer, the rookie right-hander, had certainly done enough to cement his spot in the team's starting rotation, hadn't he?

"Well," Lamont said at first. "He's going to pitch in five days."

Then, a few minutes later, Lamont said, "Well, I mean, you gotta be realistic. We're going to keep Fulmer. Fulmer's not going anywhere. ... Well, I shouldn't speak. That's my feeling."

And with the way Fulmer followed-up a career-best performance in his last start with another career-best performance on Friday night against the Athletics, Lamont's feeling is right: The kid is here to stay.

Fulmer once again was fantastic, overpowering the Oakland A's in a 4-1 win at O.Co Coliseum. He threw seven-plus scoreless innings on three hits and a walk. He struck out three and firmly planted himself in the starting rotation for the foreseeable future.

"It felt good," Fulmer said. "Early on, I felt like I had a little trouble getting loose but once I got loose and settled in, everything kind of flew by. So I was happy with the way it went."

It went different than it had five days earlier against the Rays, when he struck out 11 batters. This time, he was efficient, his pitch count never inflating as he threw into the eighth inning with no resistance from the A's offense, whose will was broken along with their bats by his upper-90 m.p.h. fastball throughout the night.

"I tried to pitch more to contact," Fulmer said. "I want to be more efficient and I want to go deeper in games so that means throwing more quality fastballs and getting weak contact so tonight, I think we did that and as a team, just a good 'W.'"

The win was keyed offensively in part by second baseman Ian Kinsler, back in the lineup after missing a pair of games with flu-like symptoms, who went 3-for-5, falling a home run short of the cycle, and couldn't forecast this kind of rapid development coming from Fulmer.

"We knew he had the mentality, we saw it in the spring," Kinsler said. "The way that he's grown since then has been remarkable, really. With a young pitcher, there's going to be ups and downs, you just gotta let him get his innings and you gotta let him figure out how to pitch."

And in just six starts – especially the past two – he has exceeded expectations.

"Well I guess maybe you'd say he is," Lamont said. "We thought maybe he'd be in Triple-A all year but he's in the big leagues right now. Coming into spring training, he wasn't part of our plans, really."

Fulmer is firmly part of their plans now, performing like the team's third-best starting pitcher recently, and is an even bigger part of their future, which was bolstered by his acquisition at the trade deadline for outfielder Yoenis Cespedes.

The Tigers backed him with two runs in the fourth inning – both courtesy of a two-out rally – one in the seventh and one in the ninth.

In the fourth, Justin Upton singled and scored on a Cameron Maybin single into the rightfield corner, followed by a RBI single by James McCann. In the seventh, Nick Castellanos hit a solo home run on the first pitch of the inning, his 10th of the season, to leftfield. In the ninth, J.D. Martinez hit a two-out RBI triple.

Throughout, Fulmer dominated the A's, allowing a hit in the second inning but not another until there were two outs in the eighth inning. In the start, he became the first Tiger starter 23 years old or younger to throw back-to-back starts of seven-plus innings allowing one or fewer earned run since Rick Porcello in 2010.

After a Coco Crisp ground-rule double followed that hit in the eighth, Lamont hooked him, then afterwards put himself on the hook for stating the youngster's case to stay in the starting rotation.

“I think he’s shown enough – I’ll probably get a call about it – but I think he’s shown enough that he’s going to stay here for a while,” Lamont said. “Maybe somebody disagrees, I don’t know.”
It would be hard to find somebody who does.

Detroit Tigers calling up Matt Boyd to start in place of Zimmermann

May 28, 2016

By Anthony Fenech/ Detroit Free Press

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Matt Boyd will make Saturday's start for the Detroit Tigers.

The left-hander will be recalled from Triple-A Toledo prior to the game against the Athletics, the team announced today, and will make his first start of the season in place of righty Jordan Zimmermann, who is dealing with a Grade 1 right groin strain.

"He was definitely the next guy if we needed somebody," acting manager Gene Lamont said. "He's done a very good job down there. Last year, when he was here, he had some rough times, but I think he's improved a lot off that."

To make room on the 25-man roster, the Tigers have sent outfielder Steven Moya back to Triple-A Toledo. Boyd, 25, has posted a 2.06 ERA in eight starts with the Mud Hens, with 41 strikeouts in 48 innings. In his last start, he struck out a season-high nine batters.

"At this point, it's just refining my game," he said. "It's all refining little parts of my game and just getting better every single day.... I believe that every day you show up to the yard, you can get better, and that's what I've stuck with."

The Tigers held Boyd out of his Thursday start in Toledo, in the event that he would be needed.

With an off day Thursday, the Tigers opted to give their starting pitchers an extra day of rest instead of moving them up in the rotation. Michael Fulmer will start the series opener against the A's tonight (10 p.m., FSD), and Mike Pelfrey will pitch Sunday.

Boyd posted a 6.57 ERA in 11 games (10 starts) for the Tigers in 2015.

"It's an honor that I am here," Boyd said. "There are a lot of guys down there that deserve to be up here."

Zimmermann is scheduled to throw long toss today and a bullpen session Sunday, in hopes of avoiding the disabled list. The Tigers need to make a decision on that by the end of the weekend. He would be in line to start Tuesday against the Los Angeles Angels.

Note: Following a review by Major League Baseball, the infield single by Tigers shortstop Jose Iglesias in the fifth inning of Wednesday's game vs. Philadelphia has been changed to a fielding error by Andres Blanco. The change makes two of the three runs scored in that inning unearned.

Tigers' Anibal Sanchez knows problems this season have been mental

May 28, 2016

By Anthony Fenech/ Detroit Free Press

OAKLAND – Anibal Sanchez didn't know.

He sat in front of his locker in Oriole Park at Camden Yards a couple weeks ago, and the only thing he knew was he didn't know. The Tigers' right-hander didn't have any answers as to why he fell apart again in the sixth inning, or why he was having difficulty getting through an opponent's lineup for the third time.

His arm felt good. His stuff felt good.

"I don't know," he said, shaking his head.

He didn't know after his next start against the Rays, again chased in the sixth inning, or his last start against the Phillies, when he was finally able to fight through the sixth inning but no further.

This much Sanchez does know, though: His problems this season have been mental.

"My last outing and my outing before, I brought like negative thoughts to the games," he said. "My stuff is there. Command is there. Location is there. I think everything is mentally. If you trust yourself in every single situation of the game, good things will happen and everything will change."

It's not a mental block about getting through the sixth inning, or through an opponent's lineup the third time. It's the mentality, he explained, that even though everything feels physically fine, the mentality needs to match up regardless of the lack of results he has been getting.

"I need to start putting everything in a good way," Sanchez said. "So I need to start working in a different way, and the best way is mentally. Because that's the only thing that is going to bring me the good stuff. If I'm not strong mentally, everything can continue the same. I need to turn on a different way for my next one and the next one and for the rest of my career. But I need to think that everything's going to be good, everything's going to be fine, and the team is going to be with me no matter what, and I need to continue working."

The Tigers have no plans to remove Sanchez from the rotation. They need him to return somewhat to his form of yesteryear, when he pitched like a front-line rotation man. And though his stuff has appeared better in recent starts, the 32-year-old isn't getting any younger and scouts have seen his stuff erode.

First, the velocity. He isn't throwing as hard as he used to. According to FanGraphs, Sanchez's velocity is down for all five of his pitches. His fastball in 2015 averaged 91.8 m.p.h. His fastball this year is averaging 90.6 m.p.h.

His location in the strike zone is a problem, too. And when he's missing, batters are not. After tying for the AL lead in home runs allowed last season, he has allowed 11 this season.

The No. 1 starter stuff he flashed as recently as 2013 simply hasn't been there.

"He's pressing," pitching coach Rich Dubee said. "His stuff is fine. He hasn't won for a while and he expects a lot of himself, so there's probably too much tension there instead of executing one pitch at a time."

His 2016 season, he said, starts anew against the Angels on Wednesday.

"That's exactly what I'm thinking," he said. "That's what my mentality is right now."

Tigers pitcher Jordan Zimmermann (groin) hopes to avoid disabled list

May 28, 2016

By Anthony Fenech/ Detroit Free Press

OAKLAND – Jordan Zimmermann has never been shot or stabbed before.

But when he strained his right groin in the sixth inning of Sunday’s win over the Tampa Bay Rays, he guessed it felt something like that.

Five days later, and his Grade 1 groin strain seemed to be healing.

“It’s slowly getting better,” he said. “I did some shuffles today and I felt it a little bit, but it wasn’t nearly as bad as it was. So it’s getting better and we’ll take it day-by-day.”

The most important of those days in determining if he will land on the 15-day disabled list is Sunday, when he is scheduled to throw a bullpen session at the O.co Coliseum.

Zimmermann threw long-toss on Friday afternoon before the series opener against the Oakland Athletics.

“Everything’s good,” he said.

Asked if he was optimistic he would avoid landing on the disabled list for the second time in his career — his only previous DL stint was for elbow ligament reconstruction surgery in 2009 — Zimmermann said, “I think so, but the real test is on Sunday when I have to push off and get on some elevation and see how it is.”

Zimmermann, 30, has been the Tigers best pitcher this season. In nine starts, he is 7-2 with a 2.52 ERA and 1.13 WHIP. Of those nine outings, seven have been quality starts.

The Tigers will need to make a decision on Zimmermann’s status for Tuesday’s start against the Los Angeles Angels by the end of the weekend, which is the seven-day limit to retroactively place him on the disabled list.

“Obviously you want to be out there, and I’ve been lucky enough to stay healthy other than the Tommy John, so I’ll do everything I can to avoid it,” he said.

Bench coach Gene Lamont, who assumed managerial duties on Friday while Brad Ausmus attended his daughter’s high school graduation, reiterated Zimmermann’s thoughts about Sunday.

“I think we think it looks pretty good,” Lamont said. “Throw side on Sunday then we’ll decide if he can make his start. If he can’t, then he’ll probably have to go on the disabled list.”

Asked if he had a gut feeling, Lamont said no.

“Nothing bothers me really other than shuffling side to side and pushing off the mound, I guess,” Zimmermann said. “So we’ll see Sunday what it feels like.”

Fulmer lays off the heat, helps Tigers stifle A's

May 28, 2016

By Lynn Henning/ The Detroit News

Oakland, Calif. — Striking out batters is akin to the Old West gunslinger dispatching all those black hats who dare challenge him.

Dramatic and violent, the essence of professional fury.

Michael Fulmer decided Friday to dispense with the Dodge City stuff.

He simply pitched. Cleanly. Efficiently. Skillfully. And, yes, successfully, as in a 4-1 victory by his Tigers against the Oakland A's.

“Good-looking young pitcher,” said Gene Lamont, who filled in for manager Brad Ausmus as Ausmus took in his daughter's high-school graduation in San Diego.

“And he's got an awful good sinker.”

Fulmer, who is 23, looked like a grizzled cuss Friday. A man who seems not to know he's a rookie threw strikes, kept his fielders busy, and for the most part avoided behind-in-the-count situations, making for fast innings and minimal pitches that enabled him to push ever deeper into a game he controlled for 7 2/3 innings. The A's got him on the night for three hits, two to the final batters he faced in the eighth before Justin Wilson arrived to get the last out, whiffing pinch-hitter Billy Butler.

Although he was firing his fastball as hot as 97 mph, mixing in sliders and the occasional change-up, Fulmer didn't mind that he wasn't blowing away the strikeout column as he did in his last start, when he had 11 punch-outs.

He had only three Friday as he stayed in the strike zone, accepted that his slider wasn't its usual murderous self, and in the process ran his record to 4-1. The A's never scored until the ninth, when Francisco Rodriguez got whacked for a single and triple that kept the Tigers from a shutout.

“I tried to pitch more to contact — just four-seams down in the zone,” said Fulmer, who at one point put away 11 consecutive A's batters. “I was very thankful the defense played as well as they did.

“I felt like I was always running over to first base,” said Fulmer, who got 13 ground-ball outs, and who said those treks to first base were worthwhile for more reasons than one:

“Miggy was always making me laugh.”

Not nearly as hilarious was Detroit's offense, which got the minimum from its 11 hits, all because the Tigers early on left too many men at third base or in scoring position.

Not that Ian Kinsler was to blame. He had a triple, double, and single after losing another extra-base hit leading off the game courtesy of a spectacular play by center fielder Billy Burns.

“Yeah, Billy took one away from me in the first,” said Kinsler, who followed up with a drive against the fence in left in the third that got past Coco Crisp for a triple. “I thought that ball (third inning) had a chance of going out. But you never know here. When the sun sets that air gets heavy.”

Nick Castellanos could also take a bow after hoisting an enormous home run nearly into the upper deck in left field in the sixth, his 10th homer of the season, and a bomb that gave the Tigers their third run of the evening. Castellanos also had a single and now sits with a season batting average of .341.

“He can hit long-fly home runs,” said Lamont, shaking his head at Castellanos' blast. “And not everyone can do that.”

The Tigers had scored a pair in the fourth after two were out when Justin Upton singled, Cameron Maybin drove him home with a double down the right-field line, and James McCann followed with a single that drove home Maybin.

But the Tigers did precious little in situations that might have given Fulmer a fatter and earlier lead.

For example:

Second inning. The Tigers get singles from Victor Martinez and Castellanos but watched the next three batters (Upton, Maybin, McCann) disappear on a strikeout, pop-up, and strikeout.

Third inning. Kinsler lashed his one-out triple against the left-field fence. The Tigers were about to shake up a scoreless game. Or, so it seemed, until J.D. Martinez was called out on a third-strike pitch that Martinez believed was well inside and umpire Joe West insisted ate up home plate.

Miguel Cabrera, who walked twice but didn't have a hit, then grounded out to leave Kinsler hanging.

Fifth inning: No one was quite sure how this happened after Kinsler led off with a double and moved to third on J.D. Martinez's fly out to right.

Cabrera was intentionally walked to bring on Victor Martinez with runners at the corners. Martinez lofted a foul pop fly that A's first baseman Yonder Alonso basket-grabbed with his back to the infield.

Kinsler bluffed a tag at third. Alonso pegged the ball to catcher Stephen Vogt, which seemed a bad choice when the ball skipped past Vogt and rolled toward the Pacific Ocean as Kinsler raced home.

There was one problem: Martinez, who had hung on to see if Alonso had made the catch, hadn't yet stepped terribly far from home plate. The relay nicked Martinez, who in West's opinion hadn't cleared the throwing lane. Kinsler was called out by West on the obstruction that went down as your basic 3-2 double play.

"I'd never seen it before," said Lamont, which seemed to be everyone's response.

Lamont and West chatted. But the umpire had it right.

"It seems like a funny rule," Lamont said. "But it's a rule."

The Tigers did cash in with a fourth run in the ninth when Kinsler singled and scored on J.D. Martinez's triple against the right-field fence.

A half-inning later, the Tigers' six-game West Coast trip had started right. Mostly because the right starter, a kid who doesn't pitch like one, had worked so artfully, and so very late into an evening he pretty much owned.

Injury issues leave the Tigers juggling pitchers

May 28, 2016

By Lynn Henning/ The Detroit News

Oakland, Calif. — The Tigers couldn't be sure Friday if they were looking at a potential glut of starting pitchers, or a paucity.

It depended upon so many things.

Jordan Zimmermann's bullpen session scheduled for Sunday at Oakland Coliseum will decide if he can rejoin the Tigers rotation or need to be shifted to the disabled list.

Then, too, there is Shane Greene's recovery from a finger blister and a rehabilitation stint in the minors that has yet to prove whether he can be trusted to pitch long innings, or perhaps be limited to shorter bullpen stints.

There was also the matter of how rookies fit into the picture. Michael Fulmer was expected to see his stock move in one direction or another Friday as the Tigers got ready for an evening game against the A's in the opening act of a six-game California road trip.

Another of the Tigers' "kid" starters, Matt Boyd, also was expected to reveal Saturday if his steady work at Triple A Toledo has moved him closer to regular rotation work in Detroit.

Any or all of the above could prod the Tigers to ponder other moves as they try to stabilize a rotation that has had its issues, particularly with respect to Mike Pelfrey and Anibal Sanchez.

Zimmermann is fighting a strained groin that knocked him from this weekend's start and led to Boyd's call-up from Toledo. He has been working out and making progress. But neither the Tigers nor Zimmermann can exclude a trip to the disabled list, which, apart from missing a year with Tommy John surgery, would be a first experience for Zimmermann.

"It seems like everything's going in the right direction, but the big test will be Sunday, when I have to push off," Zimmermann said Friday, explaining the strain, until it began to improve, felt "like a really bad cramp." Gene Lamont agreed that Sunday's test would be all-revealing. Lamont spoke in the visiting manager's office, where he was filling in for Brad Ausmus, who has missed two games this week in the aftermath of his mother's death, as well as his daughter's high school graduation.

"If he can't (make his next start), he'll probably have to go on the DL," Lamont said as the Tigers prepared for any number of scenarios and contingencies spurred not only by Zimmermann's status, but also by Greene's. Greene was relatively strong in a Wednesday start for Triple A Toledo, striking out seven in 31/3 innings of scoreless work in which he was rapped for four hits.

But because Greene threw only 61 pitches, he likely needs at least another, longer start for Toledo if the Tigers want him as a rotation option. The problem there is the issue that put him on the DL last month: a finger blister that could recur if he is asked to throw too many pitches too soon.

"We've got to decide what we're gonna do with him," Lamont said. "Is he a starter or a reliever?"

"We should know in a couple of days."

Lamont was pleased the Tigers — for now — appeared to have options in the presence of two rookies, Fulmer and Boyd, both of whom arrived in deadline trades last July. Fulmer awakened Friday with a 3-1 record since he began filling in for Greene.

Boyd made eight starts for the Mud Hens and became the obvious option when Zimmermann's groin put him on the shelf. He had a 2.06 ERA and a 1.15 WHIP, as well as a .232 opposing batting average.

He struck out 41 batters in 48 innings, walked 13, and allowed 42 hits. He throws four pitches and found that all four — fastball, slider, curve, change-up — were behaving during his time at Toledo, which was interspersed by a relief stint in Detroit during which he worked a 4 2/3-inning shift (no runs charged to him) against the Rangers.

"Every outing," Boyd said Friday, "I was getting a little bit better."

Roster move

The Tigers will announce Saturday which player has been removed from the 25-man active roster to make space for Boyd. Most likely candidate: reliever Buck Farmer.

Jimenez promoted

The Tigers have given Joe Jimenez a promotion everyone knew was coming. Jimenez, 21, the organization's top bullpen prospect, has been shipped to Double A Erie after he allowed zero runs in a nearly flawless 17-game stretch at Single A Lakeland.

Jimenez, a right-hander, is 6-foot-3, 220 pounds, and was devastating for the Flying Tigers: 171/3 innings, five hits, 28 strikeouts, and five walks.

No word

The Tigers say nothing of certainty has been diagnosed after Drew VerHagen was placed on the 15-day disabled list with an apparent arm ailment. VerHagen returned to Toledo last week after a series of rough relief appearances for the Tigers.

Happy birthday

Tigers broadcaster Kirk Gibson will celebrate in the Bay Area Saturday as he turns 59. Gibson, of course, first joined the Tigers in 1978 when he was the team's first-round draft pick.

Tigers call up Matt Boyd; he'll start Saturday

May 28, 2016

By Lynn Henning/ The Detroit News

Oakland, Calif. -- The Tigers have summoned Matt Boyd from Triple A Toledo and will make him Saturday's starting pitcher against the A's at Oakland Coliseum.

The call-up signifies that Jordan Zimmermann is still bothered by a Grade 1 groin strain that happened in Sunday's game against the Rays at Comerica Park.

Boyd, a left-hander who has pitched for the Tigers during interludes since he was traded to Detroit last July, has pitched well at Toledo, rolling up a 2.08 ERA and 1.15 WHIP in eight starts spanning 48 innings.

The Tigers said a corresponding roster move, clearing space for Boyd's arrival, would be made Saturday.

The Tigers are in Oakland for a three-game weekend series that begins Friday night at 10:05 p.m. Michael Fulmer, like Boyd a rookie, will start for the Tigers.

Tigers notes: Jordan Zimmermann 'getting better,' but real test comes Sunday

May 28, 2016

By Aaron McMann/ MLive.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Jordan Zimmermann feels better now, but Sunday when he departed his start early with a strained groin he was in some pain.

How bad?

"I guess, I've never been shot or stabbed before, but it felt like that," Zimmermann said Friday before the Detroit Tigers' 4-1 win over the Oakland Athletics, his first meeting with reporters since his injury.

"I knew it was the groin. I just didn't know how bad it was. I felt like I felt it, kind of spun off it a little bit — I didn't follow through like I usually land. Hopefully that helped it. It could have been a lot worse, I guess."

Zimmermann played catch and long toss with teammates on the field at O.co Coliseum Friday and is still a possibility to start Tuesday in Anaheim.

But his next step - a bullpen scheduled for Sunday - could determine whether he makes that start or is placed on the disabled list.

"I have to push off, get some elevation and see how it is," Zimmermann said. "It's slowly getting better. I did some shuffles today and I felt it a little bit, but not nearly as bad as what it was. It's getting better and we're just going to take it day-by-day."

Aside from Tommy John surgery in August 2009, forcing him to miss half the 2009 season and a good chunk of 2010, Zimmermann has never gone on the DL with the injury.

He's 7-2 with a 2.52 ERA and 1.14 WHIP in nine starts this season for the Tigers, with whom he signed a five-year, \$110 million contract with in the offseason.

"Obviously, you don't want to be on there," Zimmermann said. "I've been lucky enough to stay healthy, other than Tommy John. I'm going to do everything I can to avoid it."

TIGERS NOTES

FINALLY, BOYD GETS THE CALL: Matt Boyd's time of watching teammates get the call to the big leagues came to an end Thursday.

After a strong start at Triple-A Toledo, one that included a 1-3 record but 2.06 ERA in eight starts, he got his wish and will start Game 2 of the Tigers-A's series Saturday.

"It's not frustrating," Boyd said. "If you let it frustrate you, it's wasted energy and it takes away from you trying to get better.

"I found that every day you show up to the yard, you get better, and that's kind of what I stuck with."

Boyd has added a slider to his pitching repertoire, a pitch he credits with the success he's had so far in the minors. He was 1-6 with a 7.53 ERA and 1.59 WHIP in 12 starts last season for the Tigers.

"At this point, it's about refining my game," Boyd said. "There's nothing that you're going to change. It's all refining a little part of my game, getting better every single day with it."

KINSLER, UPTON A-OK: For the first time in nearly a week, the Tigers had Ian Kinsler and Justin Upton back in their lineup Friday.

Kinsler, who dealt with a bout of the flu, was 3-for-5 with a single, double and triple, and had another extra-base hit taken back when centerfielder Billy Burns made a nice leaping catch in the first inning.

"The last day at home I didn't do anything, but the first two days I still went to the cage and got some swings in," Kinsler said. "As many as I could. And just went through my routine to make sure I stayed on top of what I needed to stay on top of."

Upton, dealing with tightness in his right quad, was 1-for-4 with a single and scored in the fourth.

BATTER INTERFERENCE: Speaking of Kinsler, he was called out running home by umpire Joe West as part of an innding-ending double play in the fifth after Victor Martinez, still standing in the batter's box after a pop out, was hit on a throw home by A's first baseman Yonder Alonso.

Kinsler and Martinez tried to make their case after, but West was only - correctly - enforcing the rule.

"He's participating in the game," West told a reporter after the game. "He therefore has to avoid the throw. And because he was already out, the batter/runner who's been put out or anyone that has scored hinders or impedes on a runner such runner should be called out for the interference of his teammate."

ANOTHER BASE RUNNING BLUNDER: Cameron Maybin was caught stealing for the first time this season in the sixth inning, but the real base-running blunder came from Jose Iglesias in the seventh.

After doubling off A's starter Sean Manaea to leadoff the inning, he was tagged out running to third on a groundball to shortstop.

It was the latest in a season-long list of base-running mistakes for the Tigers. Luckily for them, as Lamont said after, they got strong pitching and scored enough runs.

"Sometimes you want guys to be aggressive, and you have to fight your aggressiveness when the ball is hit like that," Lamont said. "You don't want it to happen, but everything isn't perfect."

A stepping stone for Michael Fulmer? His latest win sure seemed like it

May 28, 2016

By Aaron McMann/ MLive.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- And to think, Michael Fulmer actually had trouble getting lose in warmups.

The Detroit Tigers rookie right-handed pitcher took the next step in his big-league development Friday, besting his superb outing last time by throwing 7 2/3 scoreless innings in a 4-1 win over the Oakland Athletics at O.co Coliseum.

After, acting manager Gene Lamont rhetorically asked reporters if it was a stepping stone for Fulmer.

"He threw well," Lamont said. "He's got an awful-good sinker, and when he's throwing his fastball and it's down he's going to get more ground balls."

Ground balls were key to Fulmer's success, one start after he struck out 11 while allowing a run over seven innings Saturday against the Tampa Bay Rays.

He retired 15 of the first 16 batters he faced, carrying a relatively low pitch count into the sixth, and got nine of them on balls hit on the ground to Tigers' infielders.

"I was trying to pitch more to contact," Fulmer said. "I wanted to be more efficient and I wanted to go deeper into games. So, that means throwing more quality fastballs and making - and getting weak - contact. Tonight we did that, and as a team it was just a good W."

Fulmer (4-1, 3.97 ERA) credited his four-seam fastball for doing most of the damage this time around, throwing it down in the zone to induce weakly hit balls, using his newly-added changeup and mixing in his slider.

Curious about his progression? Here's his start-by-start line:

April 29 at MIN (W): 5.0 IP, 7 H, 2 R, 1 BB, 4 SO

May 5 at CLE (L): 5.0 IP, 10 H, 5 R, 2 BB, 6 SO

May 10 at WAS (W): 5.0 IP, 7 H, 3 R, 3 BB, 6 SO

May 15 at BAL (-): 4.1 IP, 5 H, 5 R, 3 BB, 6 SO

May 21 vs. TB (W): 7.0 IP, 4 H, 1 R, 1 BB, 11 SO

May 27 at OAK (W): 7.2 IP, 3 H, 1 BB, 3 SO

"I feel so much more comfortable," Fulmer said. "I just trust everything. It feels good enough to get a win anyway I can. And the defense is doing great, and with (James McCann) and (Jarrod Saltalamacchia), I learn so much. Credit to everybody else with helping me along and all the advice."

Fulmer now has a win in three of his last four starts, creating an added bonus to the back end of the rotation.

And with Jordan Zimmermann (groin) in limbo over a potential trip to the disabled list and Anibal Sanchez and Mike Pelfrey struggling later in games, he's made a case for himself going forward.

Teammates are taking notice, too.

"We knew he had the mentality. We saw that in spring training," Ian Kinsler said. "But the way that he's grown since then has been (incredible), really."

"He has a great pitching mentality. He wants to throw nine innings. That's just his body language. That's the way he works. It's really nice to have someone on the mound that approaches the game that way."

Lamont declined to speculate on what the future plans are for Fulmer, especially with Shane Greene on the verge of returning soon, but said he's not going anywhere anytime soon.

"He's going to pitch in five days," Lamont said.

Tigers option Steven Moya to Triple-A Toledo to make room for Matt Boyd

May 28, 2016

By Aaron McMann/ MLive.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Detroit Tigers will continue their West Coast trip with one less outfielder.

Steven Moya was optioned to Triple-A Toledo late Friday night after the Tigers' 4-1 win over the Oakland Athletics, a move that was required to create roster space for left-handed pitcher Matt Boyd.

"He needs at-bats, and he can't play centerfield," interim Tigers manager Gene Lamont said. "We probably need somebody that can play centerfield, if we're going to have an outfielder there.

"Right now, we just need to do something to get a pitcher."

Moya filled an outfield utility role of sorts since being called up to the roster on May 12, playing in nine games while hitting .281 with zero home runs and two RBIs. He was 9 of 32 with four extra-base hits.

He did not play in Friday's game but was present with the team. He'll fly back Saturday and likely be available to the Mud Hens on Sunday when they close their series against Buffalo.

Boyd, who will be called up on Saturday, is tabbed to start Game 2 of Detroit's series in Oakland for the injured Jordan Zimmermann (groin).

"It's too bad," Lamont said. "I thought Steven showed very well why he was here. It's not easy, and then when he comes off the bench, it's tough.

"You don't wish that on anybody, especially a young kid like him. I thought he was impressive and we like him in our system."

Michael Fulmer shines, Nick Castellanos homers in Tigers' win over A's

May 28, 2016

By Aaron McMann/ MLive.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Detroit Tigers keep winning.

And Michael Fulmer keeps pitching well.

Fulmer tossed seven-plus shutout innings Friday in his best outing yet to lead the Tigers to a 4-1 win over the Oakland Athletics before 22,498 at O.co Coliseum.

It was the ninth win in 11 games for the Tigers, who were aided with an RBI double from Cameron Maybin as part of a two-run fourth inning and Nick Castellanos' 10th home run of the season.

Detroit (24-23), in the midst of a six-game trip to the West Coast, climbs above .500 again and sits just two games back of first place in the American League Central.

THREE STARS

Michael Fulmer -- Working on five days rest, Fulmer (4-1) worked effectively and efficiently in his second straight superb start. He allowed just three hits in 7 2/3 innings.

Ian Kinsler -- He was robbed of an extra-base hit in the first inning, then followed up with a triple and double in his next two at-bats. He finished 3-for-4, a home run shy of the cycle, and reached base four times.

Cameron Maybin -- The guy keeps hitting, this time with a two-out RBI double to deep right field that put the Tigers up 1-0. He went 1-for-3 and reached base twice, but was caught stealing - his first this season - on a pickoff move in the sixth.

GAME NOTES

-- Fulmer allowed a two-out single to Khris Davis in the second inning and two-out single to Chris Coghlan and double to Coco Crisp in the eighth. He walked two but worked out of it both times. His final line: 7.2 IP, 3 H, 0 R, 1 BB, 3 SO on 103 pitches.

--J.D. Martinez and James McCann each drove in a run for the Tigers, along with Castellanos and Maybin.

-- The Tigers stranded a pair of runners in the second after back-to-back singles by Victor Martinez and Nick Castellanos. A's starter Sean Manaea (1-3) struck out Justin Upton, got Maybin to pop out to first base and struck out James McCann.

-- Castellanos was 2-for-4 with an RBI for his 17th multi-hit game of the season. He has a hit in nine of his last 11 games.

-- Miguel Cabrera was hitless in four plate appearances but drew a pair of walks, including an intentional pass in the fifth.

-- Closer Francisco Rodriguez pitched the ninth and surrendered his second earned run in as many appearances on an RBI triple to Jed Lowrie. Lefty Justin Wilson struck out Billy Burns swinging to get out of the eighth.

-- Jose Iglesias was thrown out trying to take third base on a ground ball to shortstop in the seventh inning. Iglesias doubled to leadoff the inning and was 1-for-3.

-- After missing the last three games with a tight right quad, Justin Upton was 1-for-4 with a pair of strikeouts.

-- Gene Lamont was acting manager for a second straight game after Brad Ausmus attended his daughter's high school graduation ceremony Friday in San Diego. Ausmus is due to rejoin the team Saturday.

Tigers ponder moving Shane Greene to bullpen upon return

May 28, 2016

By Aaron McMann/ MLive.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Could Shane Greene end up in the bullpen?

The Detroit Tigers are apparently considering such a plan, acting manager Gene Lamont revealed Friday, as they ponder what to do next with the right-handed pitcher.

Greene, who is with the team in Oakland, reported no issues after a 60-pitch start for Triple-A Toledo on Wednesday, his second rehab stint since coming off the disabled list with a blister on the middle finger of his throwing hand.

"We've got to decide what we're going to do with him," Lamont said. "I think there's been talk about it, but I don't know for sure what we're going to do.

"We've got to decide if he's going to be a starter or is he going to be a reliever."

Lamont said Greene's next step is likely a bullpen session on Saturday, but anything after remains up in the air. Tigers manager Brad Ausmus is expected to rejoin the team Saturday after missing Friday's series opener against the Oakland Athletics to attend his daughter's high school graduation.

"I don't make those decisions," Lamont said of the call on how to use Greene. "He's got a great arm. I think he could be a starter or a reliever, but you just have to decide where is best for him and where is best for the team." Greene tossed a scoreless 3 1/3 innings Wednesday for Toledo, allowing four hits and striking out seven in 61 pitches.

"Things went really well," Greene said. "Arm feels good, finger feels good. Everything was coming out good. Just waiting to see what the next step is."

The bullpen wouldn't be a foreign spot for Greene (1-2, 6.28 ERA), who started the season as the Tigers' fifth starter. He made two relief stints at the end of 2015, one in the first game of 2016 and would provide long-inning help.

Should it happen, and it's a big if right now, rookie Michael Fulmer would likely take over the fifth spot in the starting rotation. Left-hander Matt Boyd is scheduled to make his first start of the season Saturday in place of Jordan Zimmermann, who remains bothered by a strained groin.

Putting Zimmermann on the disabled list - also a question mark at this point - would mean another hole in the starting rotation, making Greene more valuable in the starting rotation.

Either way, Lamont said, it's likely Greene will have to make a third rehab start at some point.

"I'm not sure," Greene said of moving to the bullpen. "That's not my decision.

"I just want to pitch."

Tigers' Matt Boyd to be recalled from Triple-A Toledo, start Saturday vs. A's

May 28, 2016

By Aaron McMann/ MLive.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Detroit Tigers have finally figured out their starting rotation for the weekend.

And it involves them dipping into their minor-league system for a familiar name.

Left-handed pitcher Matt Boyd will be recalled from Triple-A Toledo and start Saturday against the Oakland Athletics, the Tigers announced Friday afternoon, ending the mystery as to who would start the second game of the series.

The spot was officially slotted as "TBA" as the Tigers determined what to do with Jordan Zimmermann.

Zimmermann suffered a Grade 1 groin strain Sunday in a win over the Tampa Bay Rays, and while he hasn't been placed on the disabled list it was unlikely he would make his next scheduled start, Tigers manager Brad Ausmus later said.

Zimmermann was scheduled to toss a bullpen session today, the results of which are to be revealed later today.

Boyd, 25, is 1-3 with a 2.06 ERA in eight starts for Toledo, where he was scratched from making a scheduled start Thursday. He has allowed 11 earned runs and struck out 41 in 48 innings pitched.

In his only major-league appearance for the Tigers this season, Boyd tossed 4 2/3 innings of scoreless relief. He was 1-4 with a 6.57 ERA in 10 starts for Detroit in 2015.

A corresponding roster move will need to be made to accommodate Boyd on the 25-man roster.

The Tigers' West Coast struggles are real, and they start and end in one place

May 28, 2016

By Aaron McMann/ MLive.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Detroit Tigers begin an important six-game road trip tonight here, but if your spider senses are telling you not to get too excited you might be correct.

The Tigers' struggles on the West Coast are real.

Could it be the lengthy flight and time change? The weather?

That all remains up for debate, but check out these numbers before the Tigers - winners of eight of their last 10 - begin their three-game series Friday against the Oakland Athletics (10:05 p.m., Fox Sports Detroit).

Since 2006, the Tigers are 59-82 (.418) on the road in regular season games against teams on the West Coast. That includes typical American League opponents Oakland, Los Angeles (Anaheim) and Seattle, with the occasional National League team thrown in for inter-league play (Los Angeles Dodgers, San Francisco, San Diego).

Take a look at the breakdown by team:

vs. LAA: 10-30

vs. LAD: 3-5

vs. Oakland: 21-24

vs. San Diego: 3-3

vs. San Francisco: 2-1

vs. Seattle: 20-17

Factor in a handful of playoff games on the road against teams on the West Coast (3-5) and the winning percentage improves slightly, but the overall point rings true: the Tigers have trouble winning games after the nearly 2,000-mile journey.

Their last winning record in a season on the road vs. West Coast teams came in 2006, when Detroit went to the World Series, with series victories over Oakland and Seattle (twice, including a three-game sweep).

The nightmare seems to boil down to one team: the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim, their opponent beginning Monday.

Not only have the Tigers lost two-thirds of the games they have played at Angel Stadium since 2006, they are 1-13 there since 2012.

Here's a season-by-season breakdown of Detroit's results at LAA since 2006:

2015: 0-4 (swept)

2014: 1-3

2013: 0-3 (swept)

2012: 0-3 (swept)

2011: 1-2

2010: 1-2

2009: 2-1

2008: 1-2

2007: 1-4

2006: 1-2

Three sweeps in their last four series in Anaheim and one series win since 2009.

So what's the problem? The Tigers have struggled to score runs at Angel Stadium.

Since 2011, a span of 17 games, they have been outscored 82-33. They were outscored 26-10 in a four-game series in 2015, 12-8 in a four-game series in 2014 and - get this - a 22-4 in a three-game series in 2013.

The 2013 series was extra crushing because it followed series wins in Oakland and Seattle, their first consecutive series wins against teams from the West Coast since 2008 (San Francisco, San Diego).

Typically, as it does this year, the series in Anaheim follows a trip to either Oakland or Seattle. So it's possible fatigue and/or jet lag play a factor.

The one silver lining, if you can take one away, is the day off the Tigers had Thursday to help them acclimate to the time change.

Will it help? That remains to be seen, but history says Detroit could be in for another losing trip out west.

Fulmer flashes signs of bright future in Detroit

May 28, 2016

By Michael Wagaman/ MLB.com

OAKLAND -- With the Tigers having to jumble their starting rotation due to a litany of injuries, Michael Fulmer has emerged as one of the staff's key members after opening the season in the Minors.

Detroit's rookie right-hander followed up a solid outing against Tampa Bay with his best start of the season in the Tigers' 4-1 series-opening win over the Oakland A's on Friday night.

Fulmer scattered three hits over 7 2/3 scoreless innings with three strikeouts and one walk.

"It felt good," Fulmer said. "Early on I had a little trouble getting loose but once I got loose and settled in, everything kind of flew by. I was happy with the way it went."

Fulmer's outing was the longest of his six career starts. It helped Detroit give its bullpen a needed break and led the Tigers to their ninth win in 11 games after going 2-11 to start May.

"He threw well," Detroit bench coach Gene Lamont said. "He's got quite a few weapons. Maybe didn't use the changeup quite as much but he's got an awfully good sinker. When he's throwing his fastball and it's down, he's going to get more ground balls."

Fulmer had 11 strikeouts in his win over the Rays on May 21 but took a different approach against the A's. That meant fewer changeups and a steady diet of fastballs down in the zone.

"I want to be more efficient and I want to go deeper into games, so that means throwing more quality fastballs and getting weak contact," Fulmer said. "Keeping them honest with the changeup and the slider was OK tonight, but I think the four-seam fastball down in the zone [was key] and just let them hit so the defense can work."

Fulmer (4-1) has won three decisions since losing to Washington on May 5. Over his last two starts, he's allowed one run and seven hits over 14 2/3 innings while lowering his ERA from 6.52 to a respectable 3.97.

"He has a great pitching mentality," second baseman Ian Kinsler said. "He wants to throw nine innings."

It's possible that Fulmer could still be the odd man out when the Tigers' rotation gets healthy. Jordan Zimmermann could return next week after missing his scheduled start Saturday, and Shane Greene is also close to coming back off the disabled list.

"I'm still learning," Fulmer said. "I feel so much more comfortable. I just trust everything. It feels good to get big league hitters out any way I can."

Lamont, noting that the decision isn't entirely up to him, said he thought the rookie pitcher has done enough to stay with the big league club after being acquired from the Mets on July 31 as part of the trade for slugger Yoenis Cespedes.

"We paid dearly for him," Lamont said. "I'm not knocking the kid but he came in a pretty big trade for Cespedes. You expect to get something good for Cespedes and he's done a good job for us so far. I think he's shown enough that he's going to stay here for a while."

Not-so-routine DP leaves Tigers, A's dazed

May 28, 2016

By Michael Wagaman/ MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The Tigers scored just enough runs to earn rookie Michael Fulmer his fourth victory with a 4-1 win over the A's on Friday. They would have had more were it not for a strange double play in the fifth inning as Victor Martinez was at the plate with a runner at third base.

With one out, Martinez hit a pop fly into foul territory that A's first baseman Yonder Alonso tracked down and caught. Alonso turned and threw to home plate, but the ball skipped past catcher Stephen Vogt.

Ian Kinsler, who doubled leading off the inning, alertly broke for home and appeared to score, but home-plate umpire Joe West ruled that the ball thrown by Alonso had struck Martinez in the leg as he was turning back toward the dugout and subsequently ruled the play dead and called Kinsler out.

"[Alonso's] throwing and Victor didn't try to get out of the way," Detroit bench coach Gene Lamont said of the play. "He didn't do it intentionally, but that doesn't have anything to do with the rule. I'd never seen it before but Joe was right. If the catcher would have caught the ball nothing would have been [called]. It seems like a funny rule, but it's a rule."

West, who was also the crew chief, cited parts of three rules in his explanation of the call.

"There are three places in the rule book that cover it," West said. "First of all, [Martinez is] a player in the game. Even though his interference was unintentional, because he's in the game, he's the exception to the rule."

West explained that because Martinez was at-bat and had already been called out on the play, he was responsible for avoiding the throw. Therefore, Kinsler was called out because of Martinez's interference on the throw home.

"He was not doing anything intentional to interfere with the play," West said. "Because he's in the game, had he been running the bases and got hit, it's nothing. But he wasn't running the bases."

The play left several players scratching their heads, including Kinsler who talked with West near home plate for several moments before Lamont came out to ask for clarification.

"I'd never seen anything like it," Kinsler said.

Martinez was equally baffled by the play. He spoke briefly before leaving the clubhouse. "That's the first time I've seen that," Martinez said.

The Tigers weren't the only ones questioning the call. Several members of the A's also were stymied by the ruling, including starting pitcher Sean Manaea.

"A lot of guys in the dugout were saying they've never seen that before too," Manaea said. "It was pretty unique and it was a good way to get out of the inning."

Fulmer on fire as Tigers cruise past A's

May 28, 2016

By Jane Lee and Michael Wagaman/ MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Nick Castellanos homered, and Michael Fulmer held the A's to three hits across 7 2/3 innings to help the Tigers secure a 4-1 victory in Friday's series opener at the Coliseum.

It was the 10th homer of the season for Castellanos, who finished with two hits for the Tigers, winners of nine of their last 11 games to rise one game above the .500 mark at 24-23. Cameron Maybin and James McCann chipped in with run-scoring hits against A's starter Sean Manaea, who was on the hook for three runs on nine hits in six-plus innings.

Fulmer surrendered a two-out base hit to Khris Davis in the second inning but not another until the eighth, when Chris Coghlan and Coco Crisp notched back-to-back hits with two outs to force his exit. The right-hander fanned three, walked one and hit a batter in the win, his fourth of the season.

"When he's throwing his fastball and it's down he's going to get more ground balls," Tigers bench coach Gene Lamont said. "He got a little tired at the end but he's a good looking young pitcher."

Detroit tacked on a run in the ninth against righty Andrew Triggs, when Ian Kinsler singled for his third hit of the night -- falling a home run shy of the cycle -- and scored on J.D. Martinez's ensuing triple. Oakland's lone run came in the bottom half of the frame, with Jed Lowrie collecting an RBI triple against closer Francisco Rodriguez.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Two-out time: After wasting a pair of opportunities in the second and third, the Tigers broke through and scored twice in the fourth with three consecutive two-out hits. Maybin's RBI double extended his hitting streak to 10 games since coming off the disabled list after missing the first six weeks with a fractured left wrist.

Offense MIA: The A's did little with their bats, stranding six men on base, and have plated just 23 runs total in their last eight games, for an average of 2.88 per game over that span. This woeful stretch coincides with Josh Reddick's absence. The right fielder was placed on the disabled list with a fractured left thumb May 20, and the A's have since dropped seven of eight.

"We've got pitched to pretty well," A's manager Bob Melvin said, "and we're also not taking advantage of some situations when we get some guys on and maybe missing a pitch or two an at-bat that you have a chance to do some damage with."

Get out of the way: Victor Martinez hit into a 3-2 double play in the fifth inning that was anything but ordinary. With Kinsler at third and one out, Martinez fouled out to first baseman Yonder Alonso, who turned and threw to home. Kinsler appeared to score when the ball skipped past A's catcher Stephen Vogt, but home-plate umpire Joe West ruled that Alonso's throw hit Martinez in the leg while he was walking back to the dugout and subsequently ruled Kinsler out.

Manaea making strides: Manaea has pitched into the seventh inning in each of his last three starts after completing no more than five in his first three big league outings. The lefty has impressed by making continued improvements, evident in Friday's contest when he was able to wiggle his way out of a pair of early-inning jams.

"Seems like every time out he's feeling a little bit more comfortable," Melvin said.

"My slider was non-existent the first couple games and these past few games it's finally starting to come around," Manaea said. "Finding a comfortable grip for my changeup has been good for me. My fastball has kind of always been there. I'm just trying to execute a little better. I would say I'm starting to improve with each start."

WHAT'S NEXT

Tigers: Left-hander Matt Boyd is expected to be called up from Triple-A Toledo to start Saturday's 4:05 p.m. ET game at the Coliseum. Boyd is making a spot start in place of injured Jordan Zimmermann.

A's: Right-hander Jesse Hahn takes the mound in Saturday's 1:05 p.m. PT matchup with the Tigers at the Coliseum. Hahn is 0-1 with a 5.11 ERA in two starts since his return from Triple-A Nashville on May 17.

Will Greene return to rotation, or move to 'pen?

May 28, 2016

By Michael Wagaman/ MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Right-hander Shane Greene is inching closer to returning to the Tigers following a rehab stint in the Minors. The only question seems to be whether he'll rejoin the team as a reliever or move back into the starting rotation.

Greene has not pitched since April 24 because of a blister on his right middle finger. The blister split open a second time while Greene was on the disabled list, further setting back his recovery.

In two rehab starts, Greene has not allowed a run in 6 1/3 innings while recording 12 strikeouts. He most recently pitched Wednesday with Triple-A Toledo and gave up four hits while retiring 10 batters before joining the Tigers in Oakland.

Bench coach Gene Lamont said that Greene might make one more rehab start before a decision is made.

The issue, according to Lamont, is whether Greene's blister issues will continue the longer he pitches in a particular game. Green threw 97 and 85 pitches, respectively, in the two starts before a shortened outing against Cleveland before going on the DL.

"Is the finger problem going to be a problem if he throws 80 or 90 pitches?" Lamont said. "We don't really know that. That thing took an awful long time to heal. We just have to see how it plays out.

"I don't make those decisions. He's got a great arm. I think he can be a starter or reliever. The thing we just have to decide is where is best for him and where is best for the team."

Tigers not ruling out DL stint for Zimmermann

May 28, 2016

By Michael Wagaman/ MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The Tigers are optimistic that pitcher Jordan Zimmermann will make his scheduled start next week but haven't yet ruled out the possibility of the right-hander going on the disabled list.

Zimmermann was pulled from his previous outing against Tampa Bay with a groin strain after throwing a season-low 81 pitches and was scratched from his start this weekend in Oakland.

The 30-year-old played long toss before Friday's game and is scheduled to throw a side session this weekend. If all goes well, Zimmermann will start against the Los Angeles Angels on Tuesday in Detroit.

"If he can't [make his next start], he'll probably have to go on the DL," said Detroit bench coach Gene Lamont, who is filling in for manager Brad Ausmus while Ausmus is in San Diego for his daughter's graduation.

Zimmermann is 7-2 in his first season with the Tigers after signing a five-year, \$110 million contract with Detroit in the offseason. The two-time All-Star pitcher has a career-low 2.52 ERA that is sixth-best among qualifying starters in the AL.

Matt Boyd is slated to be called up from Triple-A Toledo to start Saturday's game against Oakland. The left-hander went 1-3 with a 2.06 ERA with 41 strikeouts in eight starts with the Mud Hens.

"He was definitely the next guy if we needed somebody," Lamont said. "He's improved an awful lot. He looked good in the spring but we kind of had our rotation then. Will it just be one time? We don't know."

Fulmer pitches Tigers past Athletics 4-1

May 28, 2016

By Rick Eymer/ Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) -- Michael Fulmer took his place in Detroit history with the best effort yet of his young career.

Nick Castellanos homered and Cameron Maybin doubled in a run, giving the rookie right-hander more than enough support in the Tigers' 4-1 victory over the Oakland Athletics on Friday night.

James McCann and J.D. Martinez also drove in runs for the Tigers, who have won nine of 11. Ian Kinsler was a home run shy of the cycle.

Fulmer (4-1) retired 14 of the first 15 batters he faced, with Khris Davis' single with two outs in the second inning the only smudge of an otherwise dominating performance.

He became the third Tigers' pitcher to throw at least 7 2-3 innings, allow no runs and three hits or fewer within his first six starts and the first since Pat Underwood in 1979.

"Early on I had a little trouble getting loose, but once I got loose and settled in, everything kind of flew by," Fulmer said. "Credit to the one guy in front of me and all seven behind me. It was a great team effort, a good team win."

Fulmer, who walked one and struck out three, retired 14 hitters on groundballs and five on flyballs.

"I tried to pitch more to contact," he said. "I want to be more efficient and I want to go deeper into games. So that means throwing more quality fastballs and getting weak contact."

A's starter Sean Manaea (1-3) gave up three runs and nine hits in six-plus innings. He walked two and struck out four.

Jed Lowrie tripled home a run in the ninth for the A's, who have lost seven of eight but avoided being shut out for a second time.

Fulmer, making his sixth career start, did not allow another baserunner after Davis' single until he walked Chris Coghlan in the sixth and hit Lowrie with a pitch in the seventh. He did not allow a runner past first through seven innings.

Maybin has hit safely in all 10 games he's played since coming off the disabled list.

ROUTINE 3-2 DOUBLE PLAY

It took three different official scoring rules to verify that an inning-ending double play was the right call by home plate umpire Joe West.

A's first baseman Yonder Alfonso caught Victor Martinez's foul pop with Kinsler edging off third. Alfonso threw home and the ball glanced off Martinez's foot and went to the backstop. West immediately called the play dead and ruled Martinez out for interference.

"There are three places in the rule book that cover it," West said. "First of all, he's a player in the game. Even though the interference was unintentional, he is the exception to the rule. Exception is members of the team at-bat who are participating in the game. He's participating in the game. He therefore has to avoid the throw."

Said Manaea: "I've never even heard of that. A lot of the guys were saying they've never seen it. It was pretty unique and a good way to get out of an inning."

TRAINER'S ROOM

Tigers: RHP Jordan Zimmermann (right groin strain) threw a long toss session before the game and will throw a bullpen session on Saturday. ... RHP Shane Greene (blister on right middle finger) made a rehab start on Wednesday with Toledo and joined the team in Oakland, where he will throw a bullpen before the team decides what to do with him.

Athletics: C Josh Phegley was activated from the DL and C Matt McBride was optioned to Triple-A Nashville before the game. ... RHP Sonny Gray (right trapezius strain) is scheduled to throw off a mound Saturday. ...

RHP Henderson Alvarez (right shoulder) resumed throwing again, playing catch at 90 feet. He'll be extended to 105 feet on Saturday.

UP NEXT

Tigers: LHP Matt Boyd (0-0, 0.00) will be recalled from Triple-A Toledo to make his second appearance of the season, and his first start, on Saturday. He threw 4 2/3 shutout innings in relief a month ago.

Athletics: RHP Jesse Hahn (1-2, 4.07) gets the call for Saturday's game. He's 2-0 in two starts against the Tigers, both last year.

Tigers' Michael Fulmer isn't going anywhere after another gem

May 28, 2016

By Katie Strang/ ESPN.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- If there was any doubt heading into Friday's start, there should be even less now: Detroit Tigers pitcher Michael Fulmer is sticking around.

The 23-year-old flamethrower, dominant for the second consecutive start, has shown he can handle the pressure and expectations befitting a major league pitcher. Any suggestion otherwise was rendered moot by his 7 2/3; scoreless-inning performance in the Tigers' 4-1 win over the Oakland Athletics.

Gene Lamont, who has assumed managerial duties the past two games during Brad Ausmus' absence for a family matter, laughed when asked if Fulmer has proven he belongs in the big leagues.

"Well, he's going to pitch in five days," he said.

Not usually the conduit to the media, Lamont didn't seem entirely at ease with divulging the team's long-term plans, but he made it quite clear that the Tigers have no intention of plucking Fulmer out of the rotation. Can't blame them. In his previous start on May 21, Fulmer struck out 11 and gave up one run in seven innings.

"Let's be realistic, we're going to keep Fulmer," Lamont said. "Fulmer's not going ... I shouldn't speak of ... that's my feeling. I don't think Fulmer will -- I don't think [general manager Al Avila] or Brad wants you guys on their ass about that."

Given the club's need for strong starting pitching outside of Justin Verlander and Jordan Zimmermann (the latter of which is currently injured and hoping to avoid the disabled list), there's no reason the Tigers should not continue to cultivate Fulmer's talent and moxie at this level. Mike Pelfrey has made strides in recent starts, but he's still reeling from an 0-4 record and a 5.55 ERA. Anibal Sanchez continues to be tormented by the sixth inning or the third time through an opponent's lineup, whichever comes first.

Even once Shane Greene (finger) returns from the disabled list, he won't be usurping Fulmer's spot. Prior to Friday's game, Lamont revealed that the Tigers were still mulling whether to use Greene in the rotation or the bullpen.

Most importantly, Fulmer continues to get only better with each start, as was evident in Friday's outing in which he allowed just two hits. According to research by ESPN Stats & Information, Fulmer became the first Tigers rookie to throw 7 2/3 scoreless innings since Verlander in 2006.

"We knew that he had the mentality," veteran second baseman Ian Kinsler said. "The way he's grown since then has been really -- remarkable."

Kinsler, who went 3-for-5 and was robbed of at least another extra-base hit when Billy Burns made a diving snag of his deep ball to center, said the way Fulmer is mixing his pitches compared to his first big league start shows just how far he has come.

When the Tigers saw him then, and in spring training, he was heavily reliant on his fastball-slider combination. Now, he's utilizing his changeup much more and it's making a marked difference.

"The last two starts, he's worked in the changeup at a high percentage and it's really, really helped him. It's really extended his innings and his pitch count has gone down," Kinsler said. "It's a big pitch for him."

The biggest difference Fulmer has noticed since he made his first career start back on April 29?

"I feel so much more comfortable. I just trust everything," Fulmer said. "It feels good to get big league hitters out, any way I can. And the defense is doing great. [Catchers James McCann and Jarrod Saltalamacchia] are helping me learn so much, so just credit to everybody else for helping me along with their advice and I'm hoping to just keep moving forward."

Fulmer, who was acquired in last year's trade that sent star center fielder Yoenis Cespedes to the New York Mets, came into the organization with top billing. He remains the club's top-ranked prospect and has already prompted the team to discuss how to monitor and manage his innings for the future.

Fulmer came highly touted -- as Lamont said, "We paid dearly for him" -- and rightfully so, but even the Tigers seem a bit surprised at how quickly he has ascended.

"We thought maybe he'd be in Triple-A all year," Lamont said. "And he's in the big leagues right now."

Considering how Fulmer has pitched of late, that is where he is likely to remain.

Jordan Zimmermann hopes to avoid DL and make start on Tuesday

May 28, 2016

By Katie Strang/ ESPN.com

OAKLAND -- Detroit Tigers pitcher Jordan Zimmermann is optimistic he will be able to return to the mound next week.

The 29-year-old pitcher has been encouraged by the progress made since the weekend and hopes to avoid the disabled list for the Grade 1 groin strain suffered in Sunday's game.

"I think so, but the real test, like I said, is going to be Sunday, when I'm going to have to push off and get on some, [a] little elevation to see how it is," Zimmermann said, talking for the first time since he was forced from Sunday's game.

Zimmermann, who played catch and long-tossed before Friday's game, will throw a bullpen session on Sunday, after which the team will determine whether he is available to start Tuesday against the Los Angeles Angels or whether he will require a stint on the DL.

"Things are moving in the right direction. The biggest test is going to be on Sunday, so if I come out of that fine, I'll be good," said Zimmermann, who has been sensational in the first quarter of the season for the Tigers, posting a 7-2 record with a 2.52 ERA.

The Tigers seem similarly confident.

"We think it looks pretty good," said bench coach Gene Lamont, who is assuming managerial duties in the absence of Brad Ausmus, who is attending to a family matter..

Zimmermann has never dealt with an extended stay on the DL, other than when he suffered an elbow injury that required him to undergo Tommy John surgery in 2009. Avoiding the disabled list is something he takes pride in, he said.

"Yeah, obviously you don't want to be on there. I've been lucky enough to stay healthy other than the Tommy John, so I'm going to do everything I can to avoid it," Zimmermann said.

He said he immediately knew it was a groin injury when it happened on Sunday and is grateful it didn't turn out to be a lot worse.

Asked about the pain he felt following the pitch on which he injured the groin, Zimmermann joked, "I guess I've never been stabbed or shot before, but that was kind of the case."

Tigers' Shane Greene: Starter or reliever?

May 28, 2016

By Katie Strang/ ESPN.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Heading into this weekend's series against the Oakland Athletics, the biggest question surrounding injured pitcher Shane Greene seemed to be whether he'd need a third rehab start.

But Detroit Tigers bench coach Gene Lamont, who is assuming managerial duties with Brad Ausmus away dealing with a family issue, made an interesting revelation in Friday's pregame media briefing: The Tigers are mulling whether to use him in the rotation or in the bullpen once he's activated from the disabled list.

This was a bit of a surprise, given the fact that Greene, who has been on the DL since April 29 (retroactive to April 25) with a blistered middle finger, has been used -- and considered -- solely as a starter since nailing down the fifth spot in the rotation out of spring training. That's no longer the case, according to Lamont.

"He's got a great arm," Lamont said. "I think he can be a starter or a reliever. You just have to decide where is best for him and where is best for the team."

Greene threw 61 pitches in his second rehab start on Wednesday, throwing 3 1/3 shutout innings with four hits and seven strikeouts. He said on Friday he felt "great." But it appears there remains some concern over whether his finger issue will be reaggravated given the workload he could see if he remains in the rotation.

"You have to decide, is the finger problem going to be a problem if he throws 80 or 90 or whatever pitches? Will it be better? We don't really know that," Lamont said.

Lamont said the Tigers would "ideally" like to get Greene another rehab start, but that could potentially change if the plan shifts to using him out of the bullpen. Lamont did definitively rule him out as a potential starter for this Tuesday if injured pitcher Jordan Zimmermann (groin) cannot make his next start.

Greene, who said he "couldn't feel any better," told ESPN.com on Friday he had no preference on whether he was used as a starter or a reliever: "I just want to pitch."

A's bats silenced in 4-1 loss to Tigers

May 28, 2016

By John Hickey/ East Bay Times

OAKLAND -- The A's had been waiting for a rookie pitcher to do this, just dominate. When it happened, though, it was, from the Oakland perspective, the wrong rookie.

While A's lefty Sean Manaea continued his gradual improvement with his second quality start in his last three games, he wound up on the short end of a 4-1 score with Tigers' newcomer Michael Fulmer simply in total command for the first seven innings.

The A's nicked him for one hit, one walk and he hit a batter in those seven innings, by which time he had a 3-0 lead. Oakland chased him in eighth and got a run home against the Detroit bullpen in the ninth, but this game was all Fulmer.

"There's not much to say; the scoreboard says it all, right?" A's first baseman Yonder Alonso said of Fulmer, who threw darting fastballs and bat-breaking change-ups that the A's had no success in handling. "He was down in the zone. It was not a good way to go."

A's catcher Stephen Vogt was particularly impressed with the right-on-right change up that Fulmer threw and acknowledged the dominating performance the Detroit 23-year-old turned in. Even so, Vogt was more than happy with what Manaea, 24, showed, and preferred to talk about what that means for the A's moving ahead. "I thought Sean was really good," Vogt said. "I think they found some holes, but he pitched out of some jams really well."

The A's need some positive thoughts, because they've lost eight of nine and are a season-worst nine games under .500 at 20-29 and nine games out in the American League West.

Manaea had a couple of infield hits hurt him to start the second inning, but the Tigers didn't score. In the third, a one-out triple could have been trouble, but again Detroit couldn't get the ball out of the infield when it counted.

"He showed what he can do in those situations," Vogt said. "It was unfortunate he gave up that home run in the fifth, but other than that, he was really, really sharp. It was good to see."

The homer came off the bat of Nick Castellanos in the sixth and made the score 3-0. The first two runs came in the fourth when three two-out hits burned him, including a soft single from Cameron Maybin that just eluded right fielder Chris Coghlan.

After giving up five runs in 62/3 innings his last time out, the left-handed Manaea seemed to feel he was back on top of his game. He's said he'd lost focus momentarily his last time out, but there was none of that this time around.

"I felt comfortable out there," Manaea said. "There were a couple of pitches I didn't get up enough that hurt me, but tonight I felt like I had better command of my slider than in any of the earlier games."

The Tigers thought they'd added a run in the fifth when Alonso's throw to the plate went wild after Alonso had caught a foul pop. But Ian Kinsler was called out because the throw hit the batter, Victor Martinez, in foul territory, and under the rule book, that meant Kinsler was automatically called out.

Both Alonso, who made the throw, and Vogt, who was denied making the catch when the ball hit off Martinez's foot, said they'd never seen a play like it.

After the game, home plate umpire Joe West said it was a case of "unintentional interference." And unintentional though it may have been, the rule book still treats it as interference, as West was quick to point out.

Fans planning to attend A's games for the holiday weekend will not be able to take BART directly from the south. There will be no BART service from Saturday through Monday night between San Leandro and the Bay Fair stations. BART will provide buses to get passengers moving. Should the Warriors have a Game 7 against Oklahoma City in the playoffs Monday, BART will instead reopen Monday at 3 p.m.

Josh Reddick, still on the disabled list for another month or so with a fractured left thumb, won't be playing Saturday when his bobblehead is the A's featured giveaway. Bummed as he is about being out of action on his first-ever bobblehead day, Reddick is expected to be at the Coliseum.

Josh Phegley came off the disabled list before the game with Oakland clearing roster space by sending outfielder/catcher Matt McBride to Triple-A Nashville.

Sonny Gray, on the disabled list with a strained right trapezoid, threw on the side Thursday and Friday and is scheduled to throw a 35-40 pitch bullpen session Saturday.

"He is doing good," manager Bob Melvin said. "He felt good yesterday and felt even better today. You always have your fingers crossed that it's a limited amount of time on the D.L., whether it's 15 days or shortly thereafter."

Henderson Alvarez's return trip from the D.L. while battling shoulder problems had him throwing out to 90 feet Friday, and the starter is supposed to throw 105 feet Saturday. Reliever Liam Hendriks, dealing with a right triceps strain, is on the same schedule. There is no set date for either to throw a bullpen.

Reliever R.J. Alvarez, trying to come back from a right elbow surgery this spring, is scheduled to throw a bullpen session Saturday morning.

Weird interference play helps A's, but not enough

May 28, 2016

By John Hickey/ East Bay Times

One of the oldest sayings about baseball is that on any given day you can see something you've never seen before.

Friday's Oakland-Detroit game was one of those given days.

The Tigers thought they'd scored in the fifth inning when Ian Kinsler tagged up and tried to score from third after A's first baseman Yonder Alonso made an over-the-shoulder catch in foul territory.

Alonso came up throwing, and Kinsler stopped. But when the ball skittered past catcher Steve Vogt at the plate, Kinsler was able to cross the plate uncontested.

Except that home plate umpire Joe West pointed at Kinsler and said two words: "You're out."

Neither side protested, and the game went on, but it took a while for the assembled multitude in the press box to sort out exactly why Kinsler was out. It turned out that the man who hit the foul ball, Victor Martinez was nicked on the foot by the throw, and that constituted interference that didn't elude West's vision. He said there were three different parts of the rule book that said so.

The A's were, however, a little slow to grasp it.

"I've never been part of a play like that," Alonso said. "I saw the guy take a couple of hard steps off third base, and I just threw to home. I don't know what happened after that. I guess (Martinez) didn't see the ball coming his way. I think it hit his foot. It worked out for us."

As for Vogt, who was waiting for the throw, it was also a first.

"I wasn't sure how they were going to do it, and then I heard Joe say like 'that runner's out, too.' And then I connected. 'Oh, yeah, he's out.'

"I had never seen a play like that. The guy wasn't intentionally trying to get in the way. You've seen where guys do it intentionally. He was just walking back to the dugout, and it was a perfect storm for us at the time."

West, talking about the play after the game, summed it up like this:

"He's participating in the game (as opposed to being on the bench)," West said. "He therefore has to avoid the throw. And because he was already out, the batter/runner who's been put out or anyone that has scored hinders or impedes on a runner such runner should be called out for the interference of his teammate. That's 6.01(a)(5)."

In this case, that was Kinsler, coming down the line from third. That save the A's a run at the time and kept the game at 2-0. It could have been a big moment for the Oakland side, but the A's didn't have much going offensively until a ninth-inning Jed Lowrie RBI triple.

"In general, we have to have better at-bats, starting with myself," Alonso said. "We've been inconsistent."

Rewind: Manaea offers bright spot despite another A's loss

May 28, 2016

By Joe Stiglich/ CSNCalifornia.com

OAKLAND — Sean Manaea's progress in his rookie season can't always be judged by the win-loss column. It was another downer of a night for his club Friday, as the A's were bottled up offensively in a 4-1 loss to the Detroit Tigers. For Manaea individually, it was a step forward against an imposing, righty-dominated lineup that could have spelled trouble for the left-hander.

He exited the game after allowing Jose Iglesias' leadoff double in the seventh, having surrendered three runs on nine hits. That would have been good enough to win on some nights, but not with how Oakland was functioning at the plate against Detroit's own highly touted rookie, right-hander Michael Fulmer.

Manaea took the loss, dropping his record to 1-3, but he earned praise from his manager and catcher.

"I told him this is the best I've seen him mix his pitches," Stephen Vogt said afterward. "Especially against an all-righty lineup, he threw some very effective, very quality sliders. We have to do a better job offensively when he gives us a chance to win like that."

Given how the A's starters have performed this season, there's no denying the bar is set low right now. The rotation entered Friday with a 5.25 ERA overall, 6.69 over the previous 31 games. The A's rank 12th out of 15 American League teams in innings pitched by their starters. So to see someone go out and register a quality start, as Manaea did Friday, comes across as quite the accomplishment.

However, a solid outing shouldn't be mistaken for dominance. Manaea's performances must be judged on their own merit, not relative to the struggles of the A's other starters not named Rich Hill. But by any standard, Friday felt like a step forward for the big lefty.

He came in having allowed a .346 batting average to righties, and the Tigers — always a righty-dominated bunch — didn't offer a single lefty in their batting order. Manaea combated that by effectively mixing his slider and changeup with a fastball that sat in the 93-94 mph range.

"My slider was non-existent the first couple games," said Manaea, who's now made six major league starts.

"The past few games it's finally starting to come around. Finding the new changeup, the new grip ... has been huge for me. The fastball has kind of always been there, I'm just trying to execute a little better."

He allowed Detroit a two-out rally in the fourth that broke a scoreless tie. Justin Upton singled on a fastball Manaea said he didn't elevate enough. Cameron Maybin sliced an RBI double down the right field corner and James McCann's blooper fell for a cheap run-scoring single. Leading off the sixth, Manaea hung a slider that Nick Castellanos pounded for a homer to make it 3-0.

There will continue to be some missteps. In Manaea's previous start, against the Yankees, he was cruising until New York struck for four runs in the fourth in an eventual 5-1 A's loss. He kept a better handle on things Friday, including stranding two runners in the second and a man at third in the third.

"He had a better mix of pitches," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "He used his slider a little more effectively, his changeup too. He was a little less predictable and looked like he had a good fastball. He looks like every time out he's feeling a little more comfortable."

The A's (20-29), tied with the Astros for the AL's second-worst record, obviously are struggling to meld their pitching and hitting together on the same day consistently. If they continue to flounder well below .500, the spotlight on their season will increasingly shift to the development of young players such as Manaea, whose success can't always be judged by what the scoreboard reads.

Instant Replay: A's stuck in neutral vs Fulmer, fall to Tigers

May 28, 2016

By Joe Stiglich/ CSNCalifornia.com

OAKLAND — In the ever-revolving cycle of A's shortcomings this season, the offense is currently trying to shake itself out of the doldrums.

The A's mustered just five hits and advanced only three runners as far as third base Friday in a 4-1 loss to the Detroit Tigers to open up a three-game series at the Coliseum.

Certainly the theme of the A's season —aside from the bombardment of injuries — has been a starting rotation that simply hasn't eaten up enough innings to get the job done. But Oakland's hitters, while at times showing flashes of power and productivity, are in a dry spell.

Over the past eight games, the A's are hitting just .179 and averaging 2.88 runs per game.

On Friday, Tigers top prospect Michael Fulmer (4-1) carved through them with ease and precision. He faced just three batters over the minimum through seven innings, leaving after 7 2/3 innings and holding the A's to three hits. He walked one and struck out three, registering 13 ground-ball outs against just one fly out.

A's rookie Sean Manaea fared relatively well, giving up three runs over six-plus innings, but with the A's bats in a deep freeze, he had very little margin for error.

The A's have dropped seven of their last eight to fall a season-high nine games under .500 at 20-29.

They avoided a shutout when Jed Lowrie banged a triple off the right field wall in the ninth against Fernando Rodriguez to score Danny Valencia.

Starting pitching report

Manaea did well to strand runners in scoring position in the second and third innings. Then a two-out rally bit him in the fourth. Justin Upton lined a single, Cameron Maybin also went the opposite way with a double that landed just inside the right field foul line that scored Upton on a close play at the plate. Then James McCann blooped a single that fell in front of Chris Coghlan in right to score Maybe for a 2-0 Tigers lead.

Manaea was helped by an unusual interference call in the fifth that helped keep Detroit off the board. With one out, Victor Martinez popped out in foul territory behind first base. Ian Kinsler, running at third, bluffed tagging up and going home, prompting a throw home from Yonder Alonso. His throw hit Martinez as he was starting to walk back to the dugout, and home plate umpire Joe West immediately called Martinez out for interference.

Detroit made it 3-0 when Nick Castellanos hit Manaea's first pitch of the sixth, a changeup that caught too much plate, for a homer well into the left field seats.

You certainly couldn't fault Manaea (1-3) on this night given how his teammates went silent with the bats. He was penalized for not shutting off the Tigers' rally in the fourth after he retired the first two batters. But for a rotation that hasn't been working nearly deep enough into games, credit the rookie for lasting into the seventh for the third consecutive start. He left with no outs that inning, having allowed nine hits and three runs with two walks and four strikeouts.

Bullpen report

Ryan Dull, Fernando Rodriguez and Andrew Triggs combined to allow one run over the final three innings.

At the plate

Fuller came in with a 5.13 ERA but he'd struck out 11 in his previous start against Tampa Bay. The A's managed just three base runners off him through the first seven innings. They rallied in the eighth, as Coco Crisp's ground rule double put runners on second and third with two outs and the score 3-0. Lefty Justin Wilson replaced Fulmer, and Billy Butler entered for the A's as a pinch hitter. He chased a pitch out of the strike zone for strike three to extinguish that threat.

In the field

Neither team committed an error.

Attendance

The announced crowd was 22,498.

Up next

Jesse Hahn (1-2, 4.07) gets the call for the A's on Saturday. He'll be opposed by lefty Matt Boyd (0-0, 0.00), who's making his first start of the season and just his second appearance for the Tigers. First pitch is 1:05 p.m.

Notes: A's Gray will test injury, throw off mound Saturday

May 28, 2016

By Joe Stiglich/ CSNCalifornia.com

OAKLAND — After playing catch the past two days, Sonny Gray will throw from the mound Saturday for the first time since joining the disabled list.

Consider that encouraging news for the A's right-hander, who joined the 15-day D.L. on Sunday after revealing he'd been pitching his past couple of starts with pain caused by a strained trapezius muscle in the back of his neck.

"He felt good yesterday and felt even better today," manager Bob Melvin said before Friday's game against Detroit. "A guy like that, you're hoping it's a limited amount of time on the D.L., whether it's 15 days or shortly thereafter."

Melvin said he didn't know yet how many bullpen sessions Gray would throw before making a minor league rehab start. But given that Melvin has been hinting that Gray could be gone longer than 15 days, it seems unlikely he'll be activated June 5, the first day he's eligible to come off the D.L.

In other pitching-related injury updates, right-hander Henderson Alvarez played catch out to 90 feet Friday and will go to 105 feet Saturday to test his surgically repaired shoulder. Reliever Liam Hendricks, recovering from a triceps strain, is on a similar schedule. And fellow reliever R.J. Alvarez, on the mend from elbow surgery, will throw his second bullpen session Saturday.

Catcher Josh Phegley rejoined the active roster after missing 15 games with a strained right knee. With the Tigers starting a left-hander in Matt Boyd on Saturday, Melvin said Phegley will be behind the plate that day. His return comes two days after second baseman Jed Lowrie came off the D.L.

"It's good to have Phegs back," Melvin said. "Now it's starting to feel like we're getting semi-whole again, at least on the position-player part of it."

The A's still have a major league-high 11 players on the D.L., including right fielder and No. 3 hitter Josh Reddick, who on Friday was still estimating his timetable for return from a fractured thumb at four to six weeks. Catcher/outfielder Matt McBride was optioned to Triple-A Nashville to clear a roster spot for Phegley.

Gray set to throw from mound in injury rehab

May 28, 2016

By Jane Lee/ MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's ace Sonny Gray is making strides in his rehab from a right trapezius strain and is slated to throw off the mound for the first time since suffering the injury on Saturday.

Gray played catch without any issues on Thursday and Friday, setting him up for a 35-40 pitch bullpen session. "He felt good yesterday and felt even better today," A's manager Bob Melvin said Friday. "We're confident enough to have him throw a bullpen tomorrow."

The right-handed Gray is expected to throw several bullpen sessions before the A's determine his next step, which could be a rehab start. That would put him on track to return to the club in mid-June.

"You always have your fingers crossed with a guy like that," Melvin said. "You're hoping that it's a limited amount of time on the DL. The first part of it is making sure he feels good enough to play catch and then the second part is throwing a bullpen. That is good news for us."

Gray is 3-5 with a 6.19 ERA in nine starts this season, after pitching to a 2.88 ERA in his first three seasons with the A's.

Worth Noting

- Right-hander Henderson Alvarez, who suffered a setback while rehabbing his surgically repaired shoulder earlier this month, is throwing again. He threw from 90 feet out on Friday and is scheduled to throw from a distance of 105 feet on Saturday. Reliever Liam Hendriks (triceps strain) is on the same throwing program.
- Right-hander R.J. Alvarez, who underwent minor elbow surgery in March, will throw his second bullpen session on Saturday and could soon face hitters.

A's activate Phegley, option McBride to Minors

May 28, 2016

By Mark Chiarelli/ MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The A's received another addition to their roster Friday, as the team activated catcher Josh Phegley from the 15-day disabled list and optioned Matt McBride to Triple-A Nashville.

Phegley, who missed time with a strained right knee, is the second veteran to return this week. Jed Lowrie was activated from the DL Wednesday after missing time with a shin contusion and went 2-for-4 in his return in a 13-3 loss to the Mariners.

"It's good to have Phegs back," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "Now we're starting to feel like we're getting semi-whole again. . . . Whenever you have a guy who has been out that's been a part of your 25-man roster for a couple years now, it's nice to get him back."

Phegley was not in Friday's lineup but Melvin said he'd start Saturday against Tigers left-hander Matt Boyd. Phegley, who has a career .269 batting average against lefties, will be in the lineup consistently against lefties moving forward, Melvin added. The 28-year-old was hitting .270 at the time of his injury.

The A's now have a league-high 11 players on the disabled list even with Lowrie and Phegley's return. But seven of those players are pitchers and two others -- Sam Fuld and Eric Sogard -- haven't played this year. Josh Reddick is recovering from a fractured thumb, while Mark Canha, who underwent hip surgery, is expected to miss the rest of the season.

Both Phegley and Lowrie provide Melvin versatility. Vogt has experience playing first base as well, and while Melvin said Phegley's arrival doesn't mean Vogt would necessarily appear at first base, he noted it does give him options. Lowrie has experience playing multiple infield positions and can be moved around the batting order. He's hitting .308 with 17 RBIs in 120 at-bats this year.

"He can hit anywhere in the lineup depending on who we're facing," said Melvin, who added that he's hoping to avoid slotting the switch-hitting Lowrie directly behind Coco Crisp and Billy Burns. "Depending on who is in on any particular day, it's really anywhere from second to sixth right now."

LAST UPDATED: SAT, MAY 28, 2016, 02:29 EDT

SATURDAY, MAY 28, 2016

TEAM	PLAYER	TRANSACTION
Toronto Blue Jays	Jose Bautista	Reinstated From League Suspension

FRIDAY, MAY 27, 2016

TEAM	PLAYER	TRANSACTION
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[Arizona Diamondbacks](#) [Silvino Bracho](#) Called Up from Minors

[Arizona Diamondbacks](#) [Peter O'Brien](#) Called Up from Minors

[Arizona Diamondbacks](#) [Shelby Miller](#) Placed on 15-Day DL, (Right index finger injury)

[Arizona Diamondbacks](#) [Evan Marshall](#) Sent to Minors

[Arizona Diamondbacks](#) [Dominic Leone](#) Called Up from Minors

[Arizona Diamondbacks](#) [Rubby De La Rosa](#) Placed on 15-Day DL, (Right elbow inflammation)

[Arizona Diamondbacks](#) [Josh Collmenter](#) Removed From 15-Day DL, (Tightness in right shoulder)

[Arizona Diamondbacks](#) [Josh Collmenter](#) Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment

[Arizona Diamondbacks](#) [Andrew Chafin](#) Sent to Minors

[Atlanta Braves](#) [Reid Brignac](#) Designated for Assignment

[Atlanta Braves](#) [Adonis Garcia](#) Called Up from Minors

Kansas City Royals	Steve Tolleson	Signed to a Minor League Contract
Los Angeles Angels	Lucas Luetge	Outrighted to Minors
Los Angeles Dodgers	Yimi García	Transferred to 60-Day DL, (Right biceps soreness)
Los Angeles Dodgers	Julio Urías	Purchased From Minors
Oakland Athletics	Josh Phegley	Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment
Oakland Athletics	Matt McBride	Sent to Minors
Oakland Athletics	Josh Phegley	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Right knee inflammation)
Seattle Mariners	Leonys Martin	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Strained left hamstring)
Seattle Mariners	Stefen Romero	Called Up from Minors
Texas Rangers	Rougned Odor	Starting to Serve Suspension
Texas Rangers	Jurickson Profar	Called Up from Minors
Texas Rangers	Shawn Tolleson	Placed on Bereavement/Family Medical Emergency List
Toronto Blue Jays	Ryan Lavarway	Signed to a Minor League Contract
Toronto Blue Jays	Jose Bautista	Starting to Serve Suspension

THURSDAY, MAY 26, 2016

TEAM	PLAYER	TRANSACTION
Atlanta Braves	Casey Kelly	Sent to Minors

Atlanta Braves	Chris Withrow	Called Up from Minors
Atlanta Braves	Héctor Olivera	Starting to Serve Suspension
Atlanta Braves	Jim Johnson	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
Baltimore Orioles	Eric Fornataro	Released
Chicago Cubs	C.J. Riefenhauser	Outrighted to Minors
Chicago Cubs	C.J. Riefenhauser	Called Up from Minors, - Not to Report
Chicago White Sox	Daniel Fields	Outrighted to Minors
Chicago White Sox	Daniel Fields	Called Up from Minors, - Not to Report
Kansas City Royals	Brett Eibner	Called Up from Minors
Kansas City Royals	Mike Moustakas	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Torn right ACL - out for season)
Los Angeles Angels	Erik Kratz	Signed to a Minor League Contract
Los Angeles Dodgers	Luis Avilan	Sent to Minors
Miami Marlins	Nick Wittgren	Called Up from Minors
Miami Marlins	Bryan Morris	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Herniated lumbar disc)
Milwaukee Brewers	David Goforth	Called Up from Minors
Milwaukee Brewers	Chris Capuano	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Left elbow soreness)
New York Yankees	Richard Bleier	Purchased From Minors

[New York Yankees](#) [Chasen Shreve](#) Placed on 15-Day DL, (Sprained AC joint, left shoulder)

[New York Yankees](#) [Rob Refsnyder](#) Sent to Minors

[New York Yankees](#) [Alex Rodriguez](#) Removed From 15-Day DL, (Strained right hamstring)

[New York Yankees](#) [Alex Rodriguez](#) Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment

[New York Yankees](#) [Slade Heathcott](#) Released

[St. Louis Cardinals](#) [Matt Carpenter](#) Placed on Paternity Leave List

[St. Louis Cardinals](#) [Greg Garcia](#) Called Up from Minors