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Detroit Free Press

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Oakland 12, Detroit 3: What's new?! Tigers' bullpen unravels in loss

May 29, 2016

By Anthony Fenech/ Detroit Free Press

OAKLAND, Calif. – It wasn't a happy return for Brad Ausmus.

After a few days away, the Detroit Tigers manager rejoined the team this morning before the middle game of a three-game set against the Athletics at O.Co Coliseum.

And then, "It was just one of those days," Ausmus said.

In his first start of the season, left-hander Matt Boyd was OK, but the Tigers bullpen was torched in two innings and their offense couldn't get much going against A's righty Jesse Hahn once again in a 12-3 loss.

"It was just an off-day for the bullpen," Ausmus said. "We'll chalk it up to that. We've been playing good baseball. Just an off-day for the bullpen, file it away and come back tomorrow."

The turning point came in the sixth inning, half an inning after Victor Martinez tied the game 3-3 with his seventh home run of the year, a monster shot into the right-centerfield seats.

"Once you're trailing you don't want to burn one of your back end guys," Ausmus said. "So you hope you can hang on a little bit."

Saupold couldn't, and after lefty Kyle Ryan ended the inning, things didn't get better. Alex Wilson allowed four runs on five hits in the seventh inning, highlighted by a three-run home run from Khris Davis – his 14th of the year – to effectively eliminate the Tigers chances of a late-innings comeback as the A's scored nine unanswered runs.

"It didn't really matter who we brought in at that point," Ausmus said. "It just seemed like it wasn't our day."

Boyd, who was recalled from Triple-A Toledo prior to the game, started off strong, striking out the side in the first inning. But a pair of solo home runs did early damage – Billy Butler in the second and Danny Valencia in the fourth – and after the Tigers cut the lead to 2-1 in the fifth, Boyd couldn't deliver a shutdown inning.

In the fifth, centerfielder Cameron Maybin lost a fly ball in the sun, credited as a triple to Jake Smolinski, and he scored on a Coco Crisp single one batter later.

"I got myself in trouble when I tried to overthrow a little bit, instead of just staying with my delivery and staying with my pitches," Boyd said. "That's the biggest thing. You gotta go deeper in the game."

Boyd threw five innings, allowing three runs on six hits. He struck out seven and walked none.

"I wish I had a few pitches back but make a couple of tweaks and get back at it in five days," he said.

The Tigers missed an opportunity in the fourth inning when Ian Kinsler kept up his hot hitting with a single to rightfield, stole second base and then third base. But while stealing third base, Kinsler spotted a passed ball and attempted an ill-advised try at home, thrown out with ease. Instead of having a runner on third base with nobody out and J.D. Martinez, Miguel Cabrera and Victor Martinez up, any threat was thwarted.

Kinsler and Victor Martinez each went 2-for-3. Upton delivered his first extra-base hit in five games with a fourth inning double. The Tigers fall back to the .500 mark, at 24-24 on the season.

Tigers notes: Starter or bullpen? How will team use Shane Greene?

May 29, 2016

By Anthony Fenech/ Detroit Free Press

OAKLAND, Calif. – Shane Greene started the season in the bullpen. Then he joined the starting rotation. Now, the Detroit Tigers' right-hander could be headed back to the bullpen.

Before Friday night's series opener against the Athletics, bench coach Gene Lamont, who assumed managerial duties with Brad Ausmus away for a family matter, said the team has been discussing which role Greene will fill when he returns from the 15-day disabled list in the near future.

"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."

Two things will factor heavily into the Tigers' decision. First, Greene's injury history. He is on the disabled list for a right middle finger blister, which forced him to exit his third start of the season early on April 25 against the Indians. Secondly, the emergence of rookie righty Michael Fulmer, who has all but established himself in the starting rotation with his past two stellar starts.

Perhaps the Tigers will decide Greene would be best utilized not throwing so many pitches, which could put the blister at further risk of reinjuring.

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

Greene has said in the past that he has no preference where he pitches.

He has thrown two minor league rehabilitation starts and Lamont said "ideally" would throw another before returning from the disabled list, but has only reached 52 pitches, in his last start with Triple-A Toledo.

In four games – three starts – this season, Greene has allowed 10 runs on 11 hits in 14 1/3 innings, with 11 strikeouts and nine walks. In 2015, he started off scorching hot before succumbing to injury, and ultimately, off-season surgery.

Greene likely isn't a candidate to fill-in for Jordan Zimmermann on Tuesday against the Angels if Zimmermann is forced to the disabled list with a Grade 1 right groin strain, but after Lamont's insight, appears a strong candidate to join the bullpen, perhaps in favor of rookie righty Warwick Saupold, who was hit hard in Saturday's loss to the A's.

■ **Ausmus is back:** After two games out of the dugout dealing with a family issue – his mother's death and his daughter's high school graduation – Ausmus returned to the team around 10:15 a.m. Saturday morning, fresh off a flight from San Diego.

He walked into the visiting manager's office at O.Co Coliseum just as Lamont was wrapping up his pregame media session with reporters.

Detroit Tigers send Steven Moya to Toledo despite encouraging stint

May 29, 2016

By Anthony Fenech/ Detroit Free Press

OAKLAND, Calif. – Steven Moya was the odd man out.

With the Tigers recalling left-hander Matt Boyd to start Saturday against the Athletics, they sent Moya back to Triple-A Toledo to keep building on his strong start to 2016.

“He needs at-bats and he can’t play centerfield,” bench coach Gene Lamont, who assumed managerial duties for the series opener Friday night, said. “We probably need somebody that can play centerfield if we’re going to have an outfielder out there. Right now, we just need to do something to get a pitcher.”

Moya helped the Tigers out in a pinch while he was up. In nine games, he went 9-for-32 with four extra-base hits. A rightfielder by trade, he played leftfield to add punch to the lineup while the team struggled on their last road trip, and filled in for Justin Upton when he was out of the lineup for two games earlier in the week.

“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.”

With Upton healthy, the Tigers had no way to get him consistent at-bats.

Moya is hitting .310 with nine home runs and 24 RBI in 31 games this season with the Mud Hens. He showed improved plate discipline in his first major league stint since September.

“You don’t wish that on anybody, especially a young kid like him,” Lamont said about sending him out. “I thought he was impressive and we like him in our system.”

Bruce Rondon inconsistent at Triple-A, working hard to get in shape

May 29, 2016

By George Sipple/ Detroit Free Press

Right-hander reliever Bruce Rondon is trying new things, but remains inconsistent at Triple-A Toledo.

Once considered the closer of the future for the Detroit Tigers, Rondon has a 4.61 ERA and a 2.05 WHIP over 13 2/3 innings this season for the Mud Hens.

Rondon earned his fifth save in the Mud Hens' 5-4 win over Durham on Thursday in Toledo, stranding runners at second and third. He hit the first batter he faced and gave up a two-out double before J.P. Arencibia flied out to right on a 99 m.p.h. fastball.

Rondon is known for hitting triple digits on the radar gun, but most of the fastballs he threw against Durham were in the 94-95 m.p.h. range.

"He was slide-stepping quite a bit to make sure they didn't run," Mud Hens manager Lloyd McClendon said of Rondon's delivery. "One of the things is learning to temper (pitch speed) a little bit and pound the strike zone more.

"We know he can reach back and get 99, 97 anytime you want to. Let's try to control things at 95, 94, 96, and I thought he did a better job at that later in the inning."

McClendon, a former hitting coach with the Tigers and manager of the Pirates and Mariners, would much rather see consistency at lower speeds on the fastball.

"Guys don't care how hard you throw," McClendon said. "What gets hitters in the big leagues is location with something on it. I'd much rather have 94-95 on the outer thirds than 98 right down the middle. They're going to knock the (crap) out of it. Just the way it is. He's getting better."

Rondon declined multiple requests to speak to a reporter after Thursday's game.

The Tigers sent Rondon home late last season due to concerns about his effort level, but McClendon said he hasn't had any issues with Rondon this season.

"He's been fantastic, I've got no complaints," McClendon said. "He's working his (butt) off, trying to get back in shape. He's doing extra running. He's out there on the bench cheering his teammates on.

"When he doesn't throw well, it doesn't look good. When he throws well, it looks great. Just gotta get him more consistent."

Rondon made his debut with the Tigers in 2013 and finished with a 3.45 ERA in 30 games that season. He missed the entire 2014 season recovering from Tommy John surgery and had a 5.81 ERA and a 1.613 WHIP in 35 games last season before the Tigers opted to send him home early.

"He's showing flashes, like most young players," McClendon said of Rondon, now 25. "I tell people this all the time: you gotta be patient, especially with pitchers. It takes time.

"He's started to get it, but there are days where it's not as good as other days. And there are going to be some days where he looks light's out."

McClendon wasn't with the Tigers organization last season, so he said he couldn't speak to what Rondon was trying to do last year.

"All I know is what he's doing now," McClendon said. "He's working his (butt) off trying to get better every day."

McClendon said Rondon has a nice arsenal, led by that triple-digit fastball.

"I will say this, he's starting to get a little more downward tilt, standing a little taller on the mound,"

McClendon said. "He's by no means a finished product. In some ways, he was probably rushed to the big leagues out of necessity. But he's on the right track to get back there."

McClendon said one of things he continually talks to young pitchers about is not trying to do too much.

"You can't pitch your way back to the big leagues in one day," McClendon said. "And they think the big leagues hinge on the next pitch, and it doesn't.

"It's not just Rondon. There's a lot of them in that locker room."

McClendon said it's more anxiety than frustration.

“They think if they have one bad outing the big league dream is over,” McClendon said. “And if they have a great outing, it’s come to fruition. It doesn’t work like that.”

McClendon, 57, said he’s not so far removed from the game that he has forgotten what those days were like himself as a hitter. He played eight years in the majors with the Reds, Cubs and Pirates.

“What I’m trying to get these guys to understand here is we’re creatures of habit,” McClendon said. “And you gotta go about your business on a daily basis doing the right things to make yourself better. Don’t put the cart before the horse. In the end, it’ll all work out.”

A look at this week's Detroit Tigers opponents

May 29, 2016

By Vito Chirco/ Detroit Free Press

Los Angeles Angels

Monday-Wednesday at Angel Stadium (9:05, 10:05 and 7:05)

Angels fans better enjoy the greatness of Mike Trout, because that's about all they presently have to enjoy. After Trout, the Halos' lineup is far from intimidating. Albert Pujols, for one, is a shell of his old self. And the Halos' season outlook gets even bleaker when you look at their starting pitching. With ace Garrett Richards and fellow frontline rotation arm Andrew Heaney both dealing with elbow injuries that could be season-ending, their rotation is full of question marks. It's why the Angels might be in line for their first sub-.500 finish since 2013.

New York Yankees

Thursday at Comerica Park (7:40; makeup of April 10 postponement)

Are the Yankees in store for their first sub-.500 record under manager Joe Girardi? Despite a three-headed monster at the back end of their bullpen (Dellin Betances in the seventh inning, former Tiger Andrew Miller in the eighth and Aroldis Chapman in the ninth), it certainly looks like it.

The Yanks have an aging lineup led by 36-year-old Mark Teixeira and 40-year-old Alex Rodriguez and a rotation that is counting on 35-year-old CC Sabathia. Yet, if ace Masahiro Tanaka stays healthy, if Sabathia continues to pitch well and if Nathan Eovaldi does the same, the Yankees will have a chance to make the playoffs.

Chicago White Sox

Friday-Sunday at Comerica Park (7:10, 4:10 and 1:10)

The White Sox have emerged as a legitimate contender in the AL Central on the strength of their starting pitching, which has been led by early-season AL Cy Young favorite Chris Sale (9-1, 2.26 ERA). Sale is slated to start Saturday while Justin Verlander goes for Detroit.

If the White Sox continue to receive strong performances from Sale and No. 2 starter Jose Quintana plus continued, steady offense from Todd Frazier and an uptick in production from Jose Abreu, they should remain a threat in the AL Central.

Down on the Detroit Tigers farm: Who's hot, who's not?

May 29, 2016

By George Sipple/ Detroit Free Press

Three to keep an eye on

Joe Jimenez RHP Erie: Recently promoted to Double-A Erie after dominating at High-A Lakeland (0.00 ERA, 0.58 WHIP). Allowed five hits and five walks over 171/3 scoreless innings with 28 strikeouts with Lakeland.

Daniel Norris LHP Toledo: Pitched six scoreless innings in an 8-0 win over Buffalo on Friday. Allowed four hits and one walk with eight strikeouts.

JaCoby Jones 3B/OF Erie: Has eight extra-base hits in 10 games since being activated from suspended list. Batting .326 (14-for-43) with three doubles, two triples and three home runs at Double-A.

Three up

Casey McGehee 3B Toledo: Had a 10-game hitting streak snapped on Thursday (0-for-3, walk), then went 2-for-4 with an RBI on Friday. Batting .366 (15-for-31) with three strikeouts over last 10 games. Batting .287 with eight doubles, two home runs and 14 RBIs in 45 games at Triple-A.

Jeff McVaney OF Erie: Batting .368 (14-for-38) with seven walks, two home runs and 11 runs scored over last 10 games. Batting .302 with a .928 OPS in 46 games at Double-A. Has 12 doubles, four triples, five home runs and 34 runs scored.

Kade Scivicque C Lakeland: Took a six-game hitting streak into Saturday, including four multi-hit games.

Batting .478 (11-for-23) with five RBIs and five runs scored in that stretch. Batting .270 with nine doubles and 19 RBIs in 39 games at High-A.

Three down

Josh Turley LHP Erie: 0-2 with a 9.00 ERA and a 2.00 WHIP in two starts at Double-A. Allowed 16 hits, including four home runs, and two walks over nine innings in the two starts. Was 2-3 with a 4.68 ERA and a 1.65 WHIP in six starts for Triple-A Toledo.

Paul Voelker RHP Erie: Allowed two walks and two hits, including a grand slam in the bottom of the ninth, in an 11-9 loss to Reading on Tuesday. Has a 6.43 ERA and a 1.86 WHIP over 14 innings at Double-A.

Mike Gerber OF Lakeland: Batting .175 (7-for-40) with 13 strikeouts over last 10 games. Batting .213 with 40 hits and 63 strikeouts in 47 games at High-A.

Bullpen falls apart, A's destroy Tigers

May 29, 2016

By Lynn Henning/ The Detroit News

Oakland, Calif. – This is wine country. And the Tigers were going to need a splash – or more – after enduring Saturday's torture at Oakland Coliseum.

Their bullpen disintegrated in the late innings, turning a 3-3 game into a 12-3 A's massacre of Detroit.

Warwick Saupold gave up five runs in the sixth, Alex Wilson was socked for four more in the seventh, and that was it as the A's threw together a 17-hit onslaught that evened the weekend series and left the Tigers with a 24-24 record heading into Sunday's rematch.

"Just an off-day for the bullpen," said Tigers manager Brad Ausmus, who returned to work after missing games due to the death of his mother, and his daughter's high school graduation.

"We'll file it away and come back tomorrow."

The Tigers' best moment Saturday came in the sixth, after the A's had taken a 3-1 lead.

Miguel Cabrera got a leadoff walk, and Victor Martinez followed with a mighty two-run homer deep into the right-center field balcony to tie the game.

But that left Saturday's game fate to Tigers relievers, which wasn't going to be a happy event for Detroit.

Saupold hadn't allowed a run in three previous games. But he was slapped around during his stint, even if two of the five hits in a one-third-inning cameo were ground balls. His ERA jumped from 0.00 to 9.24.

Wilson, who was last season's bullpen savior, had a frightful experience, as well. Five hits, four runs, two-thirds of an inning.

Matt Boyd started for the Tigers only a couple of days after he had been ordered to report from Triple A Toledo as a replacement for the hobbled Jordan Zimmermann.

Boyd was fine – mostly. He had five strikeouts in the first two innings and finished his five-inning shift with seven. But he also was smacked for long, long home runs by Billy Butler and Danny Valencia.

"I wish I could have two pitches back," said Boyd, who blamed "overthrowing" for a 28-pitch second inning and a long fifth, when the A's scored twice to take a 3-1 lead.

"And then my best pitch is a change-up," Boyd said, "and I can't throw it for a strike."

With a pitch-count at 94 after the fifth, the Tigers bullpen got involved too early, and too disastrously for Detroit's good Saturday.

It didn't help that Tigers batters got only six hits Saturday. Martinez had a single in addition to his homer, while Ian Kinsler – who simply won't be shut down – added a pair of singles as his average climbed to .319.

Justin Upton and Jose Iglesias had doubles.

The Tigers have another challenge Sunday. Mike Pelfrey is scheduled to start for the Tigers. Pelfrey isn't known for pitching terribly deep into games, which means the bullpen could again be a factor Sunday following a day of wear and tear at Oakland Coliseum.

Tigers pay for ‘too many mistakes’ by Saupold, Wilson

May 29, 2016

By Lynn Henning/ The Detroit News

Oakland, Calif. – Just as the Tigers’ rotation turns promising, thanks to rookie pitchers and healing starters, that old sore spot, the bullpen, tormented the team Saturday.

The Tigers and A’s were locked up, 3-3, in the sixth after rookie starter Matt Boyd had survived a fill-in assignment and Victor Martinez had sent a Jesse Hahn pitch screaming into the right-field balcony for a two-run homer that tied the game.

But a half-inning later it was 8-3 after the A’s had torn into Warwick Saupold. And an inning later it was 12-3 after Alex Wilson had been demolished.

The Tigers have had a pogo-stick relief corps in 2016. Up one week. Down another. But on balance, the relievers have been reasonably productive as long as starters weren’t asking for too much help too early.

That wasn’t the case Saturday. And it’s not the safest of bets that Mike Pelfrey, who has had issues in 2016, will throw excess innings in Sunday’s series finale when the Tigers meet the A’s and their starter, Rich Hill.

Ausmus knows a bullpen is at its best when it’s used the least. The Tigers used five pitchers Saturday.

A team pushed back to the .500 mark (24-24) badly needs to win its road series against the last-place A’s ahead of a follow-up three-game set against the Angels at Anaheim. But leaving Oakland with a series conquest will, in all probability, require better bullpen behavior than the relievers displayed Saturday.

Saupold seemed a safe pick to open the sixth inning of what had become a tie game, thanks to Martinez’s blast. The Tigers’ resident Australian, and a right-hander, had pitched lovely baseball in three previous missions, his first in the big leagues.

But he had a dismal day Saturday, even if two of the five hits against him were ground balls.

“I just made too many mistakes, and up here they’ll make you pay,” Saupold said in an ultra-quiet Tigers clubhouse afterward. “We were in the game and, unfortunately, I didn’t do my job.”

Nor did Wilson, who isn’t sure what’s going on a season after he was pure gold for the Tigers.

The A’s ripped into him for five hits and four runs, pushing his season ERA to 6.11. In 59 games for the Tigers in 2015, Wilson had a 2.19 ERA.

“When I get hit like that, it’s pretty poor execution on my part,” said Wilson, who missed most of spring training with a right (throwing) shoulder issue, and apart from glimpses of his old self, has experienced a spring that has been closer to an ordeal.

“I’ve got to do my part better than I did today, or I’ve done recently,” he said. “Honestly, I haven’t been throwing quality strikes. I’ve been throwing strikes – but not quality.

“It’s a matter of inches. But I haven’t found that rhythm. I’m searching, but you have to hold yourself accountable.”

It wasn’t a complete wipeout Saturday for Tigers relievers.

Kyle Ryan allowed a hit but finished off the final two A’s batters in the sixth.

Buck Farmer worked the final 1.1 innings for the Tigers. He walked a batter but didn’t allow a single A’s hit, which was noteworthy on a day when the A’s got 17 of them against a battered Tigers staff.

Tigers notes: Overthrowing costs Matt Boyd innings in return start

May 29, 2016

By Aaron McMann/ MLive.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- By all accounts, Matt Boyd's first start with the Detroit Tigers in 2016 was a productive one.

He kept his team in the game, one they would eventually let slip away Saturday in a 12-3 rout to the Oakland Athletics, and struck out seven to match a career high.

The problem? His elevated pitch count.

"I got myself into trouble when I tried to overthrow a little bit," Boyd said. "The hits and whatnot, just staying with my delivery and making pitches. It's just a clear difference from when I do that and when I don't."

Boyd exited the game after five innings and 95 pitches, in part due to the six full counts he pitched himself into. He struck out the first four batters he faced, retiring the first five, before Billy Butler got a hold of a four-seam fastball and blasted a home run over the fence in left-centerfield.

Danny Valencia jumped on a fastball in the fourth inning, hitting it an estimated 456 feet for a home run.

"There are just certain instances where you miss your spots," Boyd said. "You've just got to calm down and execute your pitches so you can get deeper into the game and save your bullpen."

He was called up on Saturday to make a, for now suspected, spot start for the injured Jordan Zimmermann (groin), but Boyd has been rather effective this season.

He threw 4 2/3 innings of scoreless relief in an appearance earlier this for the Tigers, and in eight starts with Triple-A Toledo he's got a 2.06 ERA and 1.15 WHIP.

"I know what I need to do to make the adjustments and go forth off of it," Boyd said. "I wish I could have had a few pitches back, but I just need to make a few little tweaks and get at it in five days."

TIGERS NOTES

SAUPOLD IMPLOSION: Rookie reliever Warwick Saupold had not allowed a run in his first 4 2/3 innings of relief.

That changed Saturday after he gave up five runs on five consecutive hits in the sixth inning. A two-run single by Billy Butler proved to be the game-winner, then Marcus Semien doubled in another run and Jake Smolinski drove in one with a sacrifice fly.

So why did Tigers manager Brad Ausmus stay with him for so long?

"I mean, once you're trailing, you don't want to burn one of your back-end guys," Ausmus said. "You hope he can hang on without having to get (Kyle) Ryan and (Buck) Farmer going, but it didn't matter at that point who we brought in. It just wasn't our day."

Of course, Ryan, Wilson and Farmer all saw work with varying degrees of success. The bullpen was rather fresh after having an off-day Thursday and Michael Fulmer's nearly eight-inning outing on Friday.

Keep in mind, though, Mike Pelfrey is scheduled to start Sunday, and fresh arms could be required there.

ANOTHER BASE RUNNING GAFFE: We saw it Friday night with Jose Iglesias, and now Ian Kinsler is the one caught with his hand in the cookie jar.

Kinsler was thrown out trying to take home on a passed ball with no outs in the fourth inning. He led off the inning with a single, then stole second and third base before trying to score.

J.D. Martinez was at the plate, and eventually walk, with Miguel Cabrera on deck and Victor Martinez due up after.

"As a baserunner, sometimes you get tunnel vision," Ausmus said. "'I can score here, I can help my team.' I think if you would ask him, he'd tell you he wouldn't do it again."

HAHN & THE DELAY: A's starting pitcher Jesse Hahn forced a delay after tossing his first pitch Saturday with a colored sleeve on one arm but not the other.

That forced the umpiring crew to request that he take it off or put one on both.

"That was something the umpire (called)," Ausmus said. "You're not allowed to have one sleeve on your throwing arm without a matching sleeve. It's just one of those rules. We didn't know. It didn't come from us."

Hahn, who entered the start having allowed just one earned run in 16 innings and two career starts against the Tigers, earned the win with three earned runs on five hits over six innings.

He struck out five, walked four and worked himself out of a jam in the fourth that saw Detroit leave runners on the corners.

"He's got a real, good two-seamer that can be tough on right-handed hitters, and we're a right-handed lineup for the most part," Ausmus said. "I think that's the main reason he's tough on us."

Alex Wilson knows his struggles are mechanical and he's working to fix them

May 29, 2016

By Aaron McMann/ MLive.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Alex Wilson had to rack his brain for a few seconds to remember.

The last time he's had this bad of a stretch on the mound?

"It's got to go back to 2010, Double A," Wilson said. "It's been a while. It's been a long while."

Wilson gave up four runs on five hits as the Detroit Tigers' bullpen claimed responsibility for the 12-3 pounding at the hands of the Oakland Athletics on Saturday. Rookie Warwick Saupold surrendered the lead, then Wilson took over and watched it blow up.

"I'm throwing plenty of strikes," Wilson said. "I'm just not throwing quality strikes. I need to be moving it around the zone; not just putting it in the zone."

Wilson (0-0, 6.11 ERA) entered the game in the seventh and gave up three straight hits. First back-to-back singles to Jed Lowrie and Danny Valencia, who was 3-for-4 and reached base four times, then watched as Khris Davis took him deep to left field.

This after giving up a run and three hits in 1 2/3 innings of relief Wednesday against Philadelphia. Wilson, in his last four relief appearances, has allowed six earned runs and nine hits in 4 1/3 innings.

"He's working on some mechanical stuff," Tigers catcher Jarrod Saltalamacchia said. "(Tigers' pitching coach Rich) Dubee came out there and talked to him, told him to go back to what he had been doing. From then on, he was making great pitches. It's frustrating — you're in the big leagues, you're facing good competition."

Tigers manager Brad Ausmus dismissed any notion of fatigue for Wilson, who suffered from arm fatigue at the end of last season and shoulder soreness in spring training.

He's thrown 17 2/3 innings this season after tossing a career-high 70 innings in 2015, when he posted a 2.19 ERA and 1.03 WHIP, and already has more outings (two) with three or more earned runs allowed than all of last season (one).

"He's struggling a little bit right now," Ausmus said. "The slider's coming out of his hand a little flat - not spinning - and hitters are putting some good swings on it. But he'll fine."

Wilson called the stretch frustrating but said he's identified what the issues are. Now it's up to him to fix them.

As for that stretch in 2010, there were several to go along with a painful season with Double-A Portland. He finished the season 4-5 with a 6.66 ERA while allowing 58 earned runs in 78 1/3 innings.

He followed it up by earning a promotion to Triple-A Pawtucket in 2011, and, of course, eventually found his niche in the big leagues.

"You can look at videos, you can listen to everybody else, but ultimately it comes down to you and how you execute," Wilson said. "Until I find that rhythm, find that feel, it's going to be a tough go."

Detroit Tigers, Warwick Saupold blitzed by A's in lopsided loss

May 29, 2016

By Aaron McMann/ MLive.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Detroit Tigers got what they were looking for from Matt Boyd.

Warwick Saupold, not so much.

The rookie reliever, who had not allowed a run in four-plus innings, was tagged for five runs in the sixth inning Saturday as the Detroit Tigers lost 12-3 to the Oakland Athletics before 24,154 at O.co Coliseum.

The A's had five straight hits off Saupold (1-1), including a two-run single by Billy Butler that broke open a game that had been tied 3-3.

Boyd, starting his first game of the season, gave up a pair of home runs but struck out seven as he exited the game after five.

Oakland (21-29) homered three times and totaled 17 hits, 13 of which came in the fifth inning or later.

Victor Martinez hit his seventh home run of the season, one of four hits for Detroit (24-24), which remains just two games back of first place in the bunched American League Central.

THREE STARS

Billy Butler -- Entering the game 3-for-22 and hitting .200 for the season, Butler was 2-for-4 with a home run and three RBIs. His blast to left-centerfield in the first put the A's up early, and his two-run single in the sixth won the game.

Danny Valencia -- One of seven A's hitters with at least two hits, Valencia crushed a fastball an estimated 456 feet in the fourth inning and followed with a single to lead off the marathon sixth. He finished 3-for-4 with a walk and RBI.

Khris Davis -- He doubled in the sixth and hit a three-run blast to left-centerfield in the seventh to go 2-for-4 with three RBIs for Oakland.

GAME NOTES

-- Matt Boyd made his first start and second appearance of the season, earning a no decision while striking out seven to tie his career high. He struck out the first four hitters he faced before running into trouble in the second inning. Boyd's final line: 5 IP, 6 H, 3 R, 0 BB, 7 SO on 94 pitches.

-- Saupold retired just one of the six batters he faced in the sixth, allowing three singles and a pair of doubles. He was relieved by Kyle Ryan, who induced an inning-ending double play. Saupold's line: 0.1 IP, 5 H, 5 R, 0 BB, 0 SO.

-- Alex Wilson, with the game already out of reach, fared just as poorly in the seventh. He allowed four runs on five hits including the home run to Davis.

-- Cameron Maybin lost a routine fly ball to center in the sun in the fifth inning that resulted in a triple for Oakland's Jake Smolinski, who scored on a single by Coco Crisp a batter later.

-- Nick Castellanos struck out to end a bizarre fourth inning, one that saw Ian Kinsler (2-for-3, walk) thrown out trying to take home on a passed ball, a botched double play by the A's and the Tigers leave baserunners stranded on the corners.

-- J.D. Martinez hit into a double play in the first inning after a leadoff single by Ian Kinsler. Martinez was 0-for-3 with a walk and strikeout.

-- After his first pitch of the game, A's starter Jesse Hahn was ordered by umpires to wear matching green sleeves. He was wearing a black sleeve on his throwing arm. Hahn (2-2) earned the win with a quality start, allowing three runs on five hits over six innings.

-- Tigers manager Brad Ausmus returned after missing the last two games due to family obligations. He lost a challenge in the sixth inning on a Maybin ground-ball out to shortstop.

Boyd solid over five, but Tigers fall to A's

May 29, 2016

By Jane Lee and Michael Wagaman/ MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The A's busted out of their offensive slump with a commanding 12-3 victory over the Tigers at the Coliseum on Saturday afternoon, highlighted by home runs from Billy Butler, Danny Valencia and Khris Davis, whose three-run shot in the seventh inning marked his 14th long ball of the season and 11th of the month.

The A's, who had averaged 2.9 runs per game in their previous eight contests, strung together a five-run sixth inning against Detroit's bullpen, getting a go-ahead, two-run single from Butler, who finished with three RBIs, and run-scoring hits from Marcus Semien and Coco Crisp to make a winner out of Jesse Hahn.

"It's momentum," Davis said. "When you're in an inning like that you just know what's going on and you just hunt for that blood and feed off it."

The right-handed Hahn allowed three runs on five hits, including a two-run homer to Victor Martinez, with four walks and five strikeouts. Lefty Matt Boyd, recalled from Triple-A Toledo for his first start of the season for the Tigers, fared well, but took a no-decision after allowing three runs on six hits -- two of them homers to Butler and Valencia -- and striking out seven.

"That's a good team win right there, and to do it the way we did it today was awesome," Hahn said. "Hopefully this is going to be a huge momentum carrier for us. We're pretty excited about it right now, and I think this is going to be the win that's going to kind of take off our season for us."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Should have stayed put: Ian Kinsler singled leading off the fourth and promptly stole second base with J.D. Martinez batting. Kinsler then stole third during the same at-bat and kept running for home when the pitch eluded A's catcher Josh Phegley. Phegley retrieved the ball and threw back to Hahn covering home plate, and Kinsler was tagged out easily.

"As a baserunner, sometimes you get tunnel vision like, 'I can score here, I can help my team,'" Tigers manager Brad Ausmus said. "If you ask him he'd probably [say] he wouldn't do it again."

• Tigers' bullpen turns page after rough day

Billy ball: Butler made just his 18th start on Saturday and capitalized with his biggest performance of the season despite entering the game riding a 3-for-22 stretch. His second-inning homer was his first in 30 games this year, marking the longest season-opening homerless streak of his career, and his three RBIs are a season high.

"For a guy that's not playing as much as he's used to playing, to be able to have this type of game, he's certainly going to go home in a good mood today, as he should," A's manager Bob Melvin said.

Lost in the sun: Tigers center fielder Cameron Maybin nearly got hit by Jake Smolinski's fly ball that turned into a triple in the fifth. Maybin got a good break on the ball but lost it in the sun and tried to protect himself as the ball fell in. With Detroit forced to play the infield in, the next batter, Crisp, lined an RBI single to center.

Adding on: Even after collecting six hits in the sixth inning, the A's didn't back down in the seventh, tacking on five more to their total while continuing to get contributions from the entirety of their lineup -- a necessity on most days, particularly those without Josh Reddick, who is on the disabled list with a fractured left thumb.

Every A's starter but Billy Burns notched at least one hit, with seven finishing with at least two.

• A's need starter for Tuesday after Neal works Saturday

"That's the type of lineup we need to be," Melvin said. "We have some guys in the middle of the order that can hit some homers, but if we're going to be successful, it has to be contributions like it was today. We're not going to score 12 every day, but we need everybody in our lineup."

WHAT'S NEXT

Tigers: Right-hander Mike Pelfrey starts the series finale at the Coliseum on Sunday at 4:05 p.m. ET. Pelfrey is winless in nine starts this season and has allowed 10 home runs in 27 innings after giving up 11 over 164 2/3 innings in 2015.

Athletics: Lefty Rich Hill, who is 4-0 with a 1.75 ERA in his last four starts, is back on the mound Sunday against the Tigers for the series finale at 1:05 p.m. PT. Hill is 1-0 with a 3.63 ERA in 14 career appearances -- just one of them a start -- against Detroit.

Return of V-Mart's power stroke a welcome sign

May 29, 2016

By Michael Wagaman/ MLB.com

OAKLAND -- After going three weeks without hitting a home run Tigers designated hitter Victor Martinez has rediscovered his power stroke.

Less than 24 hours after getting hit by a thrown ball that cost Detroit a possible run, Martinez made news for all the right reasons in Saturday's 12-3 loss to the Oakland Athletics.

Martinez padded his AL-leading road batting average with two hits, including his second homer in seven days, a towering two-run blast to right field that briefly tied the game at 3.

"Home runs come in bunches for a lot of guys," Tigers manager Brad Ausmus said. "They're going to go through dry spells, then they're going to get hot and hit a bunch in 10 days. He was still hitting the ball well."

Like teammate Miguel Cabrera, Martinez has feasted on A's pitching over the years. He went 2-for-3 on Saturday to raise his average to .350 with seven home runs and 76 RBIs in 76 career games against Oakland.

That follows in line with what the Detroit slugger has done on the road this season. In 25 games away from Comerica Park, Martinez is batting at a .424 clip (36-for-85).

Not that he's struggled at home. With an overall average of .341 with 16 multi-hit games, it's clear Martinez is comfortable no matter what park he's hitting in.

"In Comerica Park he hit a couple balls 425 feet that were caught that would have been home runs in 28 out of 30 parks," Ausmus said.

Martinez's home run provided one of the few offensive highlights for Detroit. The Tigers were outhit 17-6, stranded a pair of baserunners in scoring position early and managed just one runner following the home run -- Jose Iglesias' one-out double in the seventh.

Leadoff hitter Ian Kinsler singled twice to go with Martinez's two hits. The rest of Detroit's offense managed just two hits combined.

"Just one of those days," Ausmus said.

Tigers turn page after 'pen's rough day vs. A's

May 29, 2016

By Michael Wagaman/ MLB.com

OAKLAND -- The Tigers' bullpen played a key role in the team's run of nine wins in 11 games heading into the weekend. On Saturday it was the catalyst for Detroit's first loss on its seven-game road trip to the West Coast. Rookie Warwick Saupold gave up five runs and retired just one batter in the sixth, while Alex Wilson surrendered four runs in the seventh, allowing the A's to break open a tight game and pull away for a 12-3 win. "Rough day for the 'pen today," Tigers manager Brad Ausmus said. "You're going to have those days. File it and come back tomorrow."

This one might be a little tougher to forget after allowing the last-place A's to pound out a season-high for hits and runs.

Detroit had tied the score at 3-3 on Victor Martinez's two-run home run in the top of the sixth and Ausmus felt good about turning the game over to his bullpen after starter Matt Boyd struck out seven over five innings.

That's when things got out of hand in a hurry.

Saupold, the rookie right-hander who had not allowed a run in 4 1/3 innings spanning three appearances, gave up hits to the first five Oakland batters in the bottom of the sixth. All five scored.

Billy Butler, who earlier homered off Boyd, had a two-run single and Marcus Semien added a two-run double.

"It didn't matter at that point who we brought in, it seemed like," Ausmus said. "It just wasn't our day."

Kyle Ryan replaced Saupold after Jake Smolinski's sacrifice fly, but things turned sour again for the Tigers in the seventh.

Wilson relieved Ryan and gave up three consecutive hits, including Khris Davis' three-run homer. Smolinski added a one-out RBI double to chase Wilson.

"He's struggling a little bit right now," Ausmus said of Wilson. "His slider's coming out of his hand a little flat ... and they're getting some better swings on him. Just an off day."

Acquired in a trade from the New York Yankees during the offseason, Wilson did not allow a run over his first 12 appearances (11 innings). He's given up six in his last 4 1/3.

"It's never easy, especially against big league hitters," Wilson said. "At the same time, to get better I'm going to have to find a way to make that happen. The biggest thing for me is executing good pitches and I have not done that lately.

"It's frustrating because there's no one that can fix it. You can look at video, you can listen to everybody else, but ultimately it comes down to you and how you execute. Until I find that rhythm, find that feel, it's going to be a tough go."

Ausmus rejoins Tigers after tending to family

May 29, 2016

By Michael Wagaman/ MLB.com

OAKLAND -- About three hours before Saturday's 12-3 loss to the A's, Brad Ausmus poked his head into the visiting manager's office at the Coliseum just as bench coach Gene Lamont was wrapping up a pregame meeting with reporters.

"Hey, here's Ausmus right here," Lamont joked. "Looks like he didn't find his suitcase either."

Ausmus rejoined the Tigers after missing their past two games because of family issues. He left the ballclub Wednesday to be with family following the death of his mother, then flew to San Diego for a pre-planned day off on Friday to attend his daughter's high school graduation.

Lamont, who won 553 games in eight seasons as manager of the Chicago White Sox and Pittsburgh Pirates, handled all the managerial duties and guided Detroit to a 1-1 record in Ausmus' absence.

That ended following the pregame briefing with the media. With Ausmus back, the 69-year-old Lamont resumed his duties as bench coach.

Lamont also managed the Tigers for one game earlier this month while Ausmus served a one-game suspension after getting ejected from a game against the Minnesota Twins. Ausmus got into a heated discussion with umpires in that May 16 game in Detroit and at one point removed his sweatshirt and covered home plate with it. The Tigers won four straight games and eight of nine before Ausmus flew to Connecticut to be with his family.

Boyd, bullpen get beat up; Tigers fall to A's 12-3

May 29, 2016

By Rick Eymer/ Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) -- Matt Boyd tried to do a little too much. Looking back, he wished for a few do-overs. Victor Martinez hit a tying two-run homer in the sixth inning to get Boyd off the hook for the loss, but the Detroit Tigers' bullpen fell apart, allowing nine runs in three innings in a 12-3 loss to the Oakland Athletics on Saturday.

The Tigers had won nine of their previous 11 games.

"We made too many mistakes and left the ball over the middle of the plate," Tigers catcher Jarrod Saltalamacchia said.

Warwick Saupold (1-1) relieved starter Matt Boyd, gave up five runs on five hits and recorded one out in the sixth to suffer the loss.

Boyd, recalled from Triple-A Toledo to make the start, gave up three runs on six hits over five innings. He did not walk a batter and struck out seven, including the first four he faced.

"I got myself in trouble and tried to overthrow a little bit," Boyd said, adding that "I need to be able to get deeper into games. I wish I could have a few pitches back but I'll make a few tweaks and be ready in five days."

Billy Butler and Khris Davis each hit a home run and drove in three runs for the A's. Danny Valencia had three hits, including a home run, and Coco Crisp and Jake Smolinski each drove in two runs while the A's reached double figures in scoring for the first time this season. The 17 hits were also a season high.

Jesse Hahn (2-2) pitched six innings, giving up three runs on five hits to remain undefeated against the Tigers in three starts. He walked four and struck out five.

"He's got a good, hard two-seamer that can be tough on right-handers and we're a predominantly right-handed hitting team," Tigers manager Brad Ausmus said. "That's the main reason he's tough on us."

Solo home runs from Butler and Valencia gave the A's a 2-0 lead after four innings. Justin Upton scored for Detroit on a wild pitch in the fifth, but Crisp, who extended his hitting streak to 11 games, drove in a run to make it 3-1, setting up the fireworks that followed.

Cameron Maybin went 0 for 4, ending his 10-game hitting streak.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Tigers: OF Steven Moya was optioned to Triple-A Toledo after Friday night's game to make room for Boyd.

Moya appeared in one game with the Tigers, going 1 for 1 with an RBI.

Athletics: RHP Sonny Gray (right trapezius strain) threw about 35 pitches off the bullpen mound Saturday and is scheduled to throw off the regular mound Tuesday. ... RHP Henderson Alvarez (right shoulder) was extended to throwing 105 feet on Saturday and came out of it feeling good. He'll throw a bullpen on Monday. ... RHP R.J. Alvarez (right elbow) is scheduled to throw to hitters on Tuesday.

UP NEXT

Tigers: RHP Mike Pelfrey (0-4, 5.55) is expected to start Sunday's series finale against the A's. He's 0-3 with an 11.05 ERA in three starts against the A's, all at home.

Athletics: LHP Rich Hill (7-3, 2.18) gets the start for the A's on Sunday. He's undefeated over his past four starts and his seven wins through May are the most since Mark Mulder won eight in 2003.

Tigers' pen among noted bullpen failures on Saturday

May 29, 2016

By Katie Strang/ ESPN.com

OAKLAND -- At least the Detroit Tigers bullpen didn't blow a 7-1 ninth-inning lead?

It was a day of noted bullpen failures, particularly within the American League, and the Tigers were not immune.

Just as the Boston Red Sox and Chicago White Sox fell victim to their own respective bullpen implosions, Detroit saw its relief corps crumble and give up nine runs as the Tigers suffered a 12-3 rout at the hands of a 21-29 Oakland A's team that hasn't exactly been an offensive juggernaut.

"It was just one of those days," said manager Brad Ausmus, who was back in the dugout for the first time since the death of his mother earlier this week. "Rough day for the 'pen. You're gonna have those days. We'll file it and come back tomorrow."

It wasn't quite the same sort of disaster that took place in Kansas City, where the White Sox allowed a shocking, seven-run rally by the reigning World Series champion Royals, or the two-inning special that did in the Red Sox against the Toronto Blue Jays, but it was disheartening just the same. Players chalked it up as simply an off-day, considering the team has played some of its best baseball of the season the past two weeks; they entered Saturday winners of nine of their past 11 games.

"We're not going to quit today," catcher Jarrod Saltalamacchia said.

Following a game-tying, two-run blast from veteran Victor Martinez in the sixth inning, the Tigers got hammered with Aussie reliever Warwick Saupold on the mound. Saupold, in to replace starter Matt Boyd in the bottom of the sixth, surrendered five straight hits before he got his first out of the inning, and that left Ausmus in the unenviable position of having to decide whether to risk further damage or tax his bullpen in a game that was quickly spinning out of control.

"Once you're trailing, you don't want to burn one of your back end guys," Ausmus said of sticking with Saupold in the sixth.

While the A's roughed up Saupold, he wasn't the only one. It was another difficult outing for reliever Alex Wilson, who found himself trying to work through some recent mechanical adjustments at the worst possible time.

"It's never easy, especially against big league hitters, but at the same time, to get better, I'm going to have to find a way to make that happen," Wilson said.

Wilson gave up four runs on five hits in just two-thirds of an inning. At one point during Wilson's appearance, pitching coach Rich Dubee trotted out to the mound and told him to go back to what he had been doing before the tweaks, if only for the sake of getting an out.

Wilson sounded confident that he can right himself soon, but he admits he hasn't had a stretch such as this since he played Double-A ball in 2010.

"It's been a while. It's been a long while," Wilson said. "I came out of that one alright. I imagine I'll come out of this one alright. Gotta keep pushing and turn the page and start fresh tomorrow."

It was a day to forget for the Tigers. Given the outcome of the day's events for Boston and Chicago, Detroit wasn't alone.

"The best and worst thing about baseball," Wilson said, "is there is another game tomorrow."

A's rout Detroit Tigers 12-3

May 29, 2016

By John Hickey/ East Bay Times

OAKLAND -- Having had enough of losing, the A's veterans called a players-only team meeting before Friday's game.

It didn't change the outcome that night, but players in the clubhouse after Saturday's 12-3 rout of the Tigers said the meeting was exactly what was needed.

Billy Butler drove in three runs with a solo homer and a tiebreaking single, and Khris Davis hit his majors-leading 11th homer of the month and drove in three runs. Danny Valencia added a solo homer, as the A's, for the first time all year, put on a genuine offensive display

Oakland Athletics' Danny Valencia, left, and Khris Davis, right, celebrate after scoring against the Detroit Tigers in the sixth inning of a baseball game Saturday, May 28, 2016, in Oakland. (Ben Margot/Associated Press)

"We kind of talked about our identity as a team," Davis said of the meeting, run mostly by pitchers Rich Hill and Ryan Madson and outfielders Coco Crisp and Josh Reddick. "The veterans wanted to talk. They just reminded us that we should believe in ourselves and know the guys are going to get the job done. We have a great group leading us. And it translated, definitely. We didn't get the results we wanted (Friday), but sometimes the results take some time."

Something clearly changed, because the A's could have collapsed in the sixth inning Saturday when Victor Martinez crushed a two-run homer off starter Jesse Hahn. What had been a 3-1 A's lead was gone, and the Tigers, winners of nine of their last 11, seemed ready to pounce.

Instead, catcher Josh Phegley told Hahn that "we'd get the win for him."

They did that. Butler hit a two-run tiebreaking single as part of a five-run sixth, then Davis' three-run homer was the centerpiece of a four-run seventh as the A's, now 21-29, scored more than eight runs for the first time all season.

"I know we were capable of have a game like this," Davis said, "putting up eight, 10, 11 runs, whatever. It felt great."

Catcher Stephen Vogt didn't play Saturday, but he seemed able to see the impact of the 15-minute meeting on the general tone of the club, which has been beaten down by historic levels of injury -- 13 players on the disabled list at one point and 11 still on the D.L. now -- and losses that seem to implode on each other.

"It was a chance to talk," Vogt said. "It was good to sit the boys down, and whoever wanted to speak, speaks. It was good for us all to sit down together and have a good chit-chat." It also was good for the A's to finally see some results from DH/first baseman Butler, who has mostly sat this year, usually playing just against left-handers. The A's drew one in Matt Boyd on Saturday, and Butler capitalized with a solo homer in the second and the tiebreaking single in the sixth.

"I'm just waiting my turn," Butler said. "It feels good to come through in a tie ballgame. We'd had a tough stretch, and something like that could have worked in a tough stretch for us, but I got the knock, and then the flood gates opened. Everybody contributed."

Butler, in the middle year of a three-year \$30 million contract with the A's, got his first homer in the second week of the season a year ago. It's been a sore subject that it's taken him seven weeks this time around, but the A's haven't seen many left-handed starting pitchers, so Butler hasn't seen much playing time.

"I've never been through something like this before," he said. "It's tough."

All of Butler's offensive largesse, and that of his teammates, got Hahn the victory.

After the game, he was paraded around the clubhouse wearing Reddick's WWE championship belt. It may become the go-to ornament for the player of the day if the A's can get something started.

"That thing is heavy," Hahn said after allowing five hits and three runs in six innings. "But I could wear it again."

- Sonny Gray threw a bullpen session early Saturday, and manager Bob Melvin was pleased after watching most of it, saying "he was letting it go." Melvin said Gray, recovering from a right trapezius strain, will throw off the main mound Tuesday.
- Also throwing a bullpen session Saturday was reliever R.J. Alvarez, who hasn't pitched in a game after having elbow surgery March 29. "I threw 15 pitches, sat for a bit, then did another 15, and it felt great," Alvarez said. Melvin said Alvarez is due for a live session on the mound against hitters Tuesday, and Alvarez said he's been told he'd likely go out on an injury rehab assignment June 3 or 4.
- Reliever Liam Hendriks might not be that far behind Gray and Alvarez. Out with a right triceps strain, Hendriks' next step will be to throw a bullpen session Monday
- Starter Henderson Alvarez threw from 105 feet Saturday and could be ready to get back on a mound before too much longer. "He said he felt great," Melvin said. "That's encouraging." Alvarez is recovering from shoulder surgery last July.
- The 11-game hitting streak Coco Crisp has going is the longest for any A's hitter this year. It is his 13th career hitting streak of at least 10 games.
- The A's gave away Reddick bobbleheads before Saturday's game. Reddick, on the DL with a fractured left thumb, pronounced the bobblehead, which has him making a leaping catch at the wall, as "awesome," but also suggested it was bittersweet to not be on the active roster for the game.

Sonny Gray, R.J. Alvarez getting closer to a return

May 29, 2016

By John Hickey/ East Bay Times

Sonny Gray and R.J. Alvarez threw bullpen sessions for the A's Saturday morning, and both pitchers could be ready to return to the A's before too long.

Manager Bob Melvin said Gray, who threw upwards of three dozen pitches in his session, "was letting it go." It was the most substantial work yet for Gray since going on the disabled list with a right trapezius strain.

"We'll have him throw off the big mound here Tuesday," the manager said. "It will be up and down, but not with any hitters yet. We're just looking for health from him."

Melvin said no decision has been made yet on whether Gray would need an injury rehabilitation start or a simulated game before returning to the rotation. He's eligible to come off the DL a week from Sunday with the club in Houston.

Alvarez, who'd hoped to establish himself in the A's bullpen this year, hasn't pitched in a game yet after having elbow surgery March 29. He's had a couple of throwing sessions on the side and on Saturday did up and down sessions, simulating innings, although not facing any hitters.

"I threw 15 pitches, sat for a bit, then did another 15, and it felt great," Alvarez said.

Melvin said Alvarez is due for live session on the mound against hitters Tuesday and Alvarez said he's been told he'd likely go out on an injury rehab assignment June 3 or 4.

Alvarez and Gray could come off the DL at the same time. The A's, who had 13 players on the disabled list as recently as Tuesday, are down to 11 now and have high hopes of getting down to single digits in the next week or 10 days.

"It's looking up for Team Rehab," Alvarez said. "We're starting to get healthy. We're eliminating friends off the island."

NOTES

–Reliever Liam Hendriks might not be that far behind Gray and Alvarez. Out with a right triceps strain, Hendriks' next step will be to throw a bullpen session Monday

–Starter Henderson Alvarez threw from 105 feet Saturday and could be ready to get back on a mound before too much longer. "He said he felt great," Melvin said. "That's encouraging." Alvarez is recovering from shoulder surgery last July.

–Reliever Ryan Dull has been unstoppable when taking over mid-inning with men on base. He's come in with 19 men on, and none of them have scored. That's the most in the Major Leagues for any reliever who hasn't allowed an inherited runner yet this year. As a team the A's have allowed just 18.1 percent of inherited runners to score, the best mark in the big leagues.

–The 10-game hitting streak Coco Crisp brought into Saturday matches the long for any A's hitter this year. It is his 13th career hitting streak of at least 10 games.

–With the A's facing a lefty in the Tigers' Matt Boyd Saturday, Melvin did something he doesn't like to do against right-handers, and that's to stack his switch-hitters – Crisp, Billy Burns and Jed Lowrie – 1-2-3 in the batting order. It's the first time he's done that this year, and it's only because right fielder Josh Reddick is on the disabled list.

–Speaking of Reddick, the A's gave away Josh Reddick bobbleheads before Saturday's game. Reddick pronounced the bobblehead, which has him making a leaping catch at the wall as "awesome," but also suggested it was bittersweet to not be on the active roster for the game.

Rewind: Butler plays starring role with three-RBI day

May 29, 2016

By Joe Stiglich/ CSNCalifornia.com

OAKLAND — The A's got the Khris Davis home run Saturday that seemed guaranteed to come, given the rate at which he's cleared the fences this month.

The contributions from another source weren't quite so predictable.

It was Billy Butler who kicked the A's hit parade into gear during a 12-3 romp over the Detroit Tigers at the Coliseum. He lined a go-ahead two-run single into right field that snapped a 3-3 tie in the sixth and sent the A's on their way to season highs in both runs and hits (17).

Butler's three-RBI day also included his first home run of the season, a missile he launched deep into the seats in left-center off Matt Boyd in the second.

Afterward in the clubhouse, Butler's teammates teased him as reporters closed in waiting to talk to him. But those same teammates also scattered respectfully, happy to direct the spotlight to a player who has seen his role on the A's shrink considerably from a year ago.

"It feels good to contribute to the team," Butler said. "You're just waiting your turn, and it feels good to come through in a tight ballgame there in the sixth."

Butler got the word from manager Bob Melvin early in the season that he would mostly be playing against left-handed starters only. That's meant precious little time in the lineup given that the A's faced right-handers in 32 out of 34 games during a stretch that ran April 7-May 14. He's started just 18 of the A's 50 games, and that puts him in an unenviable position: A player who is a target for criticism for not producing up to the standards of his three-year \$30 million contract, but also someone not playing enough to do anything to change that right now.

"You get in the cage, you take swings," Butler said when asked how he tries to stay ready. "You have to do more stuff in there than you normally do — than I've ever had to do as an everyday player. When you're playing every day you just get in there, get loose and get ready for the game. When you're in a system that you're not getting that many at-bats, you don't really know what to work on because you don't have much to go off of."

He found a way to deliver on Saturday, as his two-run single in the sixth was one of five consecutive hits the A's tagged off Detroit's bullpen to spark a five-run rally. They continued pouring it on in the seventh, when Davis blasted a 1-0 slider from Alex Wilson for a three-run homer, a no-doubter to left.

His 14 homers tie him with Robinson Cano for third in the American League, but Davis leads the majors with a whopping 11 homers in May alone. That's the most by an A's hitter in a single month since Jason Giambi hit 13 back in September 2000.

"That's a good month," Melvin said, adding dryly: "I did that one year, had 11. I wouldn't know what to relate that too. Eleven homers in one month. Are we still going? Hopefully he's not done."

Danny Valencia, the other half of Oakland's important 1-2 power punch, added his own tape-measure blast, a 456-foot solo homer to straightaway center. Valencia enjoyed a three-hit game.

Those two have been the headliners when the A's offense has been clicking in recent weeks. But as Melvin noted, Oakland is a team that needs production from an ensemble cast. Were Butler to find a hot streak, it would add another dangerous bat to the lineup. First he'll need to hit his way into more playing time.

But for one day at least, Butler took a lead role in an A's victory.

"The guy's hit for a long time," catcher Josh Phegley said. "He's capable of hitting anytime he's in the box. We need him to get going and show up every day for us like that, and we're going to win a lot of games."

Instant Replay: A's offense breaks out to beat Tigers

May 29, 2016

By Joe Stiglich/ CSNCalifornia.com

OAKLAND — It was a feel-good day up and down the A's lineup Saturday.

Or to be more accurate, a feel-better day.

Just a night earlier, the A's managed just one run and eight base runners total in a loss to Detroit. Taking the field about 15 hours later under the sunshine at the Coliseum, the A's could do no wrong offensively.

They cracked double figures in runs for the first time this season in a 12-3 rout of the Tigers. The onslaught included eight extra-base hits from a team that came in ranked 13th in the American League in that category entering the day.

Billy Butler drove in three runs and Khris Davis cracked his 14th homer to add the exclamation point after the outcome was long decided. Eight of the nine players in the starting lineup registered at least one hit, with Billy Burns the lone exception.

In summary, it was a much needed breakout for a team that came in hitting .179 and averaging 2.9 runs per game over its last eight games. The A's broke a 3-3 tie with five runs in the sixth against the Tigers' bullpen, and that made a winner of right-hander Jesse Hahn (2-2), who went six innings and gave up three runs.

The A's previous high in runs scored this season was eight.

Starting pitching report

Hahn walked four but largely kept things in check. He did give up Victor Martinez's two-run homer that tied it 3-3 in the top of the sixth, which came right after a leadoff walk to Miguel Cabrera. But overall, it was more of what the A's need — starters giving them six (or more) quality innings and keeping the team in the game.

Bullpen report

It was a stress-free day for the bullpen as Fernando Rodriguez, Marc Rzepczynski and Zach Neal, who started just three days ago, closed out the win. A's manager Bob Melvin confirmed after the game that using Neal on Saturday means the A's will look elsewhere for a starter Tuesday. One definite possibility would be Triple-A right-hander Daniel Mengden, who has impressed greatly in the minors and is on the same turn as Neal.

At the plate

There were highlights up and down the boxscore. Aside from Butler's big day, leadoff man Coco Crisp had two hits and two RBI. Davis' homer, a three-run shot in the seventh, was his major-league leading 11th in May. That's the most home runs by an A's hitter in one month since Jason Giambi swatted 13 in September 2000.

Butler connected for his first homer of the season in the second. Danny Valencia, who snapped out of a dry spell with three hits, homered in the fourth for a 2-0 lead. But things really kicked into gear in the sixth, when Butler delivered a two-run single off reliever Warwick Saupold that put the A's in front for good, 5-3.

In the field

Catcher Josh Phegley came up with a big play when he retrieved an errant pitch and threw to Hahn covering home plate to get Ian Kinsler, who was trying to score on the play after stealing third.

Attendance

The announced crowd was 24,154 on Josh Reddick Bobblehead Day.

Up next

Rich Hill's 65 strikeouts are tied for sixth most in Oakland history before the end of May. Hill (7-3, 2.18) goes for his fifth consecutive victory in Sunday's 1:05 series finale. Mike Pelfrey (0-4, 5.55) takes the ball for Detroit.

A's heed veterans' advice with offensive outburst

May 29, 2016

By Mark Chiarelli/ MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Khris Davis said the A's held a players-only meeting before Friday's game against the Tigers to determine what their identity would be for the rest of the year. They didn't see the results that night, but, as he pointed out, "sometimes results take time."

Luckily for Oakland, it didn't take too much time.

Oakland's offense broke out Saturday in a 12-3 win over Detroit, setting a season-high in runs, hits (17) and margin of victory. Davis smashed a three-run home run in the seventh, Billy Butler hit his first homer of the year and had the go-ahead two-run single in the sixth, and Danny Valencia launched a 457-foot home run to center. It was a total team effort, one the A's, who were averaging 2.9 runs per game and hit .179 over their previous eight games, desperately needed.

"The veterans talked to us a little bit and reminded us that we should believe in ourselves," Davis said. "And to just know the guys are going to get the job done."

Davis said veterans ranging from Rich Hill to Ryan Madson to Coco Crisp took turns addressing the team in the meeting. And Saturday it was another veteran, Butler, who heeded the message, going 2-for-3 with three RBIs. He put the A's on the board in the second inning with a solo homer, and his go-ahead single in the sixth came only a half-inning after the Tigers had tied the game at 3.

"I mean, early on he was the offense," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "He got us on the board, then [he] got the biggest hit of the game, knocking in a couple [of runs]. Good feeling for him, and for a guy that's not playing as much as he's used to playing, to be able to have this type of game, he's certainly going to go home in a good mood today, as he should."

Butler has been relegated to a platoon role offensively and was mired in a 3-for-22 slump, as well as the longest homerless drought of his career (29 games). He said he believes platoons are especially tough on right-handed hitters, but he has tried to stay as sharp as possible despite inconsistent at-bats, and it paid off Saturday.

"You just have to continue to prepare, wait your turn, and be prepared for it when you get it," Butler said.

"It's an adjustment. It's tough to make those types of adjustments, but you have to do the best you can and be a professional."

"Just the being the teammate he is, he's that guy and we need to believe in him," Davis said. "And we need him, we honestly need him. It was great to see."

Davis and the rest of the offense followed suit. Oakland scored five runs in the sixth and tacked on four more in the seventh, including Davis' rocket to left. It was his 14th homer of the season and his league-leading 11th homer in May.

Melvin said he hasn't seen a stretch like Davis' before, but added, "hopefully he's not done."

The A's hope their offense as a whole can carry this momentum. They fell to a season-low nine games below .500 prior to Saturday, and entered tied in last place in the American League West. There have been flashes of success -- they won five of six before losing seven of their last eight games -- and know that, with June approaching, they'll need to establish that lasting identity soon.

"You have to try to sustain these things," Melvin said. "We had a period there where we were swinging the bat well, then we got cold after that, so it shows us again that we have the ability to do it. We need to sustain it a little bit more so than a couple games."

LAST UPDATED: SUN, MAY 29, 2016, 02:25 EDT

SATURDAY, MAY 28, 2016

TEAM	PLAYER	TRANSACTION
Atlanta Braves	Erick Aybar	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Right foot contusion)
Atlanta Braves	Aaron Blair	Called Up from Minors
Cleveland Indians	Carlos Carrasco	Sent to Minors, For Rehabilitation
Detroit Tigers	Matt Boyd	Called Up from Minors
Detroit Tigers	Steven Moya	Sent to Minors
Kansas City Royals	Chris Young	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Right forearm strain)
Kansas City Royals	Brian Flynn	Sent to Minors
Los Angeles Angels	Cliff Pennington	Removed From 15-Day DL, (Left hamstring strain)
Los Angeles Angels	Cliff Pennington	Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment
Los Angeles Angels	Brendan Ryan	Designated for Assignment
Los Angeles Dodgers	Casey Fien	Purchased From Minors
New York Mets	James Loney	Traded From from Padres, San Diego (for cash considerations)
Pittsburgh Pirates	Kyle Lobstein	Sent to Minors
Pittsburgh Pirates	Tony Watson	Reinstated from Paternity Leave List

[San Diego Padres](#) [Keith Hessler](#) Sent to Minors

[San Diego Padres](#) [Matt Thornton](#) Removed From 15-Day DL, (Left Achilles tendinitis)

[San Francisco Giants](#) [Chris Stratton](#) Called Up from Minors

[San Francisco Giants](#) [Matt Cain](#) Placed on 15-Day DL, (Strained right hamstring)

[St. Louis Cardinals](#) [Matt Carpenter](#) Reinstated from Paternity Leave List

[St. Louis Cardinals](#) [Ruben Tejada](#) Designated for Assignment

[Texas Rangers](#) [Joey Gallo](#) Sent to Minors

[Texas Rangers](#) [Yu Darvish](#) Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment

[Texas Rangers](#) [Yu Darvish](#) Removed From 15-Day DL, (Recovery from right elbow surgery)

[Toronto Blue Jays](#) [Aaron Loup](#) Removed From 15-Day DL, (Left elbow soreness)

[Toronto Blue Jays](#) [Jose Bautista](#) Reinstated From League Suspension

[Toronto Blue Jays](#) [Troy Tulowitzki](#) Placed on 15-Day DL, (Strained right quadriceps)

FRIDAY, MAY 27, 2016

TEAM	PLAYER	TRANSACTION
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Arizona Diamondbacks	Silvino Bracho	Called Up from Minors
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Arizona Diamondbacks	Peter O'Brien	Called Up from Minors
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[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 Sent to Minors

[Los Angeles Dodgers](#) Julio Urías Purchased From Minors

[Oakland Athletics](#) [Josh Phegley](#) Removed From 15-Day DL, (Right knee inflammation)

[Oakland Athletics](#) [Matt McBride](#) Sent to Minors

[Oakland Athletics](#) [Josh Phegley](#) Recalled From Minors, Rehab Assignment

[Seattle Mariners](#) [Leonys Martín](#) Placed on 15-Day DL, (Strained left hamstring)

[Seattle Mariners](#) [Stefen Romero](#) Called Up from Minors

[Texas Rangers](#) [Jurickson Profar](#) Called Up from Minors

[Texas Rangers](#) [Shawn Tolleson](#) Placed on Bereavement/Family Medical Emergency List

[Texas Rangers](#) [Rougned Odor](#) Starting to Serve Suspension

[Toronto Blue Jays](#) [Jose Bautista](#) Starting to Serve Suspension

[Toronto Blue Jays](#) [Ryan Lavarney](#) Signed to a Minor League Contract

THURSDAY, MAY 26, 2016

TEAM	PLAYER	TRANSACTION
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Atlanta Braves	Casey Kelly	Sent to Minors
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Atlanta Braves	Chris Withrow	Called Up from Minors
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Atlanta Braves	Hector Olivera	Starting to Serve Suspension
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Atlanta Braves	Hector Olivera	Suspension Announced By League, (82 games for domestic violence incident)
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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	Called Up from Minors, - Not to Report
Chicago White Sox	Daniel Fields	Outrighted to Minors
Kansas City Royals	Mike Moustakas	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Torn right ACL - out for season)
Kansas City Royals	Brett Eibner	Called Up from Minors
Los Angeles Angels	Erik Kratz	Signed to a Minor League Contract
Los Angeles Dodgers	Luis Avilan	Sent to Minors
Miami Marlins	Bryan Morris	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Herniated lumbar disc)
Miami Marlins	Nick Wittgren	Called Up from Minors
Milwaukee Brewers	Chris Capuano	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Left elbow soreness)
Milwaukee Brewers	David Goforth	Called Up from Minors
New York Yankees	Richard Bleier	Purchased From Minors
New York Yankees	Slade Heathcott	Released
New York Yankees	Chasen Shreve	Placed on 15-Day DL, (Sprained AC joint, left shoulder)

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

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

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

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

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