

A's News Clips, Friday, April 23, 2010

Kurt Suzuki has mostly memorable day

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

If it's true good things come in threes, Kurt Suzuki was more than happy settling for two out of three Thursday.

Suzuki hit into the first Oakland triple play in nearly 16 years, but he also hit a three-run first-inning homer to support Dallas Braden's third victory without a loss as the A's beat the Yankees 4-2 at the Oakland Coliseum.

"The homer's going to be off TV in a day, but the triple play is going to be on forever, right?" Suzuki said of his sixth-inning grounder with two on that went from third to second to first. "So I guess I figured out a way to stay on TV now."

Indeed, as momentous as the triple-killing was for the A's, it was even more so for the Yankees. It was the first triple play they'd executed since June 3, 1968, against Minnesota, when current Atlanta Braves manager Bobby Cox was New York's third baseman and the first baseman was some dude named Mickey Mantle.

Alex Rodriguez was the Yankees third baseman who initiated the play this time. He speared Suzuki's shot down the line, quickly stepped on third, fired to second baseman Robinson Cano, and Cano made a quick pivot and throw to Mark Teixeira to easily beat Suzuki at first.

"I was thinking bunt, to be honest with you," said Rodriguez. "Teams try to scratch for anything against (Yankees starter) CC (Sabathia), so I was up even with the bag. When the ball was hit, I just stepped on the base and threw a little Hail Mary to Robbie."

The A's hadn't hit into a triple play since May 14, 1994, when Geronimo Berroa did it in a game at Kansas City. It was the eighth triple play recorded at the Coliseum, the first since Willie Randolph hit into one for Baltimore on Aug. 8, 1990.

Things went better for Suzuki in the first inning after two of the first three hitters walked. He crushed the first pitch he saw deep over the left-field fence, and the A's never trailed the rest of the way as they salvaged the final game of the three-game series.

"When a guy like CC's out there, you can't wait around," Suzuki said.

"I just went up there trying to get a good pitch to hit early knowing that he'd walked a couple guys. I tried to look in one place and I got it. Good thing I didn't miss it."

Severely ill with a head cold, Braden made it stand up for the six innings and 81 pitches he lasted. He was touched for solo home runs by Marcus Thames in the fifth and Teixeira in the sixth before departing, but Brad Ziegler followed with two scoreless innings and Andrew Bailey closed out the ninth for his second save.

"We were literally going inning by inning with (Braden), knowing potentially he would need to come out," said manager Bob Geren.

"But it's not the first time we've seen that kind of effort from Dallas. He's one of the toughest competitors I've ever been around."

Braden wasn't so sick that he couldn't get into a shouting match with Rodriguez in the sixth. Rounding second on a foul ball hit by Cano, A-Rod took a short cut by running across the pitching mound back to first, an obscure no-no of baseball etiquette.

"I was just dumbfounded that he would let that slip his mind, someone of such status," Braden said. "I was just trying to convey to him that I'm still out there, the ball is in my hands and that's my pitcher's mound."

So, did Rodriguez apologize?

"What do you think?" Braden answered. "The guy was tasting himself too long to apologize. No, he didn't apologize, and it's a shame. I have a lot of respect of that guy, you admire a talent like that."

"It's just disappointing when you see the other side of things. I'm not really a speck of that guy's radar, and that's fine. But he'll know after today that it might not be a good thing to run across the mound when I'm out there."

Rodriguez pleaded ignorance of the unwritten rule, saying, "He just told me to get off his mound. I was a little surprised, I've never quite heard that, especially from a guy who has a handful of wins in his career."

A's update: Outfielder Travis Buck on 15-day DL with strained right oblique

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

Strained right oblique lands Buck on 15-day DL

Welcome to the Daily Disabled List Report, where as usual, there's more bad news. Now it's outfielder Travis Buck who's going on the shelf for 15 days with a strained right oblique muscle just when he was finally starting to swing the bat.

The injury-prone Buck was a late scratch Wednesday night after he felt a painful twinge taking a few final swings in the indoor batting cage. He wasn't feeling any better Thursday, and his prognosis to return is unknown at this point.

"I've never had it before, but what I've told the trainers and kind of what I'm experiencing right now, it's pretty bad — a lot of sharp pains anytime I cough, laugh, sneeze," Buck said.

Buck became the opening day left fielder when offseason acquisition Coco Crisp went on the DL on April 3 with a fractured pinkie. To replace Buck on the roster, the A's called up Matt Carson, who was hitting .357 in 56 at-bats at Triple-A Sacramento. Carson likely will platoon with Gabe Gross and Eric Patterson and be in the lineup against left-handers, as he was Thursday against the Yankees' CC Sabathia.

This latest setback was Buck's fifth trip to the DL in four seasons. It's also the eighth time the A's have used the disabled list this year after using it 17 times last year.

"Travis was looking good," A's manager Bob Geren said. "It's never a good time for anybody to get hurt, but when a guy is just starting to really look good, it just magnifies it."

Left-handed reliever Jerry Blevins is day-to-day with back spasms after having to come out of Wednesday night's game with one out in the eighth inning. Geren was optimistic that Blevins' injury was not serious.

Righty Michael Wuertz, who made his third rehab appearance in Sacramento on Wednesday, needs more rehab work, according to Geren. The eighth-inning specialist will pitch again Sunday.

"Wuertz is not quite ready to perform at this level," Geren said. "He's kind of going through a spring training situation right now, and he feels like he has a little bit of a dead-arm feeling. The positive news is that nothing hurts." ... The same could not be said about right-hander Joey Devine, who is trying to make a comeback from 2009 elbow surgery. Devine was scheduled to face hitters Wednesday during extended spring training but had to shut down just before a hitter stepped into the box. He subsequently had an MRI on his right elbow, and doctors are still evaluating his situation.

Suzuki homer propels A's past Yankees

Steve Kroner, Chronicle Staff Writer

Where to begin the account of the A's 4-2 win over the Yankees on Thursday afternoon?

Well, Oakland's Kurt Suzuki had two at-bats, producing three runs with one swing and three outs with the other.

New York's CC Sabathia tossed a four-hitter but still had his career record at the Coliseum fall to 2-5.

Then, of course, there's the foul ball.

Yep, Robinson Cano's sixth-inning looper that fell into foul territory near the left-field line led to a heated discussion - both during the game and afterward - of baseball etiquette.

Alex Rodriguez was on first base when Cano hit the foul ball. Rodriguez had run almost to third and as he returned to first, he crossed the pitcher's mound - a violation of one of the game's unwritten rules, at least according to Oakland starter Dallas Braden.

So after Cano hit into an inning-ending, 3-6-1 double play, Braden yelled across the diamond at Rodriguez. His expressions and gesticulations as he entered the A's dugout, as captured on TV, left little doubt he was furious. The cameras also caught Rodriguez flipping his hand dismissively, apparently toward Braden.

"I was just trying to convey to him that I'm still out there," Braden said. "That ball's in my hand and that's my pitcher's mound.

"If he wants to run across the pitcher's mound, tell him to go do laps in the bullpen."

Rodriguez said he "thought it was pretty funny, actually." He said he was unaware of any unwritten rule preventing him from setting foot on the mound.

"I've never quite heard that," Rodriguez said, "especially from a guy who has a handful of wins in his career."

Braden allowed two runs in six innings to up his season record to 3-0 and his career mark to 17-21. Rodriguez is a three-time AL MVP who has 585 career homers.

So when Rodriguez was told Braden had mentioned the unwritten rule, Rodriguez replied, "Who said that?"

A reporter repeated that it was Braden, and Rodriguez responded, "Exactly. Exactly. Exactly."

Said Braden: "I'm not really a speck on that guy's radar and that's fine. But he'll know after today, it might not be a good idea to run across the mound when I'm out there again."

Braden was out there under the weather Thursday. He'd had some type of cold or flu the previous two days and took an IV after his outing.

In the bottom of the sixth, Rodriguez had a hand in the most memorable play of the day. With runners at first and second and no outs, Suzuki hit a sharp grounder that Rodriguez backhanded. He stepped on third for one out, threw to Cano at second for the second out, and Cano's relay to Nick Johnson at first beat Suzuki for a triple play.

The Yankees had not turned a triple play since June 3, 1968. Check out the players involved in that one: Minnesota's John Roseboro was the hitter, and his 1-5-3 TP went from pitcher Dooley Womack to third baseman Bobby Cox (yes, that Bobby Cox) to a first baseman named Mickey Mantle.

Suzuki had launched a three-run homer off Sabathia in the first inning. The A's catcher had his tongue planted firmly in his cheek when describing his afternoon:

"The home run's going to be off the TV in a day," Suzuki said, "and the triple play's going to be on forever, right? So, I guess you figure out a way to stay on TV."

Good news, bad news time for A's in bullpen

Steve Kroner, Chronicle Staff Writer

Brad Ziegler and **Andrew Bailey** gave the A's sterling relief Thursday, quite a contrast with the news about Oakland's pitchers trying to rejoin the bullpen.

Ziegler retired all six men he faced in the A's 4-2 win over the Yankees. Bailey worked a scoreless ninth to pick up his second save of 2010. Dating to last season, the 2009 AL Rookie of the Year has a 15-inning scoreless streak and has converted 23 straight save opportunities.

Michael Wuertz (right shoulder tendinitis) has made three rehab appearances for Triple-A Sacramento, but in the words of manager **Bob Geren**, "is not quite ready to perform at this level." Geren said Wuertz is experiencing something "of a dead-arm feeling," but should have another rehab outing Sunday.

The outlook is much less encouraging for **Joey Devine**, who missed all of last season after Tommy John surgery on his right elbow. The A's have shut down Devine in extended spring training after he endured another setback.

Buck on DL: Before Thursday's game, the A's placed outfielder **Travis Buck** on the 15-day disabled list with a strained right oblique. He sustained the injury during batting practice Wednesday night.

Oakland brought up 28-year-old outfielder **Matt Carson** from Sacramento. The right-handed hitter, who went 20-for-56 (.357) in 14 games with the River Cats, started in left field and went 0-for-3 against lefty **CC Sabathia**.

Geren said when the A's face right-handed starters in the next few weeks, he expects **Eric Patterson** and **Gabe Gross**, both left-handed hitters, to get the bulk of the time in left field.

Briefly: Second baseman **Adam Rosales** made a brilliant backhanded stop and then a jump-throw to first to rob **Derek Jeter** of a base hit in the eighth inning. ... Before Thursday, the last A's player to ground into a triple play was **Geronimo Berroa**, at Kansas City, on May 14, 1994.

A's Leading Off

Steve Kroner, San Francisco Chronicle, 4/23/2010

RISPy business: Kevin Kouzmanoff's infield single with a man at second in the fourth inning was his first hit with runners in scoring position in 18 tries this season.

Suzuki's early homer holds up for A's

Three-game skid ends behind Braden's six strong innings

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Dallas Braden's face exuded zero sign of color following the lefty's fourth start Thursday.

His words, however, exploded like a rainbow and experienced no ill effect to whatever bug was running through his body.

Essentially, Braden was his usual self -- on the mound and during his postgame talk -- despite battling a sickness that forced him to take an IV shot following his third straight victory -- a 4-2 A's win over the visiting Yankees.

Braden, whose illness kept him away from the field Wednesday, could only muster 81 pitches. But it was enough for six solid innings of work before handing a lead over to an equally impressive A's bullpen, which combined for three shutout innings of one-hit ball.

"He shut down one of the best offenses in the league," manager Bob Geren said. "You wouldn't know he was sick when he was out there, but you would know in between innings. He was very, very ill. He did not look good the whole game. We were literally going inning by inning with him, but he kept going out there.

"That's not the first time we've seen him battling like that. He's one of the toughest competitors I've ever been around. I was real proud of him."

So was his batterymate, who pretty much stole every ounce of Braden's thunder by not only blasting a three-run homer off New York starter CC Sabathia to left field in the first, but by grounding into the club's first triple play since May 14, 1994, at Kansas City -- where Geronimo Berroa did it.

"It felt great," Suzuki joked. "The homer's going to be off the TV in a day and the triple play is going to be on forever. I figured out a way to stay on TV."

With runners at first and second and the A's leading, 4-2, in the sixth, Suzuki chopped a hard-hit grounder to Alex Rodriguez. The Yankees' third baseman ran to the bag to force out Daric Barton before firing to Robinson Cano at second base to nail Ryan Sweeney. Cano then whipped the ball over to Nick Johnson at first base to complete the Yankees' first triple play in 42 years.

"The whole time I was running down the line, I was thinking, 'Don't throw it to second. Uh-oh,'" Suzuki explained. "I wasn't really angry just because we had the lead and it was late in the game."

A former teammate of Suzuki -- Matt Holliday -- happened to be the last player in Major League history to tally a home run and hit into a triple play in the same game. Holliday, now with St. Louis, did it while playing for the Rockies on Sept. 12, 2007.

"If I can win some batting titles like him," Suzuki said with a smile, "that'll be fine, I guess."

Without the catcher's home run, though, the A's could have easily found themselves victims of a three-game sweep. Sabathia, a Bay Area native, tossed an eight-inning complete game, but was obviously struggling in the first frame.

That much was evident when he quickly issued walks to Rajai Davis and Ryan Sweeney, who both eventually found their way across home plate when Suzuki belted his team-leading third homer of the year.

"What you don't want to do is swing the bat freely against a guy who starts off a game struggling," Geren said. "So what you have to do is tighten up your zone and have the confidence to be aggressive when you think you have the opportunity."

"With a guy like CC out there, you don't wait around," Suzuki said. "You have to get to him early. I just went up there trying to get a good pitch early. Good thing I didn't miss it."

The homer came exactly one year to the day after Suzuki hit a three-run shot off Sabathia at Yankee Stadium.

The A's made it a 4-0 game in the fourth thanks to a sacrifice fly off the bat of Adam Rosales. In the meantime, Braden posted four consecutive zeroes before surrendering homers to Marcus Thames and Mark Teixeira in the fifth and sixth innings to narrow his club's lead to two.

"After that last inning, he basically said he couldn't go anymore," Geren said of his starter, who improved to 3-0 with a 2.77 ERA.

Righty Brad Ziegler followed Braden's gutty outing with two perfect innings, and Andrew Bailey officially sent the Yankees on their way after closing out the ninth to garner his second save of the year.

It was more than a well-deserved victory for Braden, who spent much of his postgame chat fielding questions about his sixth-inning tiff with Rodriguez. A-Rod disobeyed what Braden said was one of baseball's unwritten rules by jogging across the pitching mound following a foul ball off the bat of Cano.

The incident shed a rare bright light on Braden, who has positioned himself in an unassuming role as one of Oakland's most consistent starters over the last couple of years. He likes it that way, though.

"Leave me alone," he said, grinning. "I'm good here. I'd even like to pitch in the fifth spot. That'd be awesome. I'd love to just be the throw-in guy."

However, his teammates would likely say his colorful bulldog self wouldn't exactly fit that role as well.

"He knows what it takes to get guys out," Suzuki said. "He fights out there. He battles. He's not a guy you want to mess with."

A's Braden exchanges words with A-Rod

Slugger accused of crossing pitcher's mound after foul ball

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A's starter Dallas Braden figures he's probably not even "a speck" on Alex Rodriguez's radar.

However, the Oakland lefty is willing to bet at least his mound is now.

The two opponents exchanged words during the sixth inning Thursday in an eventual 4-2 A's win after Rodriguez rounded third on a Robinson Cano foul ball before disobeying what Braden maintains is one of baseball's unwritten rules by jogging across the pitcher's mound -- Braden's mound.

Cano grounded into a double play to end the inning one pitch later, after which Braden decided to lend Rodriguez some advice.

"After the double play, he was looking at me and [cupped] his ear like, 'What did you say?'" Braden explained. "I made sure he understood me.

"He should probably take a note from his captain over there and realize you don't cross the pitcher's mound in between an inning or during the game. I was just dumbfounded that he would let that slip his mind -- being someone of such status."

The confrontation shared postgame attention with the club's triple play in the bottom half of the inning. The Yankees' third baseman, though, seemed slightly amused as he downplayed his chat with Braden.

"He just told me to get off his mound," Rodriguez said. "That was a little surprising. I'd never quite heard that, especially from a guy that has a handful of wins in his career.

"I didn't even know he was talking to me. I've never heard of that in my career. I still don't know. I thought it was pretty funny, actually."

Braden, already battling an illness through his six innings of work, found nothing comical about it. Having just received an IV shot, he stood firm in his beliefs following the game about the incident -- one that he says never ended in an apology.

"The guy was tasting himself too long to apologize," Braden quipped. "It's a shame. I have a lot of respect for the guy and everything he's done for the game. I admire the kind of talent like that -- it's just disappointing when you see the other side of things.

According to the A's southpaw, Rodriguez didn't have much of a response. Long story short, Braden said, it didn't include a "Yes, sir, have a good day."

"It's pretty much baseball etiquette," Braden continued. "It's an extremely classy organization, the best in the business. I was trying to convey to him that I'm still out there, the ball is in my hand, and it's my pitcher's mound. If he wants to run across the pitcher's mound, tell him to go do laps in the bullpen."

Through it all, Braden said he hopes Rodriguez and the defending World Series champions -- despite owning a 14-4 mark against Oakland over the past three years -- realize "we're not the doormat anymore."

"I don't go over there and run laps at third base," he said. "I don't spit over there. I stay away. He ran across the pitcher's mound, foot on my rubber. No. Not flying."

Buck joins an already-crowded disabled list

Carson recalled from Triple-A Sacramento to fill roster spot

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- A rather busy injury front kept a quick pace for the A's, who on Thursday added outfielder Travis Buck to an already-crowded disabled list.

Buck, scratched before Wednesday's game after straining his right oblique during batting practice, was placed on the 15-day DL alongside second baseman Mark Ellis. To make room for Buck, the A's recalled outfielder Matt Carson from Triple-A Sacramento.

The 26-year-old Buck was somewhat-of-a surprise roster choice heading into the season, but Coco Crisp's fractured pinkie finger opened a rather-wide door for Buck. It marked the third straight season Buck has made the A's Opening Day roster, but four previous stints on the disabled list and options to Sacramento in each of the last two years limited him to just 156 games over those three seasons.

Buck was batting .219, but was 3-for-9 on the homestand and hit a solo homer -- his first of the year -- in Tuesday's 7-3 loss to the Yankees before becoming the eighth Oakland player to join the DL this season.

"He was right there and looking good," manager Bob Geren said. "When you're just starting to look real good, it magnifies it."

Meanwhile, the 28-year-old Carson was swinging a hot bat in Sacramento, where he was hitting .357 with six RBIs in 14 games for the River Cats. In 10 contests as a September callup with the A's last year, he went 6-for-21.

"He was hitting the ball extremely well in Triple-A," Geren said. "It's nice to have someone come up who's doing so well. He's a fundamentally sound outfielder who has some power and uses the whole field. It's nice to have someone of his caliber."

The A's skipper wasted no time in getting Carson work, placing him in the starting lineup in left field against the visiting Yankees on Thursday.

"I'm feeling more relaxed, more comfortable," Carson said. "Last year I pressed a little bit."

In order to clear space for Carson on the 40-man roster, the A's designated outfielder Jai Miller -- claimed off waivers from the Marlins on April 8 -- for assignment.

Devine suffers second setback during rehab

Team doctors are currently reviewing reliever's latest MRI

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Just three months ago, right-handed pitcher Joey Devine spoke enthusiastically of being ahead of rehab schedule following last year's Tommy John surgery.

The A's wish they could still speak of the reliever's speedy recovery, but manager Bob Geren revealed Thursday morning that Devine has experienced a setback for the second time in the last two months.

Devine was dealt with a dose of tendinitis at the beginning of March and has yet to face live hitters on his journey back to a Major League mound -- which he hasn't seen since 2008 after posting a 0.59 ERA in 42 relief appearances.

Geren said doctors are currently evaluating an MRI that was ordered on Devine's elbow, and the club will hopefully know more in the next couple of days.

"He was getting ready to face hitters," the A's manager said, "when he realized something wasn't right. It seems like something comes up every time he's about right up to 100 percent."

Devine is currently taking part in extended Spring Training in Arizona and hoped to rejoin the A's by the end of April. However, the right-hander will seemingly not be ready for at least another month.

Blevins out with back spasms

OAKLAND -- A's Left-hander Jerry Blevins was deemed day-to-day Thursday after exiting Wednesday night's game with back spasms.

The 26-year-old reliever, who left an 0-2 count to New York's Curtis Granderson in the hands of teammate Tyson Ross in the eighth inning Wednesday, felt slightly better Thursday morning but was still stiff and planned on receiving treatment.

"It still feels tight," the southpaw said. "But hopefully it won't keep me out too long."

Blevins entered Thursday tied for third in the American League with eight games pitched and two wins.

Tribe looking to keep offensive momentum

By Jonathan Mayo / MLB.com

Could the Indians' eight-run outburst on Thursday in Minnesota be a sign of things to come? They certainly hope so as they continue their road trip with a six-game swing out West, beginning with three in Oakland against the A's.

The 8-1 victory snapped a two-game losing streak for the young Cleveland club. As important as closing to within a game of .500, is the fact the offense showed signs of life for the first time in a long time. With 11 hits, including a season-high seven for extra-bases, it moved the Indians out of the cellar of the American League (and the Major Leagues) in batting average to .222. One game does not a breakout make, but manager Manny Acta's steady hand and willingness to not press the panic button might be paying dividends.

"Patience plus self-control leads to success," Acta said. "You have to be patient, because you know things will balance out. Grady Sizemore won't hit .220 [for the season], Travis Hafner won't hit what he's hitting, six guys won't be hitting a buck-eighty. You have to be patient. It's part of coaching, especially when you're dealing with young people."

Sizemore and Hafner each drove in a run in the finale against the Twins and the recently returned Russell Branyan drove in a pair. They'll need all the offensive firepower they can muster as they prepare to face the top pitching staff in the AL. The A's staff owned a 3.16 ERA heading into the finale against the Yankees. Game 1 starter Justin Duchscherer has put a rough opening start in the rearview mirror with back-to-back outings in which he allowed no runs, a stretch covering 13 innings. He's still building up his arm strength following a truncated spring for the right-hander.

Pitching-wise, the Indians probably feel they can match up with anyone. Friday's starter, Jake Westbrook, hasn't picked up a win in three starts, but was very sharp against the White Sox in his last start. The Indians' rotation now has a 3.40 ERA in 15 games.

Indians: Wood return means someone must go

With Kerry Wood coming back soon, the current members of the bullpen would be wise to curry favor with the higher-ups. One guy potentially on the fence is left-hander Tony Sipp, so his 1-2-3 outing against the Twins on Wednesday was a necessary one. Sipp is carrying a 5.40 ERA and four walks allowed after five innings of work over seven appearances, and he had a rough spring camp, too.

"I base my performance off feel and how I execute," Sipp said. "The rest I can't control. But it's definitely good to go out and not walk anybody. That's the main thing. If you walk people, nothing good can happen."

A's: So much for lineup consistency

On Tuesday, Oakland used its Opening Day lineup for the sixth time this season. That may not sound like much, but it's the first time the A's had used the same lineup more than five times in a season since 2006.

That consistency came to an end when Travis Buck was placed on the 15-day disabled list on Thursday. The outfield may look a little like musical chairs in Buck's absence. Matt Carson was called up to replace Buck and he should see time against left-handed pitchers, like he did vs. CC Sabathia on Thursday afternoon. The A's will face right-handers against the Indians this weekend, so that means Eric Patterson and Gabe Gross should share some time.

"I like that I can rely on both those guys for pretty much anywhere in the outfield," A's manager Bob Geren said. "We can be flexible pretty everywhere."

Worth noting

Hafner has now reached safely in all 14 games he's played. ... The 8-1 victory helped close the Indians' run differential to 61-54. ... A's reliever Jerry Blevins is questionable after getting "day-to-day" status with lower back spasms.

Dallas Braden to A-Rod: This Is My House

Jeff Fletcher, aol.com, 4/23/2010

OAKLAND – While much of the little attention that has gone to the A's is directed at pitchers like [Ben Sheets](#), [Justin Duchscherer](#) and [Brett Anderson](#), [Dallas Braden](#) took an opportunity on Thursday to let the baseball world – specifically [Alex Rodriguez](#) – know what he is all about.

For starters, Braden is a pretty good pitcher, evident by the fact that he beat the [Yankees](#), despite being so sick that he would later require an IV.

He is also a believer in old-school etiquette, which he showed by lighting into Rodriguez after the Yankees superstar made the mistake of running over the pitcher's mound on his way back to first base after a foul ball.

"It's an extremely classy organization, the best in the business, so he should probably take a note from his captain and realize you don't run across the pitcher's mound in between an inning or during the game," Braden said. "I was dumbfounded that someone of his status would let that slip his mind. He understands that. I was just trying to convey to him that I'm still out there. The ball is in my hand. That's my pitcher's mound. If he wants to run across the pitcher's mound, tell him to do laps in the bullpen."

Rodriguez was dumbfounded by Braden's accusation as Braden was by Rodriguez's action. Told after the game why Braden had been barking at him, Rodriguez said: "I had never heard of that in my career."

It all happened in an eventful sixth inning – one that ended with Rodriguez starting the [Yankees' first triple play in 42 years](#). [Mark Teixeira](#) had homered to bring the Yankees within 4-2, and Rodriguez followed with a single. With Rodriguez at first, [Robinson Cano](#) hit a foul ball. Rodriguez had already rounded second and gotten almost to third before he stopped to go back to first, apparently crossing over the mound in the process.

And that, at least in Braden's eyes, was a no-no.

A few pitches later, the A's turned a double play to end the inning. As Braden and Rodriguez crossed paths after the third out, Braden let Rodriguez hear about it.

"I pretty much told him that's not his mound," Braden said. "He can stay off my mound. That's my mound when I'm out here."

Did Rodriguez apologize?

"The guy was tasting himself too long to apologize," Braden said. "No, he didn't apologize. It's a shame. I have a lot of respect for that guy, everything he's done in the game. You admire a talent like that. It's just disappointing when you see the other side of things."

Braden seemed to indicate that Rodriguez might hear – or feel – a little more about the incident the next time the two meet.

"I pretty much told him that's not his mound. He can stay off my mound. That's my mound when I'm out here."

- *DALLAS BRADEN* "I'm not really a speck on that guy's radar," Braden said. "That's fine. He'll know after today it might not be a good idea to run across the mound when I'm out there again. It's not like I throw 95 and I'm going to hurt him, but he'll know I was there."

Rodriguez, who said at first he wasn't even sure that Braden was talking to him, said twice that he had never heard of an unwritten rule against running over the mound.

Michael Duca, co-author of "[The Baseball Codes: Beanballs, Sign Stealing and Bench-Clearing Brawls: The Unwritten Rules of America's Pastime](#)," said the running-over-the-mound rule was known better years ago.

"It was very common (to observe the rule) in the '40s, '50s and '60s," Duca told FanHouse. "Bob Gibson was very well versed in protecting what he called his office. He told people to say the ... out of my office. Had that been Gibson on the mound, A-Rod would have picked himself off the grass to get back to first. He would have decked him. No question about it."

That's about the only way that Braden is going to be compared to a Hall of Famer, but perhaps Thursday's performance will generate a little attention for a guy who has been quietly successful for a couple seasons.

Braden, 26, had struggled early in his big league career, but starting in August 2008, he started to put the pieces together. He finished that season by posting a 3.46 ERA in his last seven starts, a performance that helped him fall into an opening day start for the A's in 2009. He was 8-9 with a 3.89 ERA last year, a season in which he missed the final two months because of a foot infection. The acquisition of Sheets, the return of Duchscherer and the rise of Anderson pushed Braden back to the No. 4 spot, but he can still pitch. After allowing two runs in six innings on Thursday against the Yankees, Braden is one of only three pitchers in the American League to have four quality starts so far this year. (Felix Hernandez and Jered Weaver are the others.) Braden is 3-0 with a 2.77 ERA.

Braden has an average fastball, but he has good movement and command. His changeup is his specialty. He's also got an outstanding pickoff move. He has 10 pickoffs in his career, and he didn't allow a stolen base in 136 2/3 innings last year.

Mostly, though, the A's love him for his presence and competitiveness, which he showed by pitching when he felt terrible on Thursday.

"He knows what it takes to get guys out," catcher Kurt Suzuki said. "He fights out there. He battles. Being a catcher, having a pitcher like that out there, you know whatever you call he's going to throw with conviction, knowing he's going to get someone out."

Or call someone out.

"Hes a guy that's not going to take anything from anybody," Suzuki said of the A-Rod situation. "I don't know what went on but something clicked in his head to piss him off. I just tried to get him off the field before he did something crazy."

A's beat Yankees, 4-2

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Alex Rodriguez started an around-the-horn gem for the New York Yankees' first triple play in 42 years. But it was his casual jog directly across the diamond that started all the trouble.

On a day of history and histrionics, Oakland pitcher Dallas Braden screamed at Rodriguez after accusing him of breaching one of baseball's unwritten rules, setting off a shouting match Thursday in the Athletics' 4-2 win over the Yankees.

The problems began in the top of the sixth inning after a single by Rodriguez. Robinson Cano fouled off a pitch and Rodriguez, who in between second base and third, cut across the pitcher's mound to return to first.

After Cano grounded into an inning-ending double play, Braden and Rodriguez got into it.

"The long and short of it is it's pretty much baseball etiquette. He should probably take a note from his captain over there," Braden said, referring to Derek Jeter. "You don't run across the pitcher's mound in between an inning or during the game. I was just dumbfounded that he would let that slip his mind."

"I was just trying to convey to him that I was still out there, that ball's in my hand and that's my pitcher's mound. If he wants to run across the pitcher's mound. Tell him to go do laps in the bullpen," he said.

Braden yelled over his right shoulder as he stepped across the third-base line and Rodriguez hollered back. The two kept screaming at each other until A's manager Bob Geren came out and walked Braden off the field. Braden threw his glove against a wall in the Oakland dugout and kicked a stack of cups.

"He just told me to get off his mound," Rodriguez said. "I was a little surprised. I've never quite heard that, especially from a guy that has a handful of wins in his career. ... I've never even heard of that in my career and I still don't know. I thought it was pretty funny, actually."

Braden, 26, is 3-0 this year and has a 17-21 lifetime record, was hardly laughing after helping end the Yankees' six-game winning streak.

"I'm not really a speck on that guy's radar but he'll know after today that it might not be a good idea to run across the mound when I'm out there," Braden said. "It's not like I throw 95 (mph) and I'm going to hurt him. He'll know I was there, though."

Asked if Rodriguez said he was sorry, Braden said no.

"The guy was tasting himself too long to apologize," he said.

"No, he didn't apologize. And it's a shame. I have a lot of respect for that guy, everything he's done in the game. It's just disappointing when you see the other side of things."

This was not the first time someone said Rodriguez had broken an unwritten rule on the diamond.

In 2007, he shouted at Toronto third baseman Howie Clark while rounding the bag on a popup. Clark backed away, and the ball dropped. The play started a baseball debate about A-Rod's actions.

Moments after the temper tantrum with Braden, Rodriguez turned a triple play.

The A's quickly put runners on first and second in the bottom of the sixth and Kurt Suzuki — who earlier hit a three-run homer — sent a sharp grounder to Rodriguez at third base. Rodriguez stepped on the bag and threw to Cano at second. Cano's relay to first baseman Nick Johnson barely beat Suzuki.

The Yankees had gone 6,632 consecutive regular-season games without a triple play. Their last one came on June 3, 1968, with first baseman Mickey Mantle catching the final out on a ball hit by Minnesota's John Roseboro.

"The ball was hit to my right, I took a couple of steps, stepped on the bag and then threw a little Hail Mary at Robby," Rodriguez said. "And Robby did a great job of turning it."

Braden had extra incentive to be fired up against the Yankees.

He had been sick all week and needed an IV after being taken out of the game. He scattered six hits over six innings.

The A's managed only four hits but benefited from six walks by CC Sabathia (2-1) while ending their season-high, three-game losing streak.

Brad Ziegler pitched two innings and Andrew Bailey worked the ninth for his second save.

Braden, who struck out two and walked two, gave up solo home runs to Marcus Thames and Mark Teixeira but didn't allow another New York runner past second base.

"You wouldn't know when he was out there but in between innings you would know," Geren said. "He did not look good the whole game. We were literally going inning by inning."

Sabathia, who grew up in Vallejo 30 miles north of Oakland, gave up only four hits in eight innings.

NOTES: Oakland OF Travis Buck was placed on the 15-day DL with a strained right oblique muscle he injured while taking extra batting practice Wednesday. OF Matt Carson, who was called up from Triple-A Sacramento to take Buck's roster spot, started in left field and went 0 for 3. ... A's LHP Jerry Blevins (lower back) is day-to-day.

... Geren said RHP Michael Wuertz is feeling a "dead arm" during his extended spring training and is not yet ready to return to the big league club.

A's claim early season division lead

Written by CHARLEY THOMPSON, ALAMEDA SUN, 4/22/2010

A's fans had to be amused the way the East Coast baseball snobs wrote off Oakland before the 2010 season even began. The Atlantic baseball analysts acknowledged the Athletics fine pitching while discounting their sluggers. Hence all those picks for our green and goldies to finish last again.

Zero per cent of the experts east of the Mississippi believed Oakland would be in sole possession of first place in the American League West with a 2.5 game lead over the Angels and Mariners 14 games into the season.

Granted that lead may evaporate faster than a polar ice cap in the Mojave Desert. But that will happen only if the depth of the Athletics roster can't hold off the Disabled List Fairy.

Little did the preseason prognosticators realize that Ryan Sweeney (batting .320 after Sunday's 8-3 loss to Baltimore) and Daric Barton (.310) would be playing the way Billy Beane thought they could when he traded for them.

Joining Sweeney and Barton north of the .300 line is the second base tandem of Mark Ellis (.345) and Adam Rosales (.308). While Ellis missed seven games with a pickled hammy, Rosales won over fans with his production and hustle while filling in at second base.

Oakland received a scare on Sunday when Barton and shortstop Cliff Pennington became the eighth and ninth A's to be too banged up to play. Barton was removed from the game after getting hit by a pitch on the elbow in the fourth inning. While diving back to first base Pennington injured his hand when Oriole first baseman Garrett Atkins stepped on it.

A team needs to win as many series as possible in order to make it to the post season. So far this year the A's have taken three series from the Mariners, Angels and the Orioles. The only one they lost was on the road in Seattle when Oakland salvaged one win during a three game set.

The Athletics took three out of four games during Baltimore's visit to the Coliseum. The first time the A's saw the Orioles last Thursday, they looked more like the 1962 Mets. The Orioles misplayed so many balls that had their been a cornfield in center, Marv Throneberry and Choo Choo Coleman would have emerged from it to help Baltimore further stink up the lawn.

Even though Rajai Davis was struggling with a .222 average after last Sunday's game, he was leading the AL with 12 runs. His seven steals placed Davis in a four-way tie for the Major League lead. His steal last Saturday was the 100th of his career. As of Sunday, he had yet to be caught stealing.

Brett Anderson became the first A's starter to chalk up a loss after Baltimore roughed him up last Sunday. Gio

Gonzalez (3.38) is the only Oakland starter with an ERA over three.

After the A's conclude their longest home stand next Sunday against the Indians, they will board flights to play in Tampa Bay and Toronto. Then it's back to the Coliseum where they'll host Ron Washington's Texas Rangers.

A's Avoid Sweep in Game 3

Malika Bobino, Oakland Post, 4/23/2010

Oakland, CA – It's a great day for baseball! Clear skies, sixty degree weather and a crowd of 21,986. The Oakland A's avoided getting swept in game three by beating the New York Yankees 4-2.

"CC's a work horse when it comes to pitching," said manager Joe Girardi. "He has the luxury of watching Hughes the day before and coming behind him relaxed to pitch in front of his family and friends."

Following Phil Hughes stellar performance the day before Bay Area native CC Sabathia pitched the final game of the series and struggled at the mound. Sabathia walked a total of five players, two in the first inning before Kurt Suzuki connected for a three run homer on CC's first pitch. The A's were up 3-0.

Bottom of the fourth Oakland made it a 4-0 game when a sacrifice fly was hit off Adam Rosales bringing Daric Barton in for the run. A's pitcher Dallas Braden played with flu like symptoms that caused him to miss yesterday's game. But that didn't stop him from shutting down one of the best offenses in the league.

With little strength Braden pitched six solid innings and had 81 pitches. He maintained a clam demure on the mound until the unthinkable happened. Dallas began yelling toward third baseman Alex Rodriguez before heading to the dugout. Rodriguez had broke the unwritten rule of baseball which led to the pitcher's anger.

Rounding second base on a foul ball hit by Robinson Cano at the top of the sixth inning, A-Rod took a short cut by running across the pitching mound back to first. Dallas mouthed "get off my mound" and a dumbfounded Alex cupped his hand to his ear asking "what did he say?"

Bottom of the sixth Rodriguez moving past Braden's disappointment made history when he initiated a 5-4-3 triple play. Suzuki grounded into third with two runners on base. A-Rod tagged third base before throwing to Cano at second and Cano threw to first to complete the Yankees first triple play in 42 years.

"The homer's going to be off TV in a day, but the triple play is going to be on forever, right?" Suzuki said. "So, I guess I figured out a way to stay on TV now."

The excitement of the triple play did nothing in getting the Yankees in position to win the ball game. Both Marcus Thames and Mark Teixeira hit home runs but that would not be enough to stop the A's bullpen from sealing their victory. New York's six game winning streak came to an end.

Braden was finally able to rest when manager Bob Geren replaced him with Brad Ziegler who had two scoreless innings. The closer Andrew Bailey wrapped things up to end their three game losing streak. The A's are now tied for first place in the American League West with Seattle.

Writing about baseball unwritten rules and pointing the finger at Alex Rodriguez

Paul White, USA Today, 4/23/2010

So, let's size up this Alex Rodriguez-Dallas Braden spat from yesterday. Rodriguez, you've probably seen and/or heard by now, cut across the pitcher's mound -- "my" pitcher's mound, if you read Braden's lips or listen to his more expansive post-game comments -- returning to first base after a foul ball.

Words ensued on the field and after the game, with requisite playground-style sniping, like Rodriguez saying, "I've never quite heard that, especially from a guy that has a handful of wins in his career."

Others apparently have heard of it. Jason Turbow, author of the recently released book, *The Baseball Codes*, "has made a mini-career and a website -- thebaseballcodes.com -- out of getting to the bottom of baseball's unwritten rules.

This one -- the mound belongs to the pitcher -- indeed exists. Turbow writes on the site today that Rodriguez either is, "A guy who's profoundly ignorant of much of the Code, or a guy who actively disdains it." Turbow points out Rodriguez's past "code offenses," including being accused of peeking a catchers' signs and yelling to distract a defensive player.

Oakland reliever Brad Ziegler says via Twitter that he's not sure about the territorial issues but says he's never seen a player cut across the mound before. He calls the incident "competitive fire getting the best of both guys."

Turbow, though, has quotes from players about the so-called sanctity of the mound and points out some who routinely ignore it, citing White Sox catcher A.J. Pierzynski as a serial offender.

Coach and former player Tim Lincecum says Pierzynski has been hit by more than one pitch because of it.

That's the way players traditionally handle "Code violations."

Reds manager Dusty Baker once explained the violations such as sign-stealing and, presumably, A-Rod's purported offense are OK. It's just that, Baker explained, "Once we catch you, we tell you to stop. If you don't, you have to expect consequences."

So much for Ziegler's tweet that this all will be forgotten next time they step on the field. Next Yankees-A's series: July 5-7 in Oakland -- and the A's claim fireworks aren't scheduled until the following series against the Angels.

Major League Baseball's JA Catcher

Oakland A's Kurt Suzuki gears up for a new season and discusses his Japanese heritage and hometown of Hawaii.

By Pacific Citizen Staff 4/9/2010

Twenty-six-year-old Kurt Kiyoshi Suzuki has played with the Oakland A's since 2007, but he has never forgotten where he got his start.

The A's catcher says he is proud to know every time he steps on the diamond that he is representing the state of Hawaii.

"Yes, being from a small state and doing what I'm doing, makes me proud and shows me how fortunate I am," he said. "It's great to carry that Hawaiian name with me."

Suzuki, who is Japanese American, is from Hawaii where he attended Henry Perrine Baldwin High School.

The A's catcher said he wears a puka shell necklace under his jersey to remind him of his hometown of Wailuku on the island of Maui.

"I've worn it since I left the island to go to college and haven't taken it off since," Suzuki explained of heading off to college at California State University, Fullerton. "It might be superstitious, but mostly it just reminds me of home."

Suzuki wore that puka shell necklace April 5 when the A's kicked off the 2010 season against the Seattle Mariners. The two teams will play seven games during the first 10 days of the season.

Growing up in Hawaii as a JA has influenced Suzuki beyond his choice of on-the-field attire, he said.

"I think it gave me a little bit more of a laid back and relaxed attitude and the ability to really just have fun and enjoy life," Suzuki explained about how the island culture influenced him. "Hawaii is a much different place."

His Japanese heritage has also, he said, affected his demeanor in life on and off the diamond.

"Off the diamond, it definitely leads to being closer with my family," Suzuki said. "We spend a lot of time together over the holidays, so it's helped me become more family oriented."

Suzuki is regarded as one of the top catchers in the American League. He earned the nickname "Kurt Klutch" in college where he was awarded the Johnny Bench Award.

While playing for the A's, Suzuki's skills have also garnered acknowledgment. In 2009 Suzuki increased his batting average to .274 and hit 15 home runs. Suzuki was batting .249 in 2007 with 39 RBIs.

In addition to hitting seven homeruns and 42 RBIs in 2008, Suzuki was able to travel with the team to Japan.

"It was cool to experience professional baseball in Japan and the culture too," he explained. "It was interesting seeing how the way of life differed over there. It was a fun trip and the food was great."

His teammates and coaches also unofficially named Suzuki MVP last year. For his work on and off the field, Suzuki's teammates and coaches also named him as the Jim "Catfish" Hunter Award recipient in 2009.

Setting an example for others, the 26-year-old stepped up to the plate when a former college baseball player needed help.

He raised over \$61,000 for the Jon Wilhite Recovery Fund. The fund benefited Jon Wilhite, who was injured in a fatal car crash that killed Angels' pitcher Nick Adenhardt and two others.

"Anytime you are in the spotlight you feel like a role model." He added, "When kids look up to you, you have to make sure to carry yourself in the right way, and that you provide good examples for them."

Suzuki said his parents were always supportive of everything he did including baseball. He offered words of encouragement for younger JAs:

"Just keep working hard and never give up," he said. "There are no limits if you have a good attitude."

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Sacramento looks to avoid sweep Friday

Sacramento Rivercats 4/23/2010

Sacramento extended its losing streak to five Thursday night, falling 5-4 to Portland at Raley Field.

On Friday night, Sacramento (7-8) will look to avoid its first regular season sweep since the July 7-9, 2006, a run of 125 consecutive series. Staff ace Vin Mazzaro (1-1, 2.51) will start for the River Cats against left-hander Nathan Culp (0-1, 9.00).

The Cats welcomed back catcher Anthony Recker from Double-A Midland, where he started the 2010 season hitting .211 with a home run and three RBIs. Recker was a big part of the River Cats' 2009 division title run and picked up where he left off by throwing out two runners attempting to steal.

Clayton Mortensen (2-1) took the mound, allowing two runs (one earned) over 5.0 innings.

Sacramento lead-off hitter Corey Wimberly walked in the first and got the crowd excited with his seventh steal of the season. After Corey Brown and Chris Carter struck out, Jack Cust hit a ground-rule double over the center-field wall to score Wimberly for 1-0 lead.

The Beavers scored the tying run with a Craig Stansberry line-drive single in the second, bringing home Craig Cooper who had singled earlier in the inning. Dusty Ryan then walked and advanced to second on a Stansberry single. Chris Stewart followed by reaching on a fielding error by shortstop Steven Tolleson, scoring Ryan to take the lead.

Jonathon Hunton entered the game for Sacramento in the seventh. The 6-foot-9 right-hander gave up a solo homer on a 2-2 pitch to Stewart. Sean Kazmar then singled on a soft line drive to left field and advanced to second on a Cooper single. Aaron Cunningham singled, scoring Kazmar and advancing Cooper to second. The Beaver bats were hot with another single by Lance Zawadzki, scoring Cooper and advancing Cunningham to second. Cedrick Bowers then replaced Hunton on the mound and struck out Dusty Ryan swinging.

Sacramento responded in the seventh with back-to-back Recker and Tolleson singles. Sogard reached on a throwing error by first baseman Chris Stewart, scoring Recker and putting Tolleson on third. Wimberly then reach on a fielder's choice, scoring Tolleson. A huge Chris Carter double scored Wimberly, who had had stolen his eighth base of the season. Michael Taylor then flied out to end the inning, leaving the Cats trailing 5-4.

The River Cats were stopped in the eighth by reliever Ryan Webb, who retired the three batters he faced and couldn't get the momentum needed to overtake the Beavers in the end. Corey Wimberly singled in the ninth, but Carter's fly out to center was caught just before the warning track to end the game.

Hounds Drop Opener Against Missions

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

Depending on your point of view, Mother Nature's timing was either perfect ... or just a tad off.

Minutes before the heavens opened up, the San Antonio Missions broke a 3-3 tie with two, clutch, swings of the bat, defeating the RockHounds, 4-3, at Citibank Ballpark.

With the bases empty and two out in the ninth, San Antonio's Cedric Hunter fouled off three, 2-strike pitches before singling to center against RockHounds reliever Mickey Storey. Moments later, Logan Forsythe fell behind in the count, 0-2, against Beau Vaughan, then worked the count full and drove what would be the game-winning single down the left field line.

The Missions tied the game on another big swing, when Mitch Canham turned an 0-2 count into a game-tying single against Jason Ray in the seventh, and the Missions erased a 3-1 deficit.

Starters Simon Castro (SA) and Pedro Figueroa, each a top five prospect in his organization, lived up to their billing. Castro allowed three runs in six innings, but all three were unearned ... while Figueroa went 6.0 strong innings for the RockHounds, allowing one run on four hits.

With the wind gusting to 30 miles per hour throughout the game, both clubs made some outstanding defensive plays, and the Missions bullpen was brilliant, allowing one base runner in the last three innings.

When the rain did arrive, basically turning Citibank Ballpark into a boat dock, the Missions had done their 2-strike damage and former Oakland farm hand Craig Italiano slammed the door for the save.

Ports Blanked For First Time In 7-0 Loss

Stockton Ports, 4/23/2010

MODESTO, Calif. - The quest for offense continues for the Stockton Ports.

After being able to muster just two hits in the finale of their seven-game homestand on Wednesday night, the Boys of Banner Island followed up on Thursday with another dreadful performance, coming up with just four hits en route to a 7-0 loss to the Modesto Nuts. With the loss, the Ports now find themselves on a three-game losing skid and losers of seven of their last eight.

The Nuts plated their first two runs in the third. After a leadoff single from James Cesario and sac-bunt from Maikol Gonzalez, Thomas Field hit a deep fly ball to left that Ports outfielder Jeremy Barfield lost in the lights. The ball landed at the base of the wall and went for an RBI triple, putting the Nuts on top 1-0. Tim Wheeler followed with an RBI groundout that scored Field and made it 2-0 Modesto.

With two down in the fourth, Brian Rike stepped up for the Nuts and hit his third home run of the year-a solo blast to right that gave Modesto a 3-0 cushion.

Modesto would chase Ports starter Anivioris Ramirez (0-3) in the sixth. Ramirez surrendered three straight hits to start the inning, the third coming from Brian Paulsen and scoring Wheeler to make it 4-0. After Ramirez got Ryan Peisel to line out, Trey Barham came in with runners at the corners and one down. Barham faced Rike, who hit a roller past the round and into no-man's land for an infield RBI knock to make it 5-0.

Ramirez took his third loss in as many starts, going 5.1 innings and allowing five runs on seven hits while striking out one.

Meanwhile, Nuts starter Rob Scahill (1-1) was barely breaking a sweat. There was only one point where Scahill had to deal with a runner beyond first base, and it came in the first on a two-out double from Spina who was subsequently caught stealing to end the inning. Spina's double was the only hit recorded for Stockton by anyone other than Shane Keough who went 3-for-4.

Scahill earned his first win of the season, going six scoreless innings and allowing just three hits while striking out four.

The Nuts tacked on two late runs in the eighth inning on an RBI single from David Christiansen and a throwing error made by shortstop Grant Green. Both runs (one earned) came off Ports reliever Daniel Thomas.

Modesto's bullpen, a combination of Stephen Dodson, Rex Brothers and Michael Marbry, combined for three scoreless innings of relief to complete Modesto's first shutout of the season.

The Ports and Nuts will play the second game of their four-game set on Friday night at John Thurman Field. Right-hander Justin Murray (1-1, 2.70 ERA) will head to the bump for Stockton, opposed by southpaw Kenny Durst (1-0, 1.59 ERA) for Modesto. First pitch is set for 7:05 p.m. PDT.

Cougars' Rally Falls Short in Peoria

PEORIA, III. - The Kane County Cougars never enjoyed a lead Thursday night as their losing streak reached four games. They lost to the Peoria Chiefs, 6-4, at O'Brien Field and were swept in the three-game series. Starter Justin Marks suffered the defeat, as the Cougars rallied for three in the ninth before falling with the tying run at the plate.

Marks (0-2) had mixed results in the loss. He worked two perfect innings -- the first and third -- but also had two long innings. He gave up three runs in the second and faced six hitters and then yielded two runs in the fourth and saw seven hitters. A.J. Huttenlocker gave up one run in two innings, and Ryan Quigley tossed a pair of scoreless frames to complete the mound work.

The Cougars, who lead the Midwest League in runners left on base, stranded seven. Down, 6-0, after six innings, they managed an unearned run in the seventh. Then in the ninth they loaded the bases and got a groundout by Nino Leyja and a two-run single from Conner Crumbliss to cut it to 6-4. Peoria brought in James Leverton, who struck out Tyreace House to end it and record his second save. Su-Min Jung (3-0) pitched five shutout innings to earn the victory for the Chiefs (10-5).

The Cougars (6-9) continue their six-game road trip Friday night in Clinton, Iowa, with the opener of a three-game series against the LumberKings. Ian Krol (0-1, 6.52) will face Jimmy Gillheeney (1-1, 2.93). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and at www.kccougars.com, with pregame coverage starting at 6:15 p.m.