

Perez help Rangers sweep A's with 3-0 win

Written by Administrator
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OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — With the Texas rotation ravaged by injuries early in the season, Martin Perez has more than filled the void.

Perez pitched his second consecutive shutout to extend his scoreless innings streak to 26 and the Texas Rangers wrapped up a three-game sweep of the Oakland Athletics with a 3-0 victory Wednesday.

"He's been the glue," manager Ron Washington said. "He's held it together. He's the one guy in that rotation who's been in it from last year who hasn't had a blip yet."

The Rangers have been without Yu Darvish, Matt Harrison and Colby Lewis already at times this season but still find themselves in first place thanks to some strong play from fill-ins and major improvement from Perez.

Perez (4-0) outpitched Sonny Gray (3-1) in a heralded matchup of emerging stars, allowing just three hits and two walks in his first start since throwing a three-hitter against the White Sox for his first career shutout.

"I don't want to think too much about my ERA and the games that I've thrown before," Perez said. "I'm going to focus on my game today. We had a great game."

Perez, who also threw eight scoreless innings against Houston on April 13, is the first Rangers pitcher to have three straight scoreless starts since Kenny Rogers had four straight over 30 innings in 2005. Perez also joined Charlie Hough in 1983 as the only Texas pitchers to have three straight starts of at least eight scoreless innings.

"He knows how to pitch," Washington said. "He has weapons and he can throw them all for strikes and he has poise. He does a great job of staying with the game plan and that's something that he's learned from last year, how to study, how to go out there and just execute his pitches."

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Donnie Murphy homered and Michael Choice scored one run and drove in another for the Rangers, who moved a half-game ahead of Oakland in the AL West with their first sweep of the A's since August 2011.

The A's never even threatened Perez on their way to getting swept at home for the first time since September 2012 against the Angels, ending a streak of 32 straight home series with at least one win.

"You're going to have your little lumps in the road," A's third baseman Josh Donaldson said. "Everybody knows that here. We just have to come back."

Oakland got leadoff singles from Jed Lowrie in the fourth and Derek Norris in the fifth for its first two hits off Perez. But Perez followed each of those hits by getting the next batter to hit into a double play, giving him a major league-leading 11 groundball double plays.

Donaldson doubled with one out in the seventh, but was stranded there when Alberto Callaspo grounded out with runners on first and second to end the inning.

"He keeps the ball off the barrel of the bat," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "He's pitched really well this year. The reason he can get deep in games is he's not striking a lot of guys out, he's just keeping it off the barrel of the bat."

Gray allowed three runs and five hits in seven innings to end a six-game winning streak in the regular season dating to last September.

He fell behind when Choice led the game off with a walk and scored on Alex Rios' triple. The Rangers were poised for a possible big inning when Rios was originally ruled safe at home on a grounder Lowrie at shortstop. But Melvin challenged the call and Rios was ruled out on instant replay.

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Choice, traded from Oakland to Texas in the offseason, added an RBI single in the fifth and Murphy hit his first homer of the season in the sixth to make it 3-0.

NOTES: Rangers 3B Kevin Kouzmanoff was held out with a sore back. ... Scott Kazmir (2-0) will take the mound against Brett Oberholtzer (0-3) on Thursday when Oakland opens a four-game series in Houston. ... Texas is off Thursday before beginning a three-game series in Seattle on Friday.