

Darvish pulled early, Rangers lose 4-0

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ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — When Yu Darvish walked Oakland's No. 9 hitter for the second time, Texas Rangers manager Ron Washington went to the mound to get his ace.

Darvish was done after 3 1-3 innings, his shortest outing in the major leagues coming Monday night in a 4-0 loss to Oakland while A's starter Sonny Gray threw a three-hitter.

"You call that a short hook?" Washington responded when asked about pulling Darvish that early. "He had (83) pitches in four innings. I don't call that short. It wasn't going to get any better. We could save those bullets. That's all it was."

Darvish (1-1) allowed four runs and six hits. The right-hander is winless in his last nine home starts, and is 1-7 in nine career game against the A's.

"Obviously I was disappointed to throw only three-plus innings," Darvish said through his translator. "But this is something that happens to any pitchers. I just don't want to dwell on it and do much better on the next outing."

Darvish made his 66th start for Texas since signing from Japan before the 2012 season. His shortest previous MLB outing had been four innings at Seattle his rookie season, though he went only 1 1-3 innings in a start in Japan in 2006.

Darvish struck out four, but three of those came in the first five batters of the game.

While Darvish was gone early, Gray (4-1) came off the mound and into the A's dugout after the eighth inning purposely trying to avoid contact with manager Bob Melvin.

"I normally talk to him, share a laugh, make something up," Gray said. "I put my head down and he goes, 'How are you feeling?' I just yelled 'Great!' and kept walking. ... Yeah, I wanted to go

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back out there."

The 24-year-old right-hander got to wrap up his first complete game. He allowed only three singles while striking out six, throwing 73 of 108 pitches for strikes in his 16th career start.

Texas got only one runner to third base, when Gray threw two wild pitches in the sixth after Robinson Chirinos singled.

Josh Donaldson had a two-run single in the third, and the A's made it 4-0 an inning later when Josh Reddick had an RBI triple and came home on Daric Barton's sacrifice fly.

"My only guess is we're that one team (Darvish) struggles against. Everybody in this league has one person or team they struggle against and we just seem to be that team that is lucky with him," Reddick said. "Because you watch around the rest of the league and nobody can hit him, he's striking out 12 to 15 players."

Oakland and Texas entered tied for the AL West lead and the league's best record at 15-10. The Rangers, shut out for the first time this season, had swept a three-game series in Oakland last week.

Gray walked leadoff hitter Michael Choice, but got out of the first with a fielder's choice grounder and a 4-5-3 double play with three Oakland infielders shifted to the right side against Prince Fielder.

"The first couple of hitters it looked like what he usually does in the first where from time to time," Melvin said. "After that it was as well of a pitched game as I've seen in a while."

Choice grounded into an inning-ending double play in the third after the bottom two batters reached base.

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There were three replays, one when Brandon Moss was out on an overturned call after retreating to first on a pitch that got away from catcher Chirinos. Washington challenged and replay showed that when he slid back in, his foot was against first baseman Fielder's foot — and not the base — while being tagged.

Washington lost a challenge in the eighth when he thought Reddick was out on a pickoff attempt diving back to first with Barton batting. Replay confirmed a safe call before Barton hit a deep flyball.

Center fielder Leonys Martin made a leaping catch on the warning back and threw to first base. Reddick was initially called safe by crew chief Jeff Nelson, who then initiated a replay and changed his call for an inning-ending double play.

"That's a first, two replays with the same guy sliding into the same base," Melvin said. "That's part of the game now."

NOTES: Rangers OF Shin-Soo Choo was out of the starting lineup for the sixth consecutive game because of a left ankle sprain, but flied out as a pinch-hitter in the ninth. Game 2 features a standout matchup of left-handers. Oakland's Scott Kazmir (3-0, 1.62 ERA) pitches against Martin Perez (4-0, 1.42), who has thrown 26 consecutive scoreless innings his last three starts. Perez has two consecutive three-hit shutouts, the last coming Wednesday in Oakland.