

Oakland A's MLN: Winter Leagues Begin

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It might be fall baseball in the United States, but the winter has begun in the Caribbean with the start of the winter league seasons in Venezuela and Mexico. We have an update on the Oakland A's farmhands participating in the winter leagues inside...

Venezuela

Gregorio Petit: Petit has been an important part of the Leones del Caracas over the past few winters and he has been right in the middle of things for the Leones thus far this season. In three games, the shortstop has four hits in 11 at-bats. He has driven-in three, walked three times and scored twice. Petit hit .244 in 98 games for Triple-A Sacramento and .226 in 11 games for the A's in 2009. The Leones are being managed this season by former A's hitting coach Dave Hudgens.

Raul Padron: Fresh off of his championship-clinching homerun for the Double-A Midland Rockhounds, Padron is working as one of the Leones' primary catchers this winter. He has appeared in all three games for Caracas thus far and is two-for-seven with a double.

Leonardo Gil: Gil has yet to have a plate appearance for Caracas, but he did appear as a defensive replacement on Sunday. The infielder batted .261 with 23 RBIs in 62 games for short-season Vancouver and Low-A Kane County this season.

Chris Denorfia: Despite batting .271 with nine homers and 15 stolen bases in 107 games for Sacramento this year, Denorfia failed to capture the attention of the A's front office, as he appeared in only four games at the big league level. He is playing for the Aguilas del Zulia this winter in hopes of attracting some notice from major league front offices. The veteran has appeared in three games with the Aguilas, collecting three hits in 10 at-bats. Two of those hits have been doubles and the other was a homerun. He has also walked twice.

Scott Patterson: Patterson came over to the A's in a late-season trade with the San Diego Padres. The 6'7" right-hander appeared in seven regular season games for the Sacramento River Cats after the trade, allowing two runs in 8.2 innings. Overall, he had a 3.96 ERA in 63.2 innings for Sacramento and Triple-A Portland. Patterson is pitching for the Cardenales de Lara this winter. He has appeared in one game, pitching a perfect inning on Saturday with one strike-out.

Kyle Middleton: Middleton was one of the heroes of the Midland championship team. A late season pick-up, Middleton went 5-2 with a 2.69 ERA in nine starts and pitched well in the post-season. He is pitching for the Tigres de Aragua this winter as a starter. His first outing wasn't a good one, as he allowed four runs on six hits (including two homeruns) in three innings.

Mexico

Chris Carter: Carter appeared in 138 regular season games and seven post-season games this season, but he will have to wait for a few more months to get some rest. The first-baseman is appearing for the Algodoneros de Guasave this winter. He has appeared in two games thus far, and it has been all or nothing for the right-hander. In nine at-bats, he has struck-out seven times, but has homered and doubled in the other two at-bats. Carter hit .329 with 43 doubles, 28 homers and 133 strike-outs during the regular season in 2009. He is in Mexico to work on pitch recognition, specifically on picking up breaking balls, a pitch that is a specialty of Mexican League pitchers.

Arnold Leon: As he has done for the past few winters, Leon is pitching in his native Mexico this winter for the Tomateros de Culiacan. Leon, who went 2-3 with a 3.51 ERA and 63 strike-outs in 74.1 innings for Midland this season, has appeared in one game thus far for the Tomateros, allowing a run on two hits in 1.1 innings. He is expected to act as a reliever for Culiacan after splitting his time between starting and relieving for Midland this year.

Corey Wimberly: Wimberly appeared in only 74 games this season thanks to a fractured hand he sustained early in the season with Midland. To make-up for those missed at-bats, Wimberly is playing for Yaquis de Obregon this winter. He has appeared in two games thus far, collecting three hits in nine at-bats with four runs scored and a stolen base. Wimberly hit .296 with 21 stolen bases in 70 games for the Rockhounds this season. He is a candidate to be added to the A's 40-man roster this winter.

Other Winter League Notes

* A's outfielder Matt Carson is scheduled to play for the Aguilas de Cibaenas of the Dominican Winter League this off-season. Carson had a successful stint in the Dominican Winter League last winter. In his first season in the A's organization, Carson batted .264 with 25 homers and 15 stolen bases in 118 games for Sacramento. He also made his big league debut with Oakland in September, appearing in 10 games. In 21 at-bats, he had six hits, including a homer, and five RBIs.

* A's reliever Henry Rodriguez is expected to join his Venezuelan club, Zulia, later this winter. The hard-throwing Rodriguez has pitched for Zulia for the past several years, but his winter league season was cut short last year when he suffered a sports hernia. That injury kept him out the first few weeks of the 2009 regular season, but he still managed to appear in 43 games out of the bullpen. In 40 minor league games, he had a 5.77 ERA with 71 strike-outs in 43.2 innings, mostly for Sacramento. He also made his big league debut with the A's in September, allowing one earned run in four innings over three appearances. He struck-out four and walked two.

* Reliever Steve Sharpe, who had a 12-1 record and a 3.93 ERA in 71 innings for Stockton, Midland and Sacramento this season, will be pitching for the Caribes de Anzoategui this winter. He was scheduled to join the team on Sunday. Sharpe missed all of the 2008 and part of the 2007 seasons after undergoing Tommy John surgery. A's reliever John Meloan, who tossed 8.1 scoreless innings for the A's in a September call-up after being claimed off of waivers by Oakland earlier in the month, is scheduled to pitch for the Caribes later this winter.

* The Phoenix Desert Dogs will look to extend their run as Arizona Fall League champions starting with the AFL's Opening Day on Tuesday. The A's always contribute their AFL contingent to the Phoenix roster, as the Desert Dogs play their home games at the A's Phoenix Municipal Stadium. The Desert Dogs have won the last five AFL titles. Pitchers James Simmons, Mickey Storey, Sam Demel and Justin Friend and position players Jemile Weeks, Grant Desme and Corey Brown are scheduled to compete from the A's organization. Sacramento hitting coach Brian McArn is serving in that capacity for Phoenix this fall.