

A's News Clips, Thursday, October 29, 2009

Desme strikes again, homers twice

Oakland outfielder has 10 long balls in last 10 games

By Danny Wild / MLB.com

Temperatures in Phoenix may not be quite as hot as usual, but Grant Desme is certainly heating things up.

Desme went yard for the 10th time in 10 games to lead the Phoenix Desert Dogs past the Peoria Javelinas, 11-6, on Wednesday afternoon.

The A's outfield prospect, batting .469 in the Arizona Fall League, is now four homers shy of tying the league's single-season record for home runs set by the Angels' Brandon Wood in 2005. Desme, who claims he had never been this hot at the plate, maintains it is too early to discuss the record.

"I made a little bit of an adjustment with my stride and stuff, other than that it's been feeling good [and being] able to find the barrel pretty good," Desme said. "I just try to keep the same approach every at-bat, that's what's been working."

The 6-foot-2 outfielder **homered in his fifth straight** game Oct. 26 after going deep in consecutive games from Oct. 15-16. The San Luis Obispo, Calif. native hit a pair Oct. 23 and has gone deep in eight of his last 10 games.

Desme's power isn't completely shocking -- he ranked fifth in the Minor Leagues with 31 home runs in 2009. Still, he has 22 RBIs in his last 10 games, and much of those came off some of baseball's top Minor League arms.

"Yeah, it's been pretty surprising, especially since I only played in A ball this year," Desme said. "This is the best competition I've played against."

The 25-year-old hit a one-out, three-run shot in the first inning off a high-inside first-pitch fastball from Josh Butler (Brewers) to give the Desert Dogs a three-run cushion. He capped the day with a solo drive in the eighth off Omar Aguilar (Brewers) on an 0-1 slider.

The second-round pick in 2007 out of Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo has 22 hits and 18 runs scored over his 10-game power surge.

Desme has easily surpassed the hot streaks he amassed earlier this year when he homered in three straight games May 31-June 3 with Class A Kane County and hit five long balls in a seven-game stretch from July 7-13 for Class A Advanced Stockton.

Fellow Oakland prospects Corey Brown and Jemile Weeks also contributed to the victory. Brown drove in three runs and Weeks went 3-for-3 with two RBIs. Orioles third baseman Brandon Waring finished 3-for-5 with a triple and an RBI.

Rays right-hander Mitch Talbot picked up his second win of the fall, despite allowing five runs on six hits over four innings for Phoenix (10-4).

Tigers outfielder Casper Wells hit a three-run shot of Talbot in the third, his third homer of the fall season for Peoria (8-6).

Butler (Brewers) suffered his first loss after surrendering six runs on eight hits and a pair of walks over three innings.

Ascending A's: 'Jaw-dropping' Desme

Outfield prospect putting on a clinic at Arizona Fall League

By Mychael Urban / MLB.com

This is the debut of "Ascending A's," a regular offseason feature in which Oakland director of player development Keith Lieppman and director of player personnel Billy Owens will provide analysis on various top prospects in the organization. Today, Lieppman offers insight on outfielder Grant Desme, who on Monday was named one of the Arizona Fall League's players of the week.

OAKLAND -- A second-round selection in the 2007 First-Year Player Draft out of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Desme missed all but 14 games in his first two years as a professional as the result of what Lieppman calls "a crazy bunch of injuries" that included hamstring, wrist and non-throwing (left) shoulder issues.

Named the Big West Conference Player of the Year in 2007 after winning the conference's Triple Crown with a .405 batting average, 15 home runs and 53 RBIs, Desme was limited by the hamstring to 12 games at short-season Class A Vancouver in 2007.

Sent to play in the instructional league that fall, he suffered the shoulder injury early. He aggravated it and also hurt his wrist at Spring Training 2008, limiting him to two games all year, with Oakland's Rookie League entry in Arizona.

"We never really saw him until this year," Lieppman told MLB.com on Tuesday. "He's not a fragile guy; it was kind of like [A's infielder] Bobby Crosby, where he just got hurt playing the game, and the injuries kind of piled up in a hurry. It was frustrating for both sides, him and all of us in the organization, and this year was the first time we really got a look at him."

What the A's saw in 2009, which Desme started at Class A Kane County and finished at Class A Stockton, was the organization's only player to hit 30-plus home runs and steal 40 bases.

Desme, 23, batted .304 with 20 homers, 51 RBIs, a .398 on-base percentage, a 1.054 OPS and 16 stolen bases in 21 attempts over 62 games with Stockton after batting .275 with 11 homers, 38 RBIs and an .825 OPS while going 24-for-24 on stolen base attempts over 69 games at Kane County.

"We didn't know he could run like that," admitted Lieppman. "And even though he was on the older side [among players] when he was at Kane County, it's difficult to hit in [the Midwest League] because there aren't what you'd call hitters' parks, and it's very cold early in the season. That's where he really started to show things, and we got to see the combination of skills that our scouts had talked about before we drafted him.

"We moved him to the Stockton [of the California League] right after the first half, and that's when he *really* took off. That's a hitters' league; the parks are friendly and the conditions are good."

His regular-season performance earned Desme, a Bakersfield, Calif., native listed at 6-foot-2 and 205 pounds, a spot on the Phoenix Desert Dogs in the prestigious AFL.

A right-handed hitter who plays center and right field, he's has been even more impressive while competing against some of the top prospects in the game.

Through Tuesday, Desme was batting .444 -- second in the league -- and leading the league in home runs (eight), RBIs (18), hits (20), slugging (1.044), OPS (1.564), total bases (47) and runs scored (15) in 11 games.

"It's hard to believe," marveled Lieppman. "Those are, like, jaw-dropping numbers. ... For a guy in his first full year of playing pro ball, with no experience really at all, it's pretty amazing what he's done.

"Unbelievable, actually."

Desme has impressed on defense, too. He has an above-average arm, and his speed -- Lieppman said he's the third-fastest player in the organization, timed at 6.62 seconds in the 60-yard dash -- allows him to get to balls many other outfielders can only watch fall into gaps.

The only weakness in Desme's game at this point is his high strikeouts total. He struck out 81 times in 259 at-bats at Kane County, 67 times in 227 at-bats at Stockton, and his 13 strikeouts in 45 AFL at-bats were the second-most in the league through Tuesday's games.

"I don't know if that's quite Jack Cust-like," Lieppman said with a chuckle, "but he does have some swing-and-miss to him."

Asked if the organization is worried about Desme's propensity for punching out, Lieppman hedged.

"With power is going to come a few strikeouts," he said. "At this point, you just let it go where it goes. You don't want him to adjust when he's hitting the way he's hitting right now, and it's really not a worry at this stage."

The next stage for Desme is the jump to Double-A Midland of the Texas League, which is where Lieppman said the development of top prospect Chris Carter took off.

Carter, the organization's player of the year in 2008, batted .337 with 24 homers, 41 doubles, 101 RBIs, a .435 OBP and a 1.011 OPS to win the TL's Player of the Year award and finished the year with a strong playoff performance at Triple-A Sacramento.

"That jump to Double-A is a big one," Lieppman said. "The Texas League only has eight teams in it, and it's fairly sophisticated in terms of advance scouting. You see every team quite a bit, and if you have a weakness they'll absolutely pound you on it. I think Carter really benefited from it, because you're forced to constantly adjust or they'll eat you up."

Lieppman said it's too early to say whether Desme will get his first invitation to big league Spring Training come February.

"If he keeps putting up these kinds of numbers, it'd be hard not to bring him in," Lieppman conceded. "There's a lot of good things happening with him right now. At this stage, he looks like the complete package."

Wednesday's AFL roundup

Royals' Crow up and down in pro debut for Rafters

By MLB.com

Rafters 9, Saguaros 0

Aaron Crow, the 12th overall pick in this year's Draft by Kansas City, allowed two runs on three hits and struck out two over four innings for the loss as Surprise was blanked by Peoria. Crow walked the first batter he faced, Lance Zawadzki, before settling in to retire eight straight. Zawadzki ended the streak with a solo homer. Steve Garrison (Padres) limited the Rafters to just three singles in three innings for his first win. Craig Kimbrel (Braves) allowed one hit and struck out two in a scoreless ninth. He has not allowed a run in his five AFL appearances.

Desert Dogs 11, Javelinas 6

Grant Desme went yard for the 10th time in 10 games to lead Phoenix past Peoria. Desme is now four homers shy of tying the league's single-season record for home runs set by the Angels' Brandon Wood in 2005. Fellow Oakland prospects Corey Brown and Jemile Weeks also contributed. Brown drove in three runs and Weeks went 3-for-3 with two RBIs. Rays right-hander Mitch Talbot picked up his second win of the fall, despite allowing five runs on six hits over four innings for Phoenix (10-4).

Solar Sox 12, Scorpions 5

In his fourth AFL game, Boston prized pitching/infield prospect Casey Kelly smacked a triple, a double, plated four runs and scored another in Mesa's win over Scottsdale. Bryan Petersen (Marlins), who is hitting at a .409 clip with Mesa, collected two hits (including a solo homer), two RBIs and two runs. All eight position players drove in at least a run for the Solar Sox. Steve Susdorf (Phillies) lofted a two-run homer and Brandon Crawford (Giants) added a solo shot for Scottsdale (6-8).

Tuesday's Arizona Fall League roundup

Javelinas survive six-RBI night by Scorpions' Tabata

By MLB.com

Javelinas 10, Scorpions 9

Jose Tabata homered, doubled and drove in six runs, but Peoria held on to beat Scottsdale. But the first-place Javelinas (7-5) used a four-run eighth inning and a solid effort from Cale Iorg (Tigers), who homered and scored three times on a

three-hit night, to pick up the victory. Top Tigers prospect Andrew Oliver, the club's second-round pick in this year's Draft, pitched two scoreless innings with four strikeouts to pick up his unofficial first professional victory.

Saguaros 6, Solar Sox 5

Matt McBride and Freddie Freeman went deep before Cedric Hunter hit a walk-off sacrifice fly to lead Peoria past Mesa. Reds right-hander Logan Ondrusek struck out one in the ninth to earn the win for Peoria. Parker (1-1) was charged with one run on a hit and two walks to suffer the loss for Mesa.

Desert Dogs 7, Rafters 6

In his best of three professional starts, Stephen Strasburg held Surprise to one hit for 4 1/3 innings -- a leadoff double in the fifth by Mike Moustakas -- to pick up his second win in Phoenix's victory over Surprise. A two-run homer by Corey Brown opened up a four-run lead for Strasburg.

Oakland A's MLN: Instructs Awards

Melissa Lockard
OaklandClubhouse.com

Oct 27, 2009

The Oakland A's Instructional League season concluded earlier this month. Before the end of camp, the A's handed out awards for the top participating players and some of the youngest players took home the awards. We have those details, plus information on why Chris Carter has been missing from Mexican League boxscores, an AFL update and more inside...

Instructs Awards

Some of the youngest players at the Oakland A's Instructional League camp took home the end-of-camp hardware. The A's handed out six awards at the conclusion of Instructs.

Nineteen-year-old Rashun Dixon brought home the award for the top position player in camp. Dixon, who was the A's 10th round pick in 2008, showed significant improvement during Instructs over his time with the Low-A Vancouver Canadians during the regular season. Dixon hit only .214 with a .581 OPS in 57 games for Vancouver, but A's Director of Player Development Keith Lieppman said that Dixon was consistently the best hitter in camp during Instructs.

Veteran right-hander Justin Souza was named the top pitcher at Instructs. Souza was acquired during the season by the A's from the Seattle Mariners for Jack Hannahan. The Stockton native struggled in five starts with Midland after the trade, posting a 10.35 ERA in 20 innings. However, he showed a good fastball (91-95 MPH), a hard slider (82-83 MPH) and an improved curveball during Instructs, according to A's Minor League Pitching Coordinator Gil Patterson.

The camp's Rookie of the Year awards went to two players fresh out of high school: catcher Max Stassi and left-handed pitcher Ian Krol. Both Stassi and Krol were high round picks for Oakland this season (fourth and seventh rounds, respectively) and the A's went over-slot to sign both players on the eve of the draft signing deadline. Because both signed late in the season, they only got into a handful of regular season games. Krol allowed three runs in 4.1 innings in four appearances for the A's two short-season squads, while Stassi batted .280 in 50 at-bats for Rookie League Arizona and Vancouver. Both players are only 18.

Another 18-year-old 2009 high school draft pick, Royce Consigli, was named the camp's most improved player. The outfielder and native of Canada hit .202 with a .586 OPS in 94 at-bats for the A's Rookie League team during the regular season.

The final award went to Conner Crumbliss, who earned the "Grinder Award," which is given to the player who best "exemplifies what it takes to play everyday and who displays the attitude of a winner." Crumbliss, a 28th round pick this season, is coming off of an outstanding first professional campaign. In 71 games for Vancouver and Low-A Kane County, Crumbliss hit .290 with 13 stolen bases and an .831 OPS while playing all over the field defensively.

Carter Sidelined

Opposing pitchers have not been able to slow down the bat of Chris Carter this season, but illness has shutdown the A's prospect, who was participating in winter ball in Mexico. Carter last appeared in a game for the Algodoneros de Guasave on October 17th and he went 3-5 with two homeruns and three RBIs in that game.

He hasn't been able to play since thanks to an illness. Carter has returned to the US for precautionary reasons to ensure that the illness isn't anything serious. It is up in the air as to whether or not he will return to Mexico this winter. Carter was replaced on the Guasave roster by former A's farmhand Marshall McDougal. Carter was leading the Mexican Winter

League in homeruns (4) and strike-outs (14) at the time he was sidelined.

Desme Dominating In The Desert

A's outfield prospect Grant Desme has continued to put on a power display for the Phoenix Desert Dogs at the Arizona Fall League. Through 10 games, Desme has hit an incredible eight homeruns and has driven-in 16 runs. The AFL homerun record is 14. Desme has collected at least one hit in every games except his first one and he has homered in each of the last five games. He is batting .442 with a 1547 OPS in 43 at-bats.

On Monday, Desme was named the AFL's Player of the Week for week two, and he celebrated that honor by homering in his first at-bat of week three.

Fellow A's prospect Corey Brown is also off to a fast start at the AFL. In 10 games, he is batting .333 with three homers and eight RBIs. A's 2008 top pick Jemile Weeks has struggled out of the gate. In eight games, he is batting only .194 with a 636 OPS, although he has hit safely in four straight games and has scored seven runs in eight games.

A's 2007 top pick James Simmons has allowed three runs in his first 7.2 innings of work, spread over two starts. He has struck-out three and walked two.

A's relief prospects Mickey Storey, Justin Friend and Sam Demel all had rough outings in Phoenix's Friday loss to Surprise. Storey allowed four runs in two-thirds of an inning. Those were the first runs he had allowed after tossing four scoreless frames to start the AFL season. Friend was charged with the loss on Friday when he allowed three runs in two-thirds of an inning. He has given up four earned runs in four innings. Demel also struggled in the loss, allowing three runs in an inning of work. He has allowed a run in each of his last three outings.

The Desert Dogs are in a familiar place in the standings - first - as they have a two game lead over Scottsdale and an 8-4 record heading into Tuesday's action.

Winter League Round-Up

Mexico

Right-hander Arnold Leon is struggling for Culiacan. He has allowed a run in all but one of his seven outings and his ERA is at 9.39 for the year. In 7.2 innings, he has allowed 12 runs (eight earned) on 15 hits and two walks. He has struck-out seven.

Utilityman Corey Wimberly has been sidelined since October 17th with an injury, although he is expected to return from the DL soon.

Venezuela

Catcher Raul Padron is continuing his hot start to the Venezuelan Winter League season. The minor league free agent is batting .368 with four homers and nine RBIs through 12 games for Caracas. He leads the team in homers and is fourth in batting average.

Shortstop Gregorio Petit is batting .283 with a 725 OPS in 60 at-bats for Caracas. He has seven walks in 15 games and has stolen five bases.

Outfielder Chris Denorfia hasn't played since October 16th for Zula because of pain in his right elbow. Denorfia had Tommy John surgery on his right elbow in 2007. He has been replaced on the Zula roster by Andrew Locke.

Right-hander Steve Sharpe is pitching well for the Caribes. In two starts, he has a 3.12 ERA over 8.2 innings. He has allowed only six hits and one walk and he has struck-out nine.

Minor league free agents Scott Patterson and Kyle Middleton are having varying degrees of success. Patterson had a 1.80 ERA and two saves in two chances in five innings, while Middleton has a 5.29 ERA with 12 strike-outs in 17 innings spread over four starts.

Dominican Republic

A's outfielder Matt Carson is off to a slow start with Aguilas of the Dominican Winter League. Through eight games, he is batting .219 with a 546 OPS. He had a six-game hitting streak snapped on Sunday.

Infielder Alexander Valdez has appeared in only two games for Escogido thus far. He is one for eight with a walk.

Chad Reineke: An 'enjoyable' 2009 season

By LYNN GROLL, Crescent-News 10/27/09

Despite making just one start at the big league level, the 2009 season was the most enjoyable to date for Ayersville High School product Chad Reineke.

Reineke was a major piece on the winningest team in all of minor league baseball this past season with the Sacramento River Cats (Oakland Athletics' Triple A affiliate). He helped the River Cats to their eighth Pacific Coast League South Division title in the last eight years and a playoff berth.

"Overall, I thought it was a pretty good season," said Reineke. "It was probably the most enjoyable season I've had, I had a lot of fun and was on a really fun team, as far as the guys in the clubhouse. We all got along real well and we were winning a lot of games. As far as just playing ball, it was the funnest time I've had.

"Personally, I felt like it could've been a little better," added Reineke. "But overall, I'm happy with the way things went. I got to make one start with the A's. I thought I threw the ball pretty well, it's just one of those things where I have to work my way into somebody's team and try to stay up there."

Sacramento swept Tacoma in the opening round of the PCL playoffs before Memphis denied the River Cats their third straight PCL crown in the league championship series.

"It was fun, it really was," explained Reineke. "Once we clinched, we clinched really early, so the last two weeks of the season we kind of sputtered a little bit and guys kind of lost that edge a little bit. We swept the first round of the playoffs and it was just fun to play games that mattered for something. It doesn't matter if it's the big leagues or Triple A or whatever level, if you're going to be there, you want to try and win the championship.

"The second round, the first few games could've went either way and they happened to go Memphis' way," added Reineke. "It's tough to go down in the first two games of a five-game series. I felt like it could've been us up 2-0 going back to Sacramento, but it wasn't that way."

Reineke went 9-4 with Sacramento in 22 starts and 30 appearances overall. He allowed 134 hits in 125 innings to go along with 91 strikeouts and a 4.75 ERA. He also saved two games for the River Cats.

The 13th-round pick of the Houston Astros in 2004 also made one emergency start with the Athletics on Aug. 5. He picked up the victory against the Texas Rangers before being sent back down. Reineke went 2-1 with the San Diego Padres in 2008 and then was traded to the Athletics in April.

"As far as my stats, I think my stats could've been a little bit better," said Reineke. "The one thing I was really happy with was I stayed strong the whole season. I just felt good throwing the ball again this year. I'll get my rest this offseason and then I feel like next year's going to have to be a big year for me. I'm hoping that my shoulders back to being where it was a couple years ago. I look forward to next year and try to make something happen."

Going into the offseason healthy is a major plus according to Reineke after he spent last offseason rehabbing a shoulder injury.

"Instead of worrying about getting healthy and resting, right now I'm just worried about resting my shoulder," said Reineke. "Hopefully I go into spring training healthy and stay healthy all of next year. It's a big difference going out and pitching and the last thing on your mind is pain or anything. It's just a huge difference."

Off the diamond, Reineke is taking another step in his life a week from Saturday when he marries Hicksville native Kelli Battershell.

"I think the best thing is, for the first time since Kelli and I have been together and since I've been playing pro ball, she's going to be with me next year wherever I go," said Reineke. "I just feel like that's going to have a big impact on how my season goes next year. It's tough being half-a-country apart from your fiancé or wife.

"After a bad game, you're off by yourself instead of having someone there to talk to you and help you step away from the game a little bit. I'm really excited about having Kelli with me next year. It's just another big step in my life. It's been

a long time coming, we've been together over six years. I'm excited to share everything with her next season, the ups and down of the season instead of being by myself and not having to talk to her over the phone."