

## **A's News Clips, Thursday, December 31, 2009**

### **Duchscherer relieved to be back with A's**

By Joe Stiglich, Bay Area News Group, 12/31/09

Justin Duchscherer's battle with clinical depression took him far away from the baseball diamond. But there was no doubt which team the right-hander wanted to be with upon his return.

Duchscherer officially re-signed with the A's on Wednesday, a one-year deal worth \$1.75 million that could increase to about \$5.5 million if he hits all of his incentives.

Despite missing the entire 2009 season — he had elbow surgery during spring training, then sought treatment for depression in August — Duchscherer received considerable interest on the free-agent market, agent Damon Lapa said.

But Duchscherer, 32, liked the familiarity of the A's organization. The fact that the team gave him space while he worked through his off-field issues also struck a chord.

His return gives the A's a two-time All-Star to help anchor their young starting rotation.

"I really appreciate the way they handled things with me," Duchscherer said. "I was just overwhelmed with things in my personal life. They never pressured me to go out and pitch. Where I'm at now and where I was six months ago is a lot different."

Duchscherer said his elbow is 100 percent. He explored opportunities with East Coast teams so he could be closer to Evan, 6, who lives near Philadelphia.

Lapa wouldn't confirm which teams besides Oakland made offers. But Duchscherer relished the chance to continue working with A's catcher Kurt Suzuki, as well as a coaching staff he's bonded with.

Duchscherer's incentives are tied to games started, innings pitched and days spent on the active roster.

The A's designated reliever Jay Marshall for assignment to make room for Duchscherer on the 40-man roster.

Oakland has been linked to free-agent third baseman Adrian Beltre, though he likely would have to lower his reported asking price (\$10 million or more per season) before he's an option.

The A's also are one of several teams interested in Cuban left-hander Aroldis Chapman. Team co-owner Lew Wolff told Bay Area News Group in November that signing top international talent remains a priority.

### **Duchscherer returns to A's 'a better person'**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer 12/31/09

When A's pitcher Justin Duchscherer found himself unable to get on a flight from Phoenix to Sacramento for a rehab start last July - "I was paralyzed," he said - the two-time All-Star knew he needed some help.

After treatment for clinical depression, Duchscherer said he has more perspective on baseball and on his life, and Wednesday, he officially agreed to return to his longtime team. The A's will pay Duchscherer a base salary of \$1.75 million, but there are incentives that could bring the total to more than \$5.5 million.

For Duchscherer and the A's, the main thing is that the 32-year-old has worked through his issues with the help of Dr. Ray Karesky, who runs the A's employee assistance program.

Duchscherer's initial concern was that the pressures of baseball were getting to him, but he said that while working with Karesky, he realized that it was his personal relationships that were at the root of his depression. The major factors were his own divorce two years ago; being away from his son, Evan; and his parents' divorce when he was a child.

"I tried to avoid it, and baseball was a good way to do that," Duchscherer said.

While recovering from early season elbow surgery, Duchscherer said he had too much time to think, and he didn't have the proper coping skills to deal with what he described as "overwhelming emotions."

But asking for help isn't the easiest thing in pro sports, where, as Duchscherer said, "There's always a stigma - you're supposed to be tough. ... There are always people who are going to be negative, but I'm happy I went through it. I'm a better person. I feel I'll be a better father, a better future husband, not just a better baseball player. I'm more than just a baseball player."

Before, he tended to dwell on the negative even after his best performances.

"One of the biggest things I've learned is to accept the effort level," he said. "I put too much pressure on myself, expecting to be perfect, instead of appreciating what I did."

Duchscherer did not take antidepressants, because he felt they weren't right for him.

The A's were supportive throughout, and Duchscherer is grateful for their sensitivity. He considered going to another team, largely so he could be closer to his son, who lives near Philadelphia. But Duchscherer felt comfortable in Oakland, and he likes the idea of helping Oakland's young rotation. He said self-deprecatingly that he can show them how to get hitters out with "subpar stuff," and he also can be an off-the-field mentor.

Among other incentives, Duchscherer can receive \$750,000 in roster bonuses for being active for 60, 90 and 120 days; he can earn \$1.95 million for games started, beginning at the 10-start mark; and \$1.125 million for innings totals, starting at 150 innings.

In order to make room for Duchscherer on the roster, the A's designated left-handed reliever Jay Marshall for assignment.

## **Healthy Duchscherer back with A's**

ASSOCIATED PRESS 12/31/09

OAKLAND — Late last summer, pitcher Justin Duchscherer couldn't get himself on the plane to head off for another rehab outing.

His recent divorce ate away at him. He thought he had become just like his own parents, who split up when he was a boy. He dearly missed his young son, Evan, who was across the country on the East Coast, and Duchscherer felt like he'd failed him. He experienced an overwhelming sense of guilt.

"I got paralyzed and didn't know what was going on," he said of trying to get on the plane. "There was a time I felt baseball was the problem."

He asked for help and feels no shame in having done so. Now the two-time All-Star is healthy in body and mind and ready to return to the mound with the team that has supported him through all the ups and downs. He's ready to get back to the top form he exhibited in 2008.

The right-hander agreed to terms on an incentive-laden one-year contract Wednesday to rejoin the Oakland Athletics after he missed all the 2009 season. Duchscherer underwent arthroscopic right elbow surgery on March 31 and later was treated for clinical depression.

"Where I am today and where I was six months ago is a lot different," Duchscherer said on a conference call. "I learned how to change my attitude and perspective on life and things and not be so hard on myself. We're human and make mistakes. I'm not a robot."

The A's are thrilled to have found a familiar face to be one of their front-line starters next season. Duchscherer, 32, credits the club for sticking with him and giving him his space to get through the personal matters.

Duchscherer will receive a base salary of \$1.75 million and he can earn up to \$5.575 million if he reaches all his incentives and performance bonuses. The sides reached a preliminary agreement last week that was pending a physical to be finalized.

Duchscherer's agent, Damon Lapa, said the A's also were patient in allowing Duchscherer to "explore his options" with teams elsewhere, including closer to his son.

Ultimately, "familiarity and comfort was considered," Lapa said.

Duchscherer has spent the last six of his seven major league seasons with Oakland, becoming a full-time starter for the first time in his career during 2008. Duchscherer earned his second All-Star nod that season, going 10-8 with a 2.54 ERA while pitching a career-high 141 2-3 innings.

He will certainly be looking to return to that top form during the 2010 season. He has said he considered quitting baseball for good during his personal struggles this year.

A's manager Bob Geren was eager to welcome Duchscherer back into the rotation late in the season, but that all changed upon the announcement Aug. 21 that he had been diagnosed with clinical depression and was seeking treatment for the condition. Duchscherer began a rehab assignment July 26 and didn't allow a run in 11 innings over three starts before ending his comeback.

"I'm real happy that he decided to come back with us," Geren said in a phone interview. "All winter I was hoping that he would remain an Athletic. It's a perfect place for him to pitch. He's very familiar with his teammates, the town and the fans. It's really big for us to have him back and he's going to have a heck of a year. Hopefully he'll have a comeback player of the year type season."

Geren, the pitcher's first manager in the minor leagues years ago, said they have texted back and forth.

"He's pretty happy, as we all are," Geren said. "He sounds great. I think he's anxious to get started."

He can earn up to \$750,000 for days on the active roster — \$250,000 each for 60, 90 and 120 days of active service.

Duchscherer also can make up to \$1.95 million for games started: \$150,000 when he reaches 10 games started, \$200,000 at 15, \$250,000 at 17, \$300,000 at 20, \$450,000 at 25 and \$150,000 each for every start from 27 to 30.

There's an additional \$1.125 million to be had for innings pitched. He can earn \$175,000 once at 150 innings, another \$175,000 at 160, \$175,000 at 170, \$200,000 at 180, \$200,000 at 190 and \$200,000 at 200 innings pitched.

He also can earn a bonus of \$100,000 if chosen comeback player of the year.

Having Duchscherer back will add a key veteran presence to a young rotation that featured mostly rookies in 2009, including highly touted Brett Anderson and Trevor Cahill.

"I look forward to being a little bit of a mentor in life circumstances, too. I never had anybody to look up to or lean on," said Duchscherer, who acknowledges he never needed medication for his depression. "I learned I am who I am and sometimes we all need help with that. I surrendered to that and feel better having gone through that."

The A's finished with 75 wins for the second straight season and in last place in the AL West, losing their final seven games.

General manager Billy Beane has been busy this winter. The A's signed outfielder Coco Crisp last week and Beane acquired third baseman Jake Fox, second baseman Aaron Miles and cash considerations from the Chicago Cubs for three players.

Oakland also was included in the big four-team, nine-player swap featuring Cliff Lee and Roy Halladay that brought outfielder Michael Taylor to the A's. Oakland sent third baseman Brett Wallace to Toronto.

Also Wednesday, Oakland designated left-hander Jay Marshall for assignment to clear room on the 40-man roster for Duchscherer.

## **A's, Duchscherer agree on one-year deal**

### **Right-hander missed past season after elbow surgery**

By Bill Ladson and Scott Merkin / MLB.com

Free agent Justin Duchscherer will be returning for a seventh season with the Athletics, officially agreeing on a one-year deal.

No details of the contract were released, but it was reported last week that it is worth \$5.5 million if he reaches his incentives.

"I know the people, the coaching staff and the organization well. It creates a comfortable environment for me to come back to," said Duchscherer on why he returned to the Athletics. "All in all, I like playing in Oakland. I like the ballpark, I like the team, I like the people who work there. I'm just excited to get back out there."

Duchscherer, 32, missed the entire 2009 season after undergoing elbow surgery and treatment for clinical depression. He arrived at Spring Training recovering from 2008 hip surgery, but did not pitch in a Major League spring game before having arthroscopic surgery on his right elbow March 31.

During the offseason, the Athletics offered Duchscherer arbitration, but he didn't accept the offer because he hoped to move closer to his son, who lives in Philadelphia. Duchscherer went through a divorce and acknowledged he needed to take care of business off the field.

Duchscherer also credited the A's for not putting any pressure on him to go back on the field this past season. They gave him the understanding that life outside of baseball is just as important as his life inside the game.

"I wanted to see my opportunity possibly over on the East Coast with some teams before I make a final decision," Duchscherer said. "I know some people were like, 'He didn't want to come back.' And when I signed back, I surprised some people. But I always wanted to stay with the A's. I enjoyed my career there. I look forward to next year coming back.

"As far as last season, I went through personal stuff with my divorce and being away from my son -- not really being able to handle all the stress and pressure at one time. I needed some help. I spoke to the A's sports psychologist. I got the help I needed. I sorted out a lot of things that needed to be dealt with. I feel a lot better. I'm ready to go."

The right-hander made the move from the bullpen to the starting rotation in 2008 and put up dominant numbers. He finished with a 10-8 record and a 2.54 ERA over 22 starts, giving up just 107 hits and 34 walks over 141 2/3 innings, while striking out 95.

Duchscherer is currently working out in Phoenix and said his elbow is 100 percent. He is looking forward to helping the young pitchers on the staff.

"I have a good program going and I feel great. There's not a concern about that," Duchscherer said.

To clear a spot on the 40-man roster, the A's designated left-handed pitcher Jay Marshall for assignment.

Marshall was 5-3 with a 3.20 ERA and seven saves in 50 games at Triple-A Sacramento last year before he was selected by Oakland on Aug. 9. He had two losses and a 14.73 ERA in 10 relief appearances with the A's and is 1-4 with a 7.66 ERA in 61 career relief appearances over two seasons with Oakland.

## Lots of zeros made Smyth a hero

### A's prospect earns MiLBY after scoreless debut season

By Lisa Winston / MLB.com 12/31/09

It's a challenge for every team's player development staff to familiarize itself with its draft class each year, handle the influx of players into camp, evaluate them and assign them to the appropriate affiliates -- all within a matter of days.

In the case of **Paul Smyth**, the Athletics' 35th-round pick in 2009 out of Kansas, that transition was made a little easier by the fact that player development director Keith Lieppman already had been following the right-hander's career.

That's because Lieppman, like Smyth, was a Jayhawk.

"He went to my alma mater, so I already had interest in him because you don't see a whole lot of kids come out of Kansas," said Lieppman, the 2009 winner of the Sheldon "Chief" Bender Award, given annually by Minor League Baseball to someone with distinguished service in player development. "I was told he was a competitor who throws strikes, has a good sinker with tremendous deception, and an outstanding kid to have on the ballclub."

Nobody predicted, however, that Smyth, a senior signee who already had his diploma, would not allow a run in his professional debut, a span of 36 1/3 innings over 25 games between short-season Vancouver and Class A Kane County. He limited opponents to a .114 average and walked only four while striking out 44.

As a result of his 0.00 ERA over 29 1/3 innings at Vancouver -- where he walked four, struck out 37 and scattered 12 hits -- Smyth was a no-brainer when it came time to hand out the MiLBY for Best Short-Season Reliever.

With literally hundreds of player reports streaming in nightly from managers and coaches, Lieppman remembers how the dispatches from Vancouver manager Rick Magnante and pitching coach Craig Lefferts started coming together on this late-round sleeper.

"First, they started mentioning things like, 'He's solid, he likes to get the ball.' Then you start getting more embellishments about how he's unafraid in tough situations, how he pounds the lower half of the strike zone," Lieppman said. "Then they start saying how great he is off the field, how he's fluent in Spanish and helps with our Latino players, and he starts taking on this whole air, personality-wise."

At that point, Lieppman got to watch Smyth in action and saw even more reasons why the scoreless streak kept going.

"He gets swings and misses, he's getting flinches from right-handed hitters," said Lieppman, explaining why he felt comfortable moving Smyth up to a full-season club that needed a closer down the stretch. "We think we got a steal in the 35th round."

A northern California native who grew up rooting for Oakland, Smyth jokes that he thinks part of the reason he got the initial assignment to Vancouver -- the higher of the A's two short-season clubs -- was that he happened to have his paperwork in order.

"I went hoping I'd go to Vancouver but not sure how it would be decided," he said. "But a few people didn't get to go there because they didn't have their passport ready yet. I had my passport ready."

A reliever throughout his college career, Smyth knew he'd remain in the bullpen but wasn't sure what his role would be, especially since the Athletics have a policy under which they won't tweak a player's mechanics for the first month unless the player specifically requests it.

But success, obviously, came quickly, something Smyth attributes partly to the Athletics' coaching drills, which he took to immediately.

"I felt like I was doing things right and that the drills we'd been working on were paying off," he said. "I was developing comfort in my delivery and buying into everything they were teaching us."

Still, a streak like Smyth's is treated a little differently than, say, a pitcher who is throwing a no-hitter.

"I think pitchers throwing a no-hitter have it easy because no one talks for about three, four hours, whereas for me -- since it lasted for a couple of months -- people wanted to talk about it," he said. "I try not to look at stats, but this is a stats game. It definitely got brought up a lot. I tried to see how many jinxes I could get past. One time, our pitching coach introduced me to a whole group of school kids as 'The guy who hasn't given up a run yet this season,' and everyone was like, 'Well, that was nice while it lasted.'"

Not surprisingly, comparisons have been made between the side-arming Smyth and his scoreless streak and A's side-arming reliever Brad Ziegler, who set a record in 2008 when he opened his big league career with 39 shutout innings.

While neither is a prototypical over-the-top pitcher, Ziegler made the transformation from three-quarters to underhand; Smyth has been a side-armer for as long as he can remember. He also throws harder than Ziegler and probably has better "stuff" to work with.

"He's a fastball/slider guy who mainly relies on a two-seam sinking fastball but started showing the ability to pop a four-seam fastball at the letters to change the eye level for the hitter," Lieppman said. "But they both can exploit right-handed hitters and have deception in their deliveries."

## **'Duke' key to A's renaissance**

Mychael Urban, CSN Bay Area, 12/31/09

Upon learning last week that Justin Duchscherer had agreed to re-sign with the A's, we lauded him for being the rare athlete who doesn't *talk* about loyalty but actually exhibits it. He turned down money elsewhere in part because he felt as though he owed the Elephants a solid after cashing nearly \$5 million in checks without going near a big-league mound in 2009.

Now that the Duchscherer deal is being announced, it's time to take a peek at what the move means on the field. And it relates somewhat to the take we tossed out regarding the Giants' interest in right-handed reliever Kiko Calero.

Like the Giants, the A's are far better on the mound than they are in the batter's box. And like the Giants, they're not inclined to drop huge glue on a big-name basher. So they did what the Giants would be doing in adding Calero -- they got better where they already were in pretty good shape.

The A's and quality pitching have been synonymous since Oakland's most recent renaissance kicked off a decade ago. When Tim Hudson made his splashy debut with a dazzling 11-strikeout performance in an interleague game against the Padres in 1999, he ushered in an era of excellence that featured perennial Cy Young candidates Hudson, Mark Mulder and Barry Zito -- joined at various points by above-average hurlers such Rich Harden, Dan Haren, Joe Blanton, Ted Lilly and the late Cory Lidle -- leading the Low-Budget Engine That Could into the playoffs in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2006.

Duchscherer was a reliever on that 2006 team, which reached the American League Championship Series, and once granted his wish of joining the rotation in 2008, he made the AL All-Star team.

The A's haven't been to the playoffs in three years, but with Duchscherer back as their ace to lead another wave of fine young starters, another renaissance appears to be on the horizon.

Rookies Brett Anderson and Trevor Cahill, who were 21 last season, have the look of top-of-the-rotation studs for years to come. Dallas Braden, who emerged as the leader of the 2009 staff, is a left-handed version of Lidle, winning on guts and guile despite less-than-electric stuff. Vin Mazzaro and Gio Gonzalez, also in their early 20s, have some work to do, but their upsides are considerable. And Josh Outman was Oakland's best pitcher in '09 before his season was cut short by an elbow injury that led to Tommy John surgery.

Throw in recent draft pick Tyson Ross out of Cal and much-hyped international signee Michael Ynoa, and the A's rotation -- backed by a bullpen featuring AL Rookie of the Year Andrew Bailey and dart-throwing Joey Devine (fully recovered from Tommy John surgery himself) -- appears set up to keep the club in contention well into the next decade.

Contention in 2010 might be asking a bit much, given the team's offensive deficiencies, but at the very least it will serve as a monumental year in terms of development and learning how to win.

That's where Duchscherer, who signed a one-year deal, comes in.

"Duke's going to be huge for all the young guys," catcher Kurt Suzuki, the steward of the young staff, told CSNBayArea.com on Tuesday. "Guys like Brett and Trevor and Vin and Gio, they're going to be able to watch the way he competes and goes about his business every day, and that's going to speed up the process of learning to really be a pro. And a guy like Dallas,

who's similar to Duke in that he doesn't have that overpowering stuff but knows how to get after it and just get guys out, is going to take something out of working with him, too."

Duchscherer, assuming he's healthy of mind and body, immediately becomes the No. 1 starter, and that will push everyone in the rotation back a spot -- to a spot with less pressure. Duchscherer *wants* the pressure of being an ace and taking on fellow No. 1's, and the youngsters simply don't need it at this point.

Duchscherer's presence also allows the A's to do what most teams love to do with their rotations: follow right with left and one style with another. So following Duchscherer, a right-hander, likely will be Anderson, a lefty power pitcher; Cahill, a righty with dirty sink; Braden, a lefty with a mean changeup and a surprisingly effective challenge heater; and Mazzaro, a righty with exceptional movement on everything he throws.

Or maybe Gonzalez beats out Mazzaro. If not, Gonzalez's comic-book bender is exactly the kind of strikeout pitch that any team would like to bring out of the bullpen to drop on a lefty slugger with two on and two out in a tie game in the seventh inning.

And Outman, whose stuff plays well out of the bullpen, too, could be back right after the All-Star break. You think a healthy rotation of Duchscherer, Anderson, Cahill, Braden and Mazzaro, with a bullpen stacked with Bailey, Devine, stellar setup man Michael Wuertz, 2008 sensation Brad Ziegler, Outman and Gonzalez might do some damage?

With a little run support, it might. And with a steady stream of young position players expected to make an impact within the next year or two, it might also be enough to give the recently suffering die-hard A's fans optimism about the future for the first time in a while.

## **The Gloves Come Off in a Bay Area Baseball Battle**

By JESSE MCKINLEY, New York Times, 12/31/09

OAKLAND, Calif. — Cities in the Bay Area are natural allies in most matters, sharing as they do a transportation system, generally liberal politics and perpetual fears of a catastrophic earthquake.

But over the last month or so, the area's three biggest cities — Oakland, San Francisco and San Jose — have been in a testy tug of war over the fate of the Oakland A's, the attendance-deprived and stadium-challenged baseball franchise whose history includes four championships, including one over the San Francisco Giants in the 1989 World Series that was interrupted by an earthquake.

The source of the tension is the desire by the A's owner and managing partner, Lew Wolff, to move his team to San Jose, the richer Silicon Valley city 40 miles to the south.

That plan, which is being reviewed by Major League Baseball, has set off a round of hand-wringing here in Oakland, where residents are suffering sinking civic morale in the face of high unemployment, persistent violent crime and budget cuts.

"Baseball has been synonymous with Oakland since my early childhood," said the city's mayor, Ron Dellums, 74, who recalls watching games of the A's precursor, the Oakland Oaks, while growing up in Berkeley. "It's a part of the history of Oakland, and part of the spirit of Oakland."

But in a twist, the biggest ally of the city and A's fans in fighting the move may be the cross-bay rivals, the Giants, who argue that San Jose is their exclusive territory and central to their fan base, something affirmed by Major League Baseball in the past.

"The health and competitiveness of the organization depends on these territorial rights," said Staci Slaughter, a Giants' spokeswoman.

Meanwhile, earlier this month, the San Francisco city lawyer, Dennis Herrera, sent a letter to Bud Selig, the baseball commissioner, saying that moving the A's to San Jose would hurt San Francisco and "undermine the financial viability of the Giants," and hinted at legal action if the move was approved.

Shortly after that, San Jose's mayor, Chuck Reed, shot back, accusing the Giants of interfering with his city's pursuit of a big-league club. "I certainly think that the San Francisco Giants are being inconsiderate at best," Mr. Reed said in an interview. "And a little bit rude."

Mr. Wolff declined to comment on his plans for the A's, but has said in recent interviews that the team's decrepit stadium in southern Oakland prevents it from competing financially — and on the field. In interviews, he has also raised the specter that the team would move out of state rather than stay in Oakland.

"We have determined that San Jose is the only option for us in California," Mr. Wolff told San Francisco magazine this month.

The ultimate decision on where the A's will play lies with Mr. Selig and the owners of the league's 30 teams. The league has been examining options since spring, when another plan to move the team, to Fremont, 17 miles north of San Jose, fell through. At that time, Mayor Dellums and the Oakland City Council president, Jane Brunner, asked Mr. Selig to look for "a permanent ballpark solution here in Oakland." A three-member league committee is expected to give its recommendation on the A's in early 2010.

Neither a spokesman for Major League Baseball nor the committee would comment until the review was complete.

The committee has visited Oakland, and its deliberate methods have encouraged Douglas Boxer, a founder of Let's Go Oakland, a coalition of business and community leaders seeking to keep the A's.

"I believe that if this is just a check-the-box experience, they've expended a lot of time and a lot of money," said Mr. Boxer, who added that his mother, Senator Barbara Boxer, a Democrat, had also urged the team to stay in Oakland. "In my opinion the committee went from going, 'Oakland didn't have a chance and couldn't get its act together,' to believing that we have sites that work for both baseball and the city."

Oakland has been scrambling for alternatives, and on Dec. 10, Mayor Dellums and Ms. Brunner unveiled three potential sites for a stadium downtown, across San Francisco Bay from the Giants' stadium, AT&T Park.

Mr. Wolff's major complaint is with the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum, the aging structure that the A's share with football's Oakland Raiders. Opened in 1966, the Coliseum has been called ugly, uncomfortable and antiquated. And that is from its fans.

"It's a horrible stadium," said Philipp Miller, 29, an Oakland public school teacher and a regular at A's games. "I don't think anyone would argue with that."

The stadium was renovated in 1996, adding a bank of football-friendly luxury suites. The A's have long argued that the Coliseum has kept fans away and prevented the team from earning the income needed to land big-money players. Of course, the team's recent play probably has not helped. Once a perennial contender, the A's have been in a funk for several seasons, finishing last in the division in 2009, and drawing an average 17,392 fans a game, the lowest in baseball. Home games are often less than half-full. All of which, some say, has its gritty charms. "You can buy a ticket for \$8 and pretty much sit wherever you want," Mr. Miller said.

Supporters of the move to San Jose say it could solve attendance problems and thus provide more money. San Jose has more than twice the population of Oakland, and a bundle of prosperous Silicon Valley companies. The city also has only one major professional sporting team, hockey's Sharks.

"We're a growing town with a lot of disposable income and a lot of people," Mayor Reed said.

In the meantime, A's fans will continue to wonder where, and if, they will be able to follow their team. Sara Buckelew, 39, a pediatrician, said that she attended 20 to 40 A's games a year and loved the team, but that a move would break her allegiance.

"I'm an A's lifer," Ms. Buckelew said. "But I think them moving to San Jose is giving up on fans like me."



## Duchscherer returns to A's 'a better person'

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer 12/31/09

When Justin Duchscherer found himself unable to get on a flight from Phoenix to Sacramento for a rehab start last July - "I was paralyzed," he said - the two-time All-Star knew he needed some help.

After treatment for clinical depression, Duchscherer said he has more perspective on baseball and on his life, and Wednesday, he officially agreed to return to his longtime team. The A's will pay Duchscherer a base salary of \$1.75 million, but there are incentives that could bring the total to more than \$5.5 million.

For Duchscherer and the A's, the main thing is that the 32-year-old has worked through his issues with the help of Dr. Ray Karesky, who runs the A's employee assistance program.

Duchscherer's initial concern was that the pressures of baseball were getting to him, but he said that while working with Karesky, he realized that it was his personal relationships that were at the root of his depression. The major factors were his own divorce two years ago; being away from his son, Evan; and his parents' divorce when he was a child.

"I tried to avoid it, and baseball was a good way to do that," Duchscherer said.

While recovering from early season elbow surgery, Duchscherer said he had too much time to think, and he didn't have the proper coping skills to deal with what he described as "overwhelming emotions."

But asking for help isn't the easiest thing in pro sports, where, as Duchscherer said, "There's always a stigma - you're supposed to be tough. ... There are always people who are going to be negative, but I'm happy I went through it. I'm a better person. I feel I'll be a better father, a better future husband, not just a better baseball player. I'm more than just a baseball player."

Before, he tended to dwell on the negative even after his best performances.

"One of the biggest things I've learned is to accept the effort level," he said. "I put too much pressure on myself, expecting to be perfect, instead of appreciating what I did."

Duchscherer did not take antidepressants, because he felt they weren't right for him.

The A's were supportive throughout, and Duchscherer is grateful for their sensitivity. He considered going to another team, largely so he could be closer to his son, who lives near Philadelphia. But Duchscherer felt comfortable in Oakland, and he likes the idea of helping Oakland's young rotation. He said self-deprecatingly that he can show them how to get hitters out with "subpar stuff," and he also can be an off-the-field mentor.

Among other incentives, Duchscherer can receive \$750,000 in roster bonuses for being active for 60, 90 and 120 days; he can earn \$1.95 million for games started, beginning at the 10-start mark; and \$1.125 million for innings totals, starting at 150 innings.

In order to make room for Duchscherer on the roster, the A's designated left-handed reliever Jay Marshall for assignment.

## **Duchscherer discusses depression issues**

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle blog, 12/30/09

Justin Duchscherer just conducted a very candid conference call with local reporters in which he discussed his diagnosis of clinical depression last summer; I'll be able to delve into it more in tomorrow's paper, but to summarize some of his comments:

\*Duchscherer first realized he needed help when he was unable to board a flight from Phoenix to Triple-A Sacramento for a rehab start. He said he was "paralyzed" when he got to the airport, and he couldn't figure out why he felt that way.

\*Dr. Ray Karesky, who runs the A's employee assistance program, helped Duchscherer to understand that his underlying problems were not baseball-related but were more to do with his personal life and relationships, particularly with regards to his divorce two years ago and to his own parents' divorce when he was a child.

\*Duchscherer did not take any antidepressants, though they were suggested at one point. He said he's always careful about what he puts in his body and he decided they just weren't right for him.

\*He's now focusing on his life away from baseball more, getting more perspective on things, and he's learned that he cannot be such a perfectionist on the field; though he's a two-time All-Star, Duchscherer said he always dwelt on the negative, even after some of his best performances. He is now going to prepare himself as well as he can, do the job to the best of his ability and appreciate that he is making a full effort.

\*He is looking forward to mentoring the young A's starters, both as a pitcher - he said he can show them that you can still get out big-league hitters even if you have "sub-par stuff" - and as a person. He said he didn't feel he knew anyone going through the sorts of things he was as a young player, but after this experience of the past year, he can be a sounding board for teammates with off-the-field issues, too.

\*Duchscherer is completely healthy and as I mentioned last month, he's working out with noted trainer Brett Fischer.

It's great to hear Duchscherer sounding upbeat and ready for a fresh start. He has clearly gained a lot of knowledge about coping with stress and emotional issues, and he said he is very happy to be returning to a spot where he feels comfortable. He loves working with catcher Kurt Suzuki and with pitching coach Curt Young, and he appreciates the A's support and sensitivity during his tough times last summer.

No matter what happens on the field, this is already a nice story, and a reminder that baseball players are people first, athletes second. They have the same problems everyone else does, but they sometimes have to play them out in public, which can't be easy. Here's to a fine season for Justin Duchscherer.

Posted By: [Susan Slusser \(Email\)](#) | December 30 2009 at 12:19 PM

### **A's bring back Duchscherer**

By Janie McCauley, AP Baseball Writer 12/30/09

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Oakland Athletics have found a familiar face to be one of their front-line starters next season: Justin Duchscherer.

The right-hander and two-time All-Star agreed to terms on an incentive-laden one-year contract Wednesday to return to the A's after he missed all the 2009 season. Duchscherer underwent arthroscopic right elbow surgery on March 31 and later was treated for clinical depression.

The 32-year-old Duchscherer will receive a base salary of \$1.75 million. The sides reached a preliminary agreement last week that was pending a physical to be finalized.

He has spent the last six of his seven major league seasons with Oakland, becoming a full-time starter for the first time in his career during 2008.

Duchscherer earned his second All-Star nod that season, going 10-8 with a 2.54 ERA while pitching a career-high 141 2-3 innings. He will certainly be looking to return to that top form during the 2010 season. He has said he considered quitting baseball for good during his personal struggles this year.

A's manager Bob Green was eager to welcome Duchscherer back into the rotation late in the season, but that all changed upon the announcement Aug. 21 that he had been diagnosed with clinical depression and was seeking treatment for the condition. Duchscherer began a rehab assignment July 26 and didn't allow a run in 11 innings over three starts before ending his comeback.

"I'm real happy that he decided to come back with us," Geren said in a phone interview. "All winter I was hoping that he would remain an Athletic. It's a perfect place for him to pitch. He's very familiar with his teammates, the town and the fans. It's really big for us to have him back and he's going to have a heck of a year. Hopefully he'll have a comeback player of the year type season."

Geren said they have texted back and forth.

"He's pretty happy, as we all are," Geren said. "He sounds great. I think he's anxious to get started."

Also Wednesday, Oakland designated left-hander Jay Marshall for assignment to clear room on the 40-man roster for Duchscherer.

Having Duchscherer back will add a key veteran presence to a young rotation that featured mostly rookies in 2009, including highly touted Brett Anderson and Trevor Cahill.

The A's finished with 75 wins for the second straight season and in last place in the AL West, losing their final seven games.

General manager Billy Beane has been busy this winter. The A's signed outfielder Coco Crisp last week and Beane acquired third baseman Jake Fox, second baseman Aaron Miles and cash considerations from the Chicago Cubs for three players.

Oakland also was included in the big four-team, nine-player swap featuring Cliff Lee and Roy Halladay that brought outfielder Michael Taylor to the A's. Oakland sent third baseman Brett Wallace to Toronto.