

## A's News Clips, Monday, January 11, 2010

### Cactus League expands from humble roots

#### Reds latest team to move spring headquarters to Arizona

By Jesse Sanchez / MLB.com 1/10/2010

Robert Brinton first sold the Cactus League program when he was 6 years old.

Fifty-eight years later, Brinton has bought into the program, too. As president of the Cactus League, he has watched the Arizona Spring Training league evolve into a baseball power that rivals its older East Coast counterpart, the Grapefruit League.

There will be 15 teams training in Florida's Grapefruit League when pitchers and catchers report to Spring Training on Feb. 18, and with the recent arrival of the Cincinnati Reds in Goodyear, Ariz., 15 teams will now train in Arizona.

"We were down to seven teams in the early '90s and my vision was to see if we can get 10 teams here," said Brinton, who lives in Mesa. "To end up with 15 teams shows the hard work of many people working together over the years. It's been more successful than we could have ever dreamed."

The leagues have come a long way. The Cactus League started in 1946 with the Cleveland Indians in Tucson and the New York Giants in Phoenix. The Grapefruit League started in 1908 with an exhibition game between the Reds and the St. Petersburg Saints. The Chicago Cubs were the first team to train in Florida when they arrived in 1913.

When the Cubs became the third team in the Cactus League in 1952, Brinton was a boy who wanted to be ballplayer when he grew up. On game days, he camped outside of Rendezvous Park in Mesa to sell four-page black and white programs for 25 cents.

Baseball is his family business. Brinton's father, Dilworth, was a member of the civic group HoHoKams and worked closely with Dwight Patterson, often referred to as the Father of the Cactus League, to bring the Cubs to town.

#### **Cactus League expansion**

The Reds are the latest to move to Arizona, giving the Cactus League 15 teams.

<b>Team</b>	<b>Current city</b>	<b>First year</b>
Cubs	Mesa	1979
Giants	Scottsdale	1982
A's	Phoenix	1984
Angels	Tempe	1993
Rockies	Tucson	1993
Mariners	Peoria	1994
Padres	Peoria	1994
Brewers	Phoenix	1998
D-backs	Tucson	1998
Rangers	Surprise	2003
Royals	Surprise	2003
Dodgers	Glendale	2009
Indians	Goodyear	2009
White Sox	Glendale	2009
Reds	Goodyear	2010

Robert Brinton has worked with the Cactus League for the past 20 years, and in 2008, was named president of the organization. He is also the president of the Mesa Convention and Visitors Bureau and has worked closely with Major League Baseball to make Spring Training a productive and enjoyable experience.

"Baseball's Spring Training has always and will always be special, and in so many ways it's the harbinger of summer and excitement for sports fans like no other sport can do," said Laurel Prieb, who serves as Major League Baseball's vice president of western operations & special projects in Phoenix. "The history and timing of the game and Spring Training yields itself to an exciting couple of months that obviously does great things for tourism in Florida and Arizona and stirs the imagination of fans everywhere excited about their team's prospects."

Following the example set by Indians, Giants and Cubs, the Baltimore Orioles set up camp in Yuma to officially form the Cactus League. The Orioles moved to Scottsdale in 1956 but were replaced by the Boston Red Sox in 1959.

In 1963, Houston's Colt .45s moved to Geronimo Park in Apache Junction. Oakland (Mesa), San Diego (Yuma), and the Seattle Pilots team that eventually ended up being the Milwaukee Brewers (Tempe) moved into Arizona in 1969.

From the mid-'70s to the mid-'80s, the Cactus League was made up of the Angels, Cubs, Indians, Brewers, A's, Padres, Giants and Mariners. The Cubs trained in Scottsdale from 1967 to 1978 and moved to their current site, Mesa's HoHoKam Park, in 1979.

Cleveland left for Florida in 1993 but returned to Arizona last season and will now share a facility with the Reds. The Padres and the Mariners became the first teams to share a Spring Training facility when they moved into the multi-million dollar Peoria Sports Complex in 1994. The Brewers moved into a complex in Phoenix in 1998.

A state-of-the-art facility is the new norm for Spring Training.

The Reds' \$23 million complex features six full practice fields plus two half-fields for infield work, and space for agility drills. There are multiple bullpens and covered batting cages. The facility also features a 43,000 square foot, two-story building for offices, clubhouses and rehabilitation.

"It's a new chapter for us," said Dick Williams, Reds vice president of baseball operations. "We've been in Florida for a long time. We are the oldest team in baseball and we take history very seriously. We loved our time in the Grapefruit League and now we look forward to the Cactus League."

The Reds are the latest team to make the move to the Phoenix area but they will not be the last. Last season, the Dodgers moved from Vero Beach, Fla., to Glendale to share a facility with the White Sox, who moved north from Tucson. Next year, the Rockies and the D-backs will leave Tucson for a new facility on Salt River Pima-Maricopa Native American Community land near Scottsdale. In 2003, the Rangers moved from Port Charlotte, Fla., into a facility with the Royals in Surprise.

"This is the final year for those teams in Tucson and it is unfortunate because of the tradition there, but it's also about change and evolution," Brinton said. "If you go back 20 years ago to Yuma, owners wanted to keep the teams apart and now the whole goal is to spend more time on the field than on the bus."

"Consolidation was simply something that was going to happen at some point and it was a matter of when," he continued. "Having done that, you will see easier access to players and travel will be easier. That was a real key factor."

The state of Arizona is also reaping the rewards of the Cactus League. According to figures compiled by Brinton's group, the Cactus League generated an estimated \$359 million in revenue for the state from out-of-state spenders.

"Even though the fan base is not year-round, the presence of the team is year-round which helps everyone," Brinton said. "The same can be said for Florida. It really is a good thing to have Spring Training in Florida and Arizona. Now there is parity."

In a strange twist, it's Brinton's beloved Cubs that could offset the balance of teams between the Cactus and Grapefruit Leagues. The Cubs are considering relocating their Spring Training location from HoHoKam Park to a spot near Naples, Fla., possibly as early as 2012.

"We have partnered with the Cubs and plan on doing everything we can but it's still a decision the Cubs must make," Brinton said. "The city and state, everyone is trying to make sure they stay in Arizona. They've been here a long time."

## **Oakland group bids to keep A's in town**

Jeff Mitchell, Sacramento Bee, 1/10/2010

OAKLAND – In Doug Boxer's eyes, it's two out in the bottom of the ninth. The home team – the city of Oakland – is up to bat, and the crowd is hoping for a spectacular walk-off homer to win the game.

Only in this case, the home run will come if the Oakland Athletics stay in Oakland and abandon efforts to move the major league baseball club south to San Jose.

"This team is beloved and supported by the greater East Bay region and, yes, even by the people from San Francisco," said Boxer, vice chairman of the city's planning commission and co-founder of Let's Go Oakland – a nonprofit group recently created to fight the team's intended move to the South Bay city.

"The A's belong nowhere else," he said. "They belong in Oakland."

Law Wolff, co-owner and managing partner of the Athletics, says his team can no longer draw the crowds it needs to survive economically at the Oakland Coliseum, an aging, outmoded public facility that the team shares with the Oakland Raiders.

Wolff, a Los Angeles-area real estate developer, tried unsuccessfully to move the team to Fremont through much of 2008 and early 2009. Now he has set his sights on building a modern, compact, 32,000-seat ballpark on a 14-acre, city-owned parcel that's immediately adjacent to the HP Pavilion, where the San Jose Sharks hockey team plays.

If the city gives part or all of the land to the team as part of a development deal, that would trigger an ordinance requiring a referendum election to allow city voters to weigh in on the matter, officials said.

On Friday, Fremont jumped back into the competition to lure the team south when it announced that it would seek to set aside part of the soon-to-be-vacated New United Motor Manufacturing Inc. plant site as a new venue for a stadium for the team.

Fremont officials say that after news of the closure of the auto manufacturing plant was announced, Major League Baseball officials requested they put together a "conceptual" report for a stadium on the site. In February 2009, when Wolff walked away from Fremont, he cited the strong push-back by city residents and some business leaders who objected to the increased traffic a new stadium would generate there.

The departure of the Athletics has been a foregone conclusion for many Oakland leaders, including Mayor Ron Dellums himself in 2007.

But Boxer says renewed efforts by the mayor and City Council President Jane Brunner to appeal directly to Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig have given Let's Go Oakland and other boosters a fighting chance to convince the team it should stay in Oakland, where it has played since 1968.

In reaction to the letter, Selig formed a three-person study committee in March to review all possible sites in Oakland where the team could build a new ballpark.

While a location next to the existing Oakland Coliseum has already been examined and roundly rejected, the city is hoping that three sites on its burgeoning waterfront – two of which have yet to be studied – would make excellent places for the team to relocate.

"This city's leadership has a clear, concise and unified message for Major League Baseball: Keep the A's in Oakland," Dellums said during a news conference in early December. "This project is not solely about a baseball stadium. This is about continuing our efforts to bolster Oakland's economic future."

Boxer, the son of Democratic U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer, said that like Dellums, the Let's Go Oakland effort is about appealing not to Wolff but to Selig and Major League Baseball.

The three Oakland locations are a parcel near Jefferson and Market streets known as Jack London Square North, another parcel near the small Victory Court between Oak Street and the Lake Merritt Channel, and the Howard Marine Terminal on the Oakland-Alameda estuary.

All three are within easy walking distance of Jack London Square proper and its restaurants, hotels and shops. Boxer said no public opposition has surfaced to any of the sites.

Since starting Let's Go Oakland in early November, the organization has galvanized East Bay civic and corporate leaders, all of whom hope Selig will reject Wolff's efforts to move the team. Boxer also noted that 30,216 people have joined the group's Facebook page and that more than 7,000 fans have signed an online petition asking the league to thwart the move.

While Wolff believes the A's will have a chance to flourish on the field and at the ticket office in the more upscale South Bay market, Selig will also have to settle a simmering territorial dispute with the neighboring San Francisco Giants, who say the San Jose area falls within their marketing area. The Giants claim to have up to 1 million fans in the South Bay.

Fearing the A's could cut into that fan base and reduce the Giants' revenue, San Francisco City Attorney Dennis Herrera recently threatened to sue Major League Baseball if Selig approves Wolff's request. Herrera said the lawsuit would protect the city's financial interest in the team, which pays the city about \$3.6 million a year in rent.

Team spokesman Bob Rose refused comment on the Let's Go Oakland campaign or on the three waterfront sites.

But Wolff said in a recent USA Today report that allowing his team to move to San Jose was a matter of basic fairness.

"It's like we're being held hostage," Wolff told the newspaper. "We tried to make it work in Oakland. We exhausted everything we could in our area. It can't work. For us to compete, we've got to have revenue, and for us to get revenue we have to move to San Jose. It's that simple."

To be sure, the A's in recent years have had a tough time drawing fans. In 2009, the team finished last in attendance among the 30 major league clubs.

But Boxer says the city has strongly supported the team for the lion's share of the past four decades, during which it won four World Series, 14 American League West Division titles and six American League pennants.

He also argues that with a new stadium on the Oakland waterfront, the team would once again draw fans, which in turn would increase revenue, which in turn would allow the team to begin acquiring better on-field talent.

"I can't imagine an Oakland without the A's," Boxer said. "It's time to put our rally caps on."

## **Fremont wants an A's ballpark at Nummi site**

Carolyn Jones, Chronicle Staff Writer 1/8/2010

Fremont went head-to-head against Oakland today in the fight for the Athletics, proposing a ballpark at the soon-to-be-closed Nummi auto plant.

Fremont sent its pitch to a Major League Baseball task force, which is studying possible locations for the A's and is expected to announce its recommendation within the next few weeks.

"May the best city win," said Fremont city manager Fred Diaz. "But we think this could be a good, healthy deal for the city of Fremont."

Oakland last month proposed three potential ballpark sites at Jack London Square, as a way to entice the Athletics to stay in their host city of 41 years. Fremont is proposing a 36,000-seat "state-of-the-art" stadium with retail, offices and restaurants.

Both cities call for the Athletics - not the cities - to pay for the ballpark, and all the proposed sites are walking distance to BART. Fremont's stadium would be near the Warm Springs station, scheduled to open in 2014.

Fremont's plan would hinge on voter approval, Oakland's would not.

Oakland officials took the news in stride.

"How long has Fremont been trying to get the A's?" said Oakland city councilman Ignacio de la Fuente, who's led the fight to keep the Athletics. "I can say this, we're not in competition with anyone. Good luck to them."

The A's were set to move to Fremont until February 2008, when owner Lew Wolff abruptly scratched plans to build a "baseball village" at Auto Mall Parkway due to community opposition over traffic.

Leading that opposition were officials from New United Motor Manufacturing, Inc., who said ballpark traffic would hinder Nummi's trucking fleet on nearby Interstates 880 and 680.

But Nummi plans to close the plant April 1, leaving its 370-acre property vacant. The city hopes to purchase the property with redevelopment funds, build roads and other infrastructure and set aside 120 acres at the northwest corner for the ballpark.

The rest of the property would be developed into residential, retail and office space.

"We've had a lot of calls from people interested in developing the plant, but so far no one's come forward with a pocketful of money," said Mayor Bob Wasserman. "But we think the ballpark could be a catalyst for development out there."

Nummi has not yet decided what it will do with the property, which has been used for auto manufacturing since the 1950s. The company might keep the property and develop the land itself, said Nummi spokesman Lance Tomasu.

The A's had no comment on either Fremont's or Oakland's pitch for hosting the team, said A's spokesman Bob Rose.

Fremont's city council is slated to discuss the matter Tuesday night. If Major League Baseball approves Fremont's bid, the plan is likely to go before voters on the November ballot, Diaz said.

Fremont is eager to begin redeveloping the Nummi site, which is the size of San Francisco's Financial District. The Nummi closure will result in the loss of 4,700 jobs at the plant and 21,000 jobs across the region, and will result in millions of dollars in lost revenue for Fremont.

Diaz likened the closure to a military base shutting down.

Without a major tenant at the site, redevelopment could take up to 20 years, he said.

"We figured we'd need something special to fall out of the sky," he said. "Then we realized we might have one of those opportunities with the A's."

## **Fremont deals again for the A's**

By Matthew Artz, Oakland Tribune 1/8/2010

Fremont re-entered the bidding Friday to become the new home of the Oakland A's by 2015 with a proposed 36,000-seat ballpark on land owned by the NUMMI auto plant.

Major League Baseball asked the city to submit stadium plans while it determines whether a suitable stadium site exists for the A's in the East Bay.

The city would buy the land in south Fremont and make about \$62 million in infrastructure improvements — including a pedestrian bridge to a new BART station — while the A's would privately finance construction of the ballpark, between interstates 880 and 680.

The A's last year had considered two other Fremont sites before ending negotiations with the city and turning its attention to San Jose.

But Major League Baseball considers San Jose to be the territory of the San Francisco Giants, who oppose the A's moving to Santa Clara County.

To help the A's find their future home, baseball Commissioner Bud Selig formed a committee to determine if there is a viable location in the East Bay.

Since the committee formed, Oakland has proposed a waterfront stadium near Jack London Square, while Fremont, at the committee's request, pitched the NUMMI site.

A's co-owner Lew Wolff, who in recent months has dismissed reconsidering stadium opportunities in both Fremont and Oakland, said he hadn't seen the new Fremont proposal.

"All we're doing is waiting to here from Major League Baseball," he said.

Baseball spokesman Matt Bourne said that the committee has spoken with city officials and conducted telephone surveys regarding the viability of a Fremont stadium. But he would not say when the committee would present its findings to Selig.

The city's new plan would put the stadium on 120 acres at the southeast corner of Fremont and South Grimmer boulevards. The vacant parcel is at the northernmost edge of the NUMMI property and would not include any of the land occupied by the vehicle manufacturing plant.

Previous proposals to build a stadium near the Pacific Commons Shopping Center, west of Interstate 880 — as well as a second stadium just west of Interstate 680 and about a half-mile east of the new site — were scrapped because of complaints from nearby businesses and residents.

NUMMI was a major opponent of the previous stadium plans, but its scheduled closure in April makes available new land for a stadium that would have easy access to both I-880 and I-680, as well as a new BART station.

City Manager Fred Diaz said he has broached the plan to NUMMI officials, but hasn't received any feedback.

City officials say a ballpark would spur development at the NUMMI site, which, at 370 acres, is nearly as large as downtown San Francisco.

"There's acres and acres of land down there that's going to be reused," Fremont Mayor Bob Wasserman said. "There's nothing that will stimulate that land getting used in the best possible way than the attraction of the ballpark."

Without a major catalyst, it could take 15 to 20 years to redevelop the site, Diaz said.

The city plans to make the area a redevelopment zone and use future redevelopment income to build the stadium and make infrastructure improvements, Diaz said.

Any firm proposal for a ballpark would go to Fremont voters.

## **Fremont deals again for the A's**

By Matthew Artz, Oakland Tribune 1/8/09

The City of Fremont has unveiled a new plan for bringing the Oakland A's to town as early as 2015.

At the request of Major League Baseball, the city has developed plans for a 36,000 seat ballpark in south Fremont on land owned by the NUMMI auto plant.

The city proposes to buy the land and make infrastructure improvements, including a pedestrian bridge to a new BART station, while the ballpark would be built with private funds.

The A's had previously considered two other Fremont sites before ending negotiations with the city and turning its attention to San Jose, which Major League Baseball considers San Francisco Giants territory.

Commissioner Bud Selig last year formed a committee to determine if viable locations in the East Bay exist for a new A's ballpark. The commission is scheduled to present its findings later this month, Fremont officials said.

The city will present its new stadium approach to the City Council at a 5:30 p.m. meeting Tuesday.

If the committee considers the NUMMI site to be viable and the City Council favors the plan, the city would begin talks with A's co-owner Lew Wolff and NUMMI officials, City Manager Fred Diaz said.

City officials say a ballpark would spur development at the NUMMI site. The auto manufacturer, which is scheduled to close April 1, employed 4,700 workers and generated about 20,000 additional jobs throughout the state.

"There's acres and acres of land down there that's going to be reuse," Fremont Mayor Bob Wasserman said. "There's nothing that will stimulate that land getting used in the best possible way than the attraction of the ballpark."

The proposed site is on 120 acres at the intersection of Fremont and South Grimmer boulevards, about a half-mile west from a previous site, which generated protest from residents across Interstate 680.

## **A's designate Everidge for assignment**

### **First baseman made debut with Oakland in 2009**

By Lisa Winston / MLB.com 1/8/2010

The Oakland A's designated first baseman Tommy Everidge for assignment Friday to clear a spot on their 40-man roster for newly-signed DH Jack Cust.

Everidge, 26, made his big league debut with the A's in 2009, hitting .224 with two homers and seven RBIs in 24 games. After starting the season at Double-A Midland, he moved up to Triple-A Sacramento in early June and was called up to the Majors on July 28.

When Everidge was promoted, his 136 hits led the Minors, while his 85 RBIs ranked third. On the season, between Midland and Sacramento, Everidge combined to hit .335 with 20 homers and 94 RBIs in 107 games.

## **Oakland A's Top Prospects: Beyond The Top-50**

Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Jan 7, 2010

The Oakland A's system has made big improvements over the past few years both in terms of the quality of the prospects in the A's system and the quantity of players with a chance to make the big leagues. Choosing only 50 players for our top prospect list was a tall order, as we considered more than 80 players for our list. Inside are the players who just missed the cut...

*Note: These names are in alphabetical order and not in rank order*

**Travis Banwart:** Banwart had a mixed 2009 season, winning 10 games for Midland, but struggling to the tune of a 5.43 ERA after the All-Star break.. Overall, he posted a 4.89 ERA in 140 innings for the Rockhounds. Banwart had a 1.31 ERA in April and a 2.97 ERA in August, but posted ERAs of 4.63 or higher in May, June and July. Banwart has better stuff than his 77 strike-outs in 140 innings would indicate. He struggled with shoulder soreness in 2008, but didn't miss a turn in 2009. The 2010 season will be a big one for Banwart, who should be challenged at Triple-A for at least part of the season.

**Trey Barham:** Thanks to an early season stint in extended spring training and a two-week stay on the disabled list, Barham only threw 43.2 innings for the Kane County Cougars in 2009, but he was dominant when he was on the mound. The left-hander scattered 26 hits and 11 walks and he struck-out 41 while posting a 1.24 ERA. He smothered left-handed hitters to the tune of an .045 average and held righties to a .233 mark. Barham's fastball sits only in the high-80s, but he gets a lot of movement on the pitch. His best offering is his curveball, which is effective against both righties and lefties, and he has a quality change-up. He also hides the ball well. Barham will be 24 throughout the 2010 season and he has never pitched above Low-A, but he could have a career as a situational lefty in the major leagues if he is able to move through the A's system quickly.

**Michael Benacka:** Since signing with the A's out of the independent Frontier League midway through the 2008 season, Benacka has been dominant out of the bullpen. He had a 2.39 ERA in 26.1 innings with Stockton in 2008. He topped that performance in 2009 by posting a 2.61 ERA in 79.1 innings for Midland and Sacramento. Benacka struck-out 90 and didn't allow a homerun. The righty is already 27, but he could have a career in the major leagues as a middle reliever. He should open the season in the River Cats' bullpen.

**Matt Carson:** Carson signed a minor league free agent deal with the A's before the 2009 season after spending the first seven years of his career in the Yankees' chain. The outfielder was the Sacramento River Cats' primary centerfielder for much of the season and he wound-up leading the team in homeruns with 25 and RBIs with 77 while also being the team's best defensive outfielder. He also stole 15 bases. Carson made his major league debut with the A's in September and hit .286 with a homer in 10 games. He was designated for assignment by the A's this off-season, but he was re-signed to a minor league deal with an invitation to spring training and could be an option for the A's during the season if they have injuries in the outfield.

**Yusuf Carter:** Carter was acquired before the 2009 season through the minor league Rule 5 draft. Formerly an outfielder in the Chicago Cubs' system, Carter was moved behind the plate with Oakland. He spent the entire season with the Stockton Ports and was Stockton's only All-Star representative. Carter hit .318 with 14 homers and an 867 OPS in 91 games. Not surprisingly, he struggled defensively while trying to learn a new position. He showed flashes of good tools behind the plate, but a broken thumb prevented him from having the opportunity to improve more defensively at the A's Instructional League. He will likely receive a lot of close attention from the A's coaching staff during spring training. Carter will turn 25 in 2010, but he has an above-average bat for a catcher, so he has a shot at a big league career if his defense can improve quickly.

**Yung-Chi Chen:** The former Mariners' top prospect was claimed off of waivers by the A's before the 2009 season. He was eventually dropped from the 40-man roster but remained with Oakland. The infielder missed significant parts of the season with knee problems and he has struggled to stay healthy the past few seasons. He was productive when he played, batting .306 with a .375 OBP and six stolen bases in 52 games, mostly for Midland and Sacramento. Chen can play second, third and short and is a career .295 hitter in 381 minor league games. He will turn 27 during the 2010 season.

**Royce Consigli:** Consigli was the A's 30th round pick out of a high school in Welland, Ontario. The outfielder had a scholarship offer to Pittsburgh, but the A's were able to convince him to forgo college for now. He appeared in 26 games for the A's Rookie League team in his pro debut season. Consigli hit only .202 and managed only four extra-base hits, but he walked an impressive 16 times and posted a .330 OBP. He also drove-in 13 runs and stole three bases in three tries. During the A's Instructional camp, Consigli earned the Most Improved Award. At 6'2", 205, Consigli has the build of a player much older than his 18 years. He is an aggressive runner with a strong throwing arm and good bat speed. He also received high marks for his work ethic. Consigli won't turn 19 until midway through next season, but he may be ready for Vancouver next season.

**Jose Crisostomo:** The 2009 season marked Crisostomo's second year playing in the US. He put together a solid season for the AZL A's in 2008, batting .308 with a .381 OBP in 28 games. The left-handed hitting outfielder had a similar year with Vancouver in 2009. He hit .297 with a .360 OBP in 47 games for the Canadians. The speedy Crisostomo has yet to show much power, but he has gotten on-base consistently and has sprayed the ball all over the field. Crisostomo is still learning how to use his speed both in the field and at the plate and, at only 180 pounds, he has room to add strength to his frame, as well. He will be 20 throughout most of the 2010 season.

**Omar Duran:** Duran was an international free signing before the 2008 season. The lefty out of the Dominican Republic made his US debut in 2009, tossing 15 innings for the A's Rookie League team. He was wild, walking 11 and allowing 14 hits, but he struck-out 21 and his fastball was clocked as high as 96 MPH. Duran made three late-season appearances in the Dominican Summer League and was dominant, allowing only two hits and three walks in nine innings and striking out 14. He will be an arm to watch in the coming years.

**Jason Fernandez:** Fernandez had a see-saw year with Midland in his first full season at the Double-A level. The right-hander began the season in the Rockhounds' rotation and then moved into a long relief role at the end of the year. He was part of a seven-inning no-hitter (Fernandez tossed the final four innings) and was a Texas League mid-season All-Star and a two-time Pitcher of the Week, as well as the winning pitcher in the Texas League championship-clinching game, but he finished the year with a 4.97 ERA and a 74:55 K:BB ratio in 125 innings. Fernandez has moved back-and-forth between the bullpen and the rotation throughout his career, but his future should be in the bullpen. He is a groundball pitcher who doesn't generate a lot of strike-outs, but did induce 26 double-plays in 2009. Look for him to be either in the Midland or Sacramento bullpens in 2010. He will be 25 throughout the season.

**Joel Galarraga:** Signed out of the Mexican League before the 2009 season, Galarraga's first US campaign was limited first by visa issues and then by a serious shoulder injury that cost him all but 13 games with the River Cats. He has been rehabbing the surgically repaired right shoulder and recently began a throwing program that should allow him to participate at the start of major league spring training camp. Galarraga is originally from Cuba, but he defected and spent two years in Mexico before signing with the A's. He is a veteran baseball player at 28 years old and has good catch-and-throw skills to go along with an above-average bat for a backstop. He was hitting .357 with a 925 OPS over 42 at-bats with the Sacramento River Cats before his shoulder injury.

**Jose Guzman:** Although he is only 22 years old, Guzman is a veteran in the A's system, having pitched in the US for parts of the 2006-2009 seasons and in the Dominican Republic in 2005. With the exception of one appearance with Sacramento, Guzman has pitched exclusively in A-ball over the past five years. The right-hander was a starting pitcher at the beginning of his career, but he transitioned to relief in 2008 with great success. He was a Northwest League All-Star, saving 15 games and posting a 2.25 ERA for Vancouver. Guzman began the 2009 season with Kane County, but an injury sidelined the right-hander in early May. He wouldn't return to the Cougars until late July, although he did pitch nine games in Vancouver in late June and early July. Guzman finished the year with 32.1 innings for Kane County and 10.1 innings for Vancouver. His Kane County ERA was 5.01, but that number was dramatically inflated by three bad outings. His K:BB ratio was solid (34:11) and he allowed only two homeruns. Between Kane County and Vancouver, Guzman had 45 strike-outs and only 13 walks in 42.2 innings. Guzman's fastball sits in the low-90s and he has a solid change-up to go along with a slider. He has good command and generally works in the lower half of the strike-zone. Guzman will be 22 throughout the 2010 season and should head to Stockton.

**Shawn Haviland:** Haviland, a 33rd round pick of the A's in 2008, had an up-and-down year as a member of the Kane



County rotation. Before the All-Star break, he was one of the team's top starters, posting a 3.66 ERA and striking out 69 in 78.2 innings. His numbers dropped off after the break, however, as his ERA rose to 5.81 and he struck-out only 52 in 74.1 innings. In total, he posted a 4.71 ERA with 121 strike-outs in 153 innings. Missed location and some bad luck appeared to be Haviland's biggest hurdles during his struggles after the All-Star break. He pitched more to contact after the break and gave up a lot of hits, but he did a good job of keeping the ball in the ballpark throughout the season. The Harvard alum flashed improved velocity on his fastball, often hitting the low-90s, as opposed to the high-80s he had in 2008. He has a deep arsenal of pitches (fastball, cut-fastball, change-up, curveball and split-finger fastball) and a smooth, repeatable delivery. Haviland led the Cougars in innings pitched and fatigue may also have played a role in his second half slide. He should be a part of the Stockton rotation in 2010.

**Fernando Hernandez:** The A's brought back a familiar face when they signed Hernandez to a minor league free agent deal this off-season. The right-handed reliever was an Oakland Rule 5 pick in 2008 and he spent the first few weeks of the 2008 regular season on the A's roster before being sent back to the Chicago White Sox. At the time, Oakland had wanted to keep Hernandez, but they were unable to come to an agreement with the White Sox on a trade. Hernandez struggled with Chicago's Double-A affiliate in 2008, but he rebounded in a big way in 2009, posting a 1.68 ERA in 69.2 innings for the White Sox's Double-A and Triple-A teams. He struck-out 70 and allowed only 45 hits. He also pitched well this winter in Venezuela, posting a 3.41 ERA in 29 innings. Hernandez isn't an overpowering pitcher, but he can hit the low-90s with his fastball and he has a solid curveball and change-up. His command is his best asset and he has always gotten a lot of strike-outs throughout his career even without a blazing fastball. He will be 25 for most of the 2010 season and has been invited to big league spring training.

**Josh Horton:** The A's second round pick in 2007 had an up-and-down year for Midland in 2009. He was a mid-season Texas League All-Star after batting .298 with a 771 OPS before the All-Star break. However, he faded to a .213 average and a 600 OPS after the break. It was the second consecutive season that Horton got off to a fast start only to falter in the second half. He is a scrappy player who posted an even 1:1 K:BB ratio in 2009 and played solid defense at shortstop, but he will need to put together two strong halves of a season in order to move up the rankings. Horton has been praised by coaches for his leadership skills and has been an integral part of two league championship teams (2008 Stockton Ports and 2009 Midland Rockhounds).

**Steve Kleen:** Kleen was one of the top comeback stories within the A's system in 2009. The infielder/outfielder missed the entire 2008 season with a shoulder injury and coaches weren't sure what to expect from him in 2009. He impressed with the A's two full-season A-ball affiliates, hitting a combined .312 with 15 homers, 85 RBIs and an 856 OPS. He was particularly impressive with Stockton, batting .342 with a 917 OPS in 70 games. Kleen was old for A-ball (he turned 26 during the season) and he'll have to make up ground in a hurry to have a shot in the big leagues, but he has a solid approach at the plate, decent power, a strong throwing arm (he was a pitcher in college) and a versatile glove, so it isn't out of the question.

**Josh Leyland:** The A's may have a reputation for drafting college players, but the organization has been adding more and more high school talent through the draft. Leyland was taken in the 16th round out of a Southern California high school in this year's draft. The high school catcher signed fairly quickly, but a pulled quad limited Leyland to only seven games with the A's Rookie League team and cut into his Instructional League season. Leyland will be a project both offensively and defensively, but he comes to the A's with a reputation for having prodigious power, having impressed at several high school showcase homerun derbies, and a strong work ethic.

**Jermaine Mitchell:** Two years ago, Mitchell was one of the A's top prospects after he put together a strong season for Kane County in 2007. Since that time, the talented outfielder has struggled in consecutive seasons with Stockton. After posting only a 715 OPS with the Ports in 2008, Mitchell repeated there in 2009 and actually regressed, posting a 676 OPS. He showed good on-base skills (.350 OBP), but he was caught stealing 10 out of 27 times and managed only 24 extra-base hits. Mitchell is far more talented than these numbers would indicate, but he will need to start putting up better numbers in 2010 or he will drop off of the radar completely. He will be 25 throughout the 2010 campaign.

**Petey Paramore:** When Paramore was taken in the third round by the A's in the 2008 draft, he drew comparisons to Jason Varitek as a switch-hitting catcher with good power and patience at the plate and strong defensive skills. Paramore has shown good plate discipline since turning pro and a strong glove, but his power has yet to materialize in one-and-a-half seasons, mostly with Kane County. In 2009, he hit only .230 with the Cougars. His OBP was a respectable .344, but he managed only a .294 SLG in 326 at-bats. Paramore hasn't had the opportunity to hit in a hitter-friendly environment yet, and he could benefit from playing 2010 in Stockton.

**Stephen Parker:** The A's fourth round pick in 2009 struggled to the tune of a 672 OPS in his first 73 professional games, but coaches raved about the corner infielder's batting stroke during the A's Instructional League camp. The BYU alum posted a 1060 OPS with nine homers in 205 at-bats in his final year of college and he was considered a polished bat coming out of BYU. Parker is a solid defender at first base and was a third baseman in college. He could be a fast riser in the rankings next season.

**Gregorio Petit:** After a big 2008 season that saw Petit make his major league debut and hit .348 in 14 games with the A's, it was a disappointing 2009 campaign for Petit, who hit only .244 with Sacramento and then was given only 31 at-bats with Oakland. The defensive wiz hit .251 in 43 games with Caracas in the Venezuelan Winter League this winter and earned high praise for his defensive work at shortstop. Petit is an above-average defender at short and second and would seemingly be a solid back-up infield option for Oakland, but with the team's off-season acquisition of Aaron Miles and flirtation with Jamey

Carroll makes Petit's place on the team's depth chart uncertain.

**Anivoris Ramirez:** After three seasons playing for the A's Dominican Summer League and Rookie ball teams, Ramirez finally made the jump to a full-season affiliate when he joined the Kane County Cougars for the final five weeks of the season. Ramirez acquitted himself well with Kane County, posting a 3.29 ERA and going 5-2 in nine starts. The left-hander struck-out only 33 in 52 innings, but he walked only 11 and allowed just two homeruns. In 23.2 innings with the AZL A's, Ramirez had 22 strike-outs and seven walks. Throughout his professional career, Ramirez has shown solid command, walking fewer than 7% of the players he has faced, and he has generally been a groundball pitcher. With Kane County, he was remarkably consistent, allowing three or fewer runs in all but one of his nine starts. Ramirez, who will turn 22 in March, is 6'1", but he weighs only 170 pounds, so he may gain velocity as he fills out more. He will probably return to Kane County in 2010.

**Anthony Recker:** An everyday catcher since being drafted by the A's in 2005, Recker had to fight for playing time at various points during the 2009 season. He spent most of the season with Sacramento, where he struggled early, but found his groove at the plate late in the season. After the All-Star break, Recker hit .326 with a 933 OPS in 95 at-bats for Sacramento. In 329 total at-bats for the River Cats and the Rockhounds, Recker hit a career-best 15 homeruns and he posted an 804 OPS. He also improved defensively and earned himself an invitation to the A's major league spring training camp. He will be competing for playing time at Triple-A and for the right to be the A's first option if Kurt Suzuki or Landon Powell were injured with Galarraga and top A's catching prospect Josh Donaldson.

**Myrio Richard:** The A's 2009 ninth round pick demonstrated good plate discipline, but struggled to generate much power in his first professional stint with the Vancouver Canadians. In 53 games, he posted a 661 OPS, but walked 26 times. Richard showed more power in college and should put up better numbers when he escapes the pitcher-friendly Northwest League and the C's Nat Bailey Stadium. Richard's SLG was 100 points higher away from Nat Bailey Stadium. The 6'1" outfielder was a three-year starter at Prairie View A&M, where he showed good power and discipline at the plate while racking up 58 steals in 66 chances.

**Robin Rosario:** Aside from Michael Ynoa, Rosario was the highest-profile international signing the A's made in 2008. He made his pro debut in the Dominican Summer League that season and hit .281 with a 762 OPS. Rosario made the jump to the US in 2009, appearing in 29 games with the A's Rookie League team in Arizona. He struggled badly, hitting only .163 and striking out 37 times in 98 at-bats. Rosario only just turned 19, however, and he has considerable raw talent, so the A's will be patient with him. His throwing arm is one of the best in the system.

**Lance Sewell:** After posting a 2.88 ERA in 78 innings with Kane County in 2008, Sewell made the leap to Stockton in 2009. His ERA rose to 4.36 in the hitter-friendly California League, but he was better than his ERA would indicate. In 43.1 innings, he struck-out 56 batters and held opposing hitters to a .244 average. His 27 walks and eight homeruns allowed hurt him. The reliever also struggled at home, posting a 6.23 ERA versus a 1.56 ERA on the road. Sewell was the A's seventh round pick in 2007. The lefty has one of the most unusual pitching motions in baseball, although the A's have worked with him to smooth out some of the twisting action in his motion. Because of his delivery, the ball is very difficult for hitters to pick up coming out of Sewell's hand. He is equally difficult against both righties and lefties. Control has been Sewell's biggest hurdle, as he doesn't always maintain a consistent release point. If he can clean up his command, he is a very intriguing relief prospect, especially in an organization that loves relievers with unorthodox deliveries.

**Murphy Smith:** Smith, a 13th round pick this season, became the first starting pitcher taken by the A's in the draft to pitch for a full-season affiliate. The right-hander acquitted himself well with Kane County, posting a 4.75 ERA in nine starts. He allowed three runs or less in all but two of his starts. Smith has excellent command of his fastball, change-up and breaking ball and he mixes his pitches well. He is very polished and could move up the ladder quickly.

**Paul Smyth:** Smyth was named the Short-Season Reliever of the Year by MiLB.com for his efforts for the Vancouver Canadians in 2009. A 35th round pick of the A's this season, Smyth dominated in his first pro stint, not allowing a run in 36.1 innings for Vancouver and Kane County. He struck-out 44, walked only four and allowed only 14 hits. A side-armed, Smyth could be a future groundball specialist in the A's bullpen, a la Chad Bradford and Brad Ziegler. The Northern California native will be 23 during the 2010 season.

**Justin Souza:** Souza was acquired by the A's for Jack Hannahan in mid-July. He struggled with Midland after the trade (10.35 ERA in 20 innings) but had performed well for Double-A West Tennessee (3.35 ERA in 78 innings) before the deal. The right-hander starred during the A's Instructional League, showing a 91-95 MPH fastball and a tight slider that sat in the low-80s. A's minor league pitching coordinator called Souza a "poor man's [Andrew] Bailey." He has been a starter much of his career, but Souza could move into the bullpen next season. He was added to the A's 40-man roster during the off-season.

**Daniel Thomas:** Thomas was the talk of the A's 2008 Instructional League, when he wowed A's coaches and scouts alike with his high-90s fastball and devastating slider. Unfortunately, the right-hander was limited to only 26 innings in 2009 thanks to arm problems. He struck-out 31 in 26 innings, but he posted a 6.23 ERA and walked 16. His history of arm problems is extensive, but, if healthy, Thomas could rise through the system as a reliever very quickly, as he has the stuff of a top prospect.

**David Thomas:** Thomas, the A's 14th round pick in 2008, split a truncated 2009 season between the A's two full-season A-

ball affiliates. In 82 games, he hit .243 with a 681 OPS. He struggled with Stockton (622 OPS), but his numbers were much better with Kane County, as the switch-hitting outfielder batted .273 with a 752 OPS. A broken finger cost Thomas the final six weeks of the season. When healthy and playing well, Thomas is a sparkplug-type player. When he was called up to Stockton from Kane County in late April, Thomas provided an immediate energy boost to the Ports' roster. He is a good defensive outfielder and can play all three outfield positions. He will likely get another shot at Stockton in 2010.

**Alexander Valdez:** After a slow climb through the A's system, the talented Valdez might finally be on the verge of a breakout. The switch-hitting infielder hit .273 with a 747 OPS in 111 games with Stockton and Midland in 2009, his first full season above the Low-A level. He has followed that performance with a standout winter campaign in his native Dominican Republic. In 40 games with the Leones del Escogido, Valdez hit .308 with an 831 OPS. He was recently named the league's Rookie of the Year. Valdez was a seven-year minor league free agent this off-season, but he was re-signed quickly by the A's. Visa problems cost him much of the 2008 campaign, but the 25-year-old still could have a major league future as a utility infielder. He can play second, third and short, although his defense is still a work-in-progress.

**Corey Wimberly:** Wimberly was picked up by the A's in a trade involving Matt Murton before 2009 spring training. The utilityman was invited to big league spring training and he made a strong first impression with the A's coaching staff by playing with high energy all over the diamond. He was assigned to Midland at the start of the season and he got off to a red-hot start, batting .348 with a .458 OBP in 69 April at-bats. Unfortunately, Wimberly injured his hand at the tail-end of April, an injury that cost him all of May and June. When he returned to Midland, he still hit for average, but his OBP dropped significantly and he hit for considerably less power. He finished the year with a .296/.363/.350 line with 21 stolen bases in only 70 games. Wimberly was left unprotected in the Rule 5 draft, but he went unclaimed. When healthy, Wimberly offers a versatile glove (he can play short, second, third and all three outfield positions), as well as above-average speed and good on-base skills. However, he has struggled to stay healthy throughout his career. A winter league stint in Mexico was also cut-short this season due to injury. Wimberly will get another chance at big league camp this spring and with his versatility and speed, an opportunity in the big leagues could come at any time provided he is healthy when the opportunity arises.