

A's News Clips, Tuesday, February 8, 2010

Geren nixes six-man-rotation talk

A's skipper says he'll follow convention despite depth

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- At this time of the year, concrete answers are usually hard to come by around manager Bob Geren.

From roster possibilities to rotation spots, everything is speculation.

Well, almost everything.

Geren confirmed on Monday that, despite a tremendous amount of pitching depth, the A's will not open the season featuring a six-man rotation.

"No, definitely not," he said. "Not right now, at least."

The six-man notion has been lingering since the addition of Ben Sheets, who leads a rotation of fellow projected starters Justin Duchscherer, Brett Anderson and Dallas Braden.

The A's skipper will, however, consider bringing a starting candidate into the bullpen to provide the club with long-relief options. Trevor Cahill, Gio Gonzalez and Vin Mazzaro represent the leading contenders for the fifth spot -- Gonzalez being the only one with bullpen experience.

"It definitely helps to have somebody in the bullpen who can give you length," he said. "When one of your pitchers has trouble in the first, second or third innings, you want to be able to bring somebody in who can keep the damage to a minimum. A lot of our back-end relievers are very good, but they're also one-inning guys, so you don't want to eat at them."

The relief corps will most likely include right-handers Andrew Bailey, Michael Wuertz, Brad Ziegler and Joey Devine, along with lefties Craig Breslow and Jerry Blevins. Southpaw Brad Kilby is an option to round out the bullpen count at seven -- a number Geren prefers -- but Cahill, Gonzalez or Mazzaro may very well play into that equation.

Geren insists each starter has the same shot at a rotation nod, but that doesn't necessarily mean all are equipped for bullpen duties.

"I don't want to say any names specifically," he said, "but if somebody doesn't make the rotation, we have to weigh out if it's best for him to pitch out of the bullpen and get big league experience, or if it is best to go back to Triple-A and tighten up their game. Every pitcher is a different case, but that would be something that would be well thought out."

Cahill, though the youngest of the trio at 21, boasts the most big league experience and represented a constant in the A's rotation last year despite what Geren described as "rough streaks" that resulted in a 4.63 ERA. Gonzalez needs to prove consistency and composure while Mazzaro has to show both improved shoulder health and command.

"It's going to be a very good competition," Geren said. "We'll have to evaluate how they approached their offseason programs and what kind of shape they're in. How they perform in the spring will say a lot."

A's radio loss is Giants' gain

Lowell Cohn, Press Democrat, 2/8/2010

MY HOUSE — Seismic shift in Bay Area baseball radio broadcasting. Big deal. You should know about this.

Marty Lurie, baseball raconteur, baseball interviewer deluxe, baseball historian, a man you want on your side, has left the A's after 12 seasons and will work for the Giants this year. No disrespect to the A's, but in terms of radio stations, that's

like going from the minors to the majors. The Giants broadcast their games over KNBR, the sports leader. KNBR is the radio voice of sports around here. Can you tell me what station carries the A's? If you're interested, look it up.

In the interest of full disclosure, I tell you Marty is one of my closest friends — has been for a long time. I have a bias when it comes to his work, sure, but just about everyone agrees with me about Marty. He came by my house in the Oakland hills from his house in the Oakland hills the other day and we talked for two hours. He had a whopper of a cold and I made it my business to stay away from him, although I gave him a box of Kleenex.

This is Marty's story — what he did for the A's and how he ended up at the Giants. He used to be a big-deal defense attorney in San Francisco, but left that profession because he wanted to enjoy life. He started working at KECG FM in El Cerrito in 1996, started real small and used to tell himself, "I want to create a station like KNBR." Life is filled with lovely ironies.

For years Marty was an independent sports producer for the A's. He booked the guests for his pregame show, "Right Off the Bat." He sold his own advertising. He was a one-man band. He could walk into the visiting clubhouse of any major-league club, and players and managers and executives would hurry over to him. "Hi, Marty, what do you need?" That's the kind respect Marty has in the bigs. I know because I've seen it happen.

Every year he would negotiate his own deal with the A's radio station. The A's never employed him and if you don't mind my adding a personal note, I don't believe the A's understand what a treasure Marty is. The A's sometimes changed stations in the offseason and Marty would worry if there even would be a place for him on the broadcasts. The uncertainty would make him nuts.

Last August he went to the A's and asked what was going on with the station. Would he be back to do what he'd been doing? The A's said there were new people at the radio station (OK, it's KTRB) and there was lack of clarity.

"Here I go through another winter of uncertainty," Marty thought.

Late last season he bumped into Giants president Larry Baer at AT&T Park. Baer always had respected Marty's work and he complimented Marty on something he recently had done. In one of those daring moments that come to regular people from time to time, Marty took a chance. He heard himself say to Baer, "At some point I'd love to bring my show over to you."

It's not like the A's were fighting to keep him.

To which Baer replied, "Are you a free agent?"

"I realized I am a free agent," Marty told me. "I'm like one of the players. I own the whole show."

He told Baer he was a free agent.

"I don't want to interfere with the A's in any way," Baer said.

They left it at that, said they might talk after the season. Marty again went to the A's and asked if he was included in their plans. Again the A's told him they didn't know what would happen at the radio station. The A's appeared to have no clout with the station, which strikes me as strange and disappointing.

In late October, Marty contacted Baer and said he was interested in exploring possibilities. Baer spoke to the people at KNBR — made the proper introductions. And then Marty was waiting again. He said it was like being a lawyer and waiting for the jury's verdict.

"When I was waiting for the jury," Marty said, "I'd walk around every day looking for little signs, looking at notes, walking into walls."

Finally, KNBR gave him the verdict. Yes. Come on over.

"Marty brings a passion and love for baseball," Lee Hammer, Director of Operations for KNBR, told me. "Adding him to KNBR gives Giants fans more time to talk about baseball. He does a fabulous job. I've listened to Marty over the years and I'm glad to have him as part of the KNBR family."

Marty still will be a free agent. He is bringing over some of his A's advertisers like Good Neighbor Pharmacy, Truitt and White, Nation's Giant Hamburgers. They're as stoked about the move as he is. Marty will have a pregame show and a postgame show on weekends. He will begin on March 6 at the Giants' first spring-training home game.

"I will look at all of baseball through a Giants' lens," he said. "I'll preview the major games of the day and review the night before and get you ready for baseball that day. I'll take calls and talk to the fans."

He will analyze and bring in the top personalities of baseball — former players, scouts, executives, beat writers. He will bring to the show the essence of baseball. He likens a baseball season to a novel. Each game is one chapter leading to a dramatic climax and Marty will lead listeners through the chapters to the conclusion.

After he blew his nose for the 100th time, I asked Marty how he feels about the move to the Giants.

"I'm the luckiest man in the world," he said.

If you don't mind me butting in — Giants fans are lucky, too.