

## A's News Clips, Tuesday, February 23, 2010

### A's notebook: Crazy eight a sticking point for utility man

By Joe Stiglich\_Oakland Tribune 2/23/2010

Jake Fox has plenty of room for clothes in his locker.

His baseball gloves? That's another story.

Fox has eight gloves — yes, eight — and it's tough finding space for all of them. Such is life for a player whose versatility will be his biggest value to the A's.

"I have an infielder's glove, a first baseman's glove, an outfield glove and a catcher's mitt," Fox said Monday. "And I've got four backups, one of each. For me, that's the hardest thing about a new year, breaking in all my new gloves."

The A's acquired Fox, 27, and Aaron Miles from the Chicago Cubs in December (Miles since has been dealt to Cincinnati), and it was his bat that drew the team's interest. He hit .259 for the Cubs last season but swatted 11 homers in just 241 plate appearances.

Upon making the trade, the A's said Fox could see time at third base, first base, left field or designated hitter. But other offseason moves, including a trade for third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff, seem to have hurt Fox's odds of making the Opening Day roster.

His ability and willingness to play all over the diamond could help his cause.

Fox was drafted as a catcher, but the Cubs eventually tried him in the outfield and both corner infield spots.

"I've always had criticism of my defense," Fox said. "... With (Chicago), trying to figure out where I could fit in, it was better for me because it made me more valuable."

Fox is working with the catchers in the early portion of camp, and manager Bob Geren wants him to catch in some Cactus League games.

Landon Powell remains the solid choice as the backup catcher behind Kurt Suzuki. But if Fox makes the roster, Geren could give Powell occasional time at DH or first base and still have a reserve catcher on the bench.

Outfielder Coco Crisp and touted first base prospect Chris Carter were among the position players reporting. Crisp, signed in the offseason, said he felt like a "lost puppy" trying to find his way around. He also said he won't be going full-bore right away after having offseason surgery on both shoulders.

"(The trainers) are going to evaluate where I'm at, and I'm going to go with the flow of what they say," he said.

The reporting deadline for position players is Thursday, with the first full-squad workout Friday.

Geren already is impressed with 18-year-old catcher Max Stassi, a fourth-round pick in June. Stassi received a nonroster invitation to camp just seven months after graduating from Yuba City High.

"Watching him receive (Sunday), he's got a good lower body. He shifts well," Geren said. "He doesn't have any appearance at all of being 18."

Stassi was the top-rated prep catcher in last year's draft but slid down in the draft because of signability concerns. His time in big league camp may be short, but Geren said Stassi will get some innings in the Cactus League.

Heavy rains forced the A's to switch their workout from Phoenix Municipal Stadium to Papago Park, which has more indoor facilities. After two days interrupted by weather, forecasts call for sunshine today.

Geren and pitching coach Curt Young said Cal product Tyson Ross stood out among the pitchers who threw Monday.

Justin Duchscherer's procedure to relieve pain in his sacroiliac joint was rescheduled for 11:30 a.m. today. The team didn't announce the reason for the postponement.

## **Chin Music: Another wet day at Oakland A's camp; Duchscherer's procedure postponed**

By Joe Stiglich, Contra Costa Times, 2/22/2010, 3:16PM

Sorry for the late post ... technical difficulties with our blog today. Not that there was a ton to report anyway. The A's workout was interrupted by rain for a second straight day, and it poured much harder today than yesterday. The team had to shift operations to Papago Park because there's more covered batting cages over there, although the pitchers were able to throw outside. Weather.com predicts tomorrow will be in the mid-60's with no rain ... We can only hope.

A few tidbits and observations:

–Justin Duchscherer's procedure to relieve pain in his SI joint was rescheduled for tomorrow at 11:30 a.m. No reason given for the postponement.

–Jake Fox has taken the early lead for chattiest player in the clubhouse. The guy is just friendly as can be. Some players see reporters and head the other direction. Fox invites you to sit down, talks your ear off, and then encourages you to drop by again soon. Gotta love it ...

–Manager Bob Geren and pitching coach Curt Young both were impressed with RHP Tyson Ross today. "His delivery looks cleaner and cleaner," Geren said. Ross split last year between Single-A and Double-A, and the A's are very high on him.

–Coco Crisp and stud first base prospect Chris Carter were among the position players to report today. All position players are due in Thursday, with the first full-squad workout Friday.

–Never knew Ben Sheets had such a dry wit about him. He's a really funny dude, and seems to relish it when reporters are around. It's early, but that bodes well for us covering the team, because he's going to be a big story for as long as he's with the A's. Poking fun at his (lack of) hitting ability, Sheets said he wants the chance to dig in against CC Sabathia. "Just let him know that if I ever face him in Yankee Stadium, the porch is short."

Check in w/you tomorrow ...

## **Inman: New Oakland football stadium a fun idea ... forget about it**

By Cam Inman, [Oakland Tribune](#) columnist 2/23/2010

Some lucky firm is going to get paid \$125,000 to determine if a new football stadium can be built next to the Oakland Coliseum.

This could be the start of something great, perhaps a three-stadium complex off Hegenberger Road. Or, more likely, it could mean throwing more loot away to try to solve a maddening riddle — how to build a football stadium in California.

The housing crisis for Bay Area sports teams is a tired, tortured and depressing story. But another chapter is being written, thanks to the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum brass embarking on this new-stadium joy ride.

If (gulp, when?) the 49ers' stadium project in Santa Clara fails this year, then Plan B indeed could send them scurrying to Oakland, where — wouldn't you know it? — a feasibility study was ordered Friday to scout a new stadium that could house two NFL teams.

Here is what that study will uncover: A. The site works. B. The funding doesn't.

See how easy that was? Please forward the \$125,000 to the e-mail address below.

Well-intentioned study? Absolutely. Will it pay off? Not if the past decade of stadium plans by the A's and 49ers have taught us anything.

It all comes down to financing. At least the Coliseum folks warned that little or no public money will be available. (Safely assume "no" is the answer; \$150 million is still owed on Mount Davis.)

Of that \$125,000 fee being charged by the study's winning bidder — Convention, Sports & Leisure International — \$25,000 is allotted to identify potential sources of construction financing.

Here comes some comedy, via the CS&L's plans to find that revenue:

No. 1. Naming rights: OK, let's survey our current landscape: Both the Coliseum and Candlestick Park have lost their corporate-name sponsors, and not even Jerry Jones' new palace in Dallas has one. Relying on those dollars is unreliable.

No. 2. Premium seating: Need we remind anyone that "PSL" — personal seat license — might be the most feared moniker in Oakland sports lore (although "A.D. Football, Inc." isn't far behind thanks to the Raiders' seven-year skid)?

No. 3. Personal seat licenses: Oops, spoke too soon. Enough said, however.

No. 4. Seat equity: Wait, more money from the seats? Anyone else getting the idea that fans' wallets are losing this round of credit-card lotto?

No. 5. Sponsorships: Not much of that coin going around these days, unless you happen to be tax attorney Stephen Moskowitz. (Warning: Oracle-fed sports sponsorship might be tied up in the 34th America's Cup through 2013 as well as a never-ending bid process for the Warriors.)

No. 6. Ticket surcharges: And you thought bank fees were annoying. Perhaps Cal can offer an undergraduate degree in scalping.

No. 7. Concessionaire participation: Sure, charge \$20 for a flat beer and see how many seats get filled while underachieving quarterbacks get drilled into the turf (natural or artificial, by the way?).

No. 8. Team and/or league contributions: Likely the only way the NFL chips in is if the 49ers and Raiders share the remaining costs. A 50-50 split between these struggling franchises? Well, yes, if they realize how desperately they need a new stadium (and suite revenues) to remain competitive with them rich folk in Dallas, D.C., and New York.

No. 9. Private funding: You know, in case category No. 8 falls a few pennies short. They may as well start setting up donation boxes for the Raiders and 49ers home games in six months.

Oakland would love for the Raiders to help pay for the feasibility study. The Raiders responded by noting they've already "expended resources" in scouting out a redevelopment plan.

And so the haggling over money is already under way.

But don't let that stop you all from dreaming about a three-stadium hub — one for football, one for baseball (assuming the A's can't flee to San Jose) and one for whatever it is the Warriors do indoors to scam money off basketball fanatics.

The starting price for that dream: \$125,000, and climbing.

## **Chavez learning on fly at first base**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer 2/23/2010

Mike Gallego has a fun challenge this spring: The A's infield coach has to turn a Gold Glove third baseman into a competent first baseman.

Going from third to first isn't a snap, as Eric Chavez already has discovered. Gallego has worked with Chavez three days a week since Feb. 1, and it's coming along slowly.

"Obviously, Eric needs a lot of work," Gallego said Monday at Phoenix Municipal Stadium. "He's still getting used to that different angle, he's getting used to the footwork, to staying out of the way of the runner on the throw up the line.

"The biggest instinct he has to get rid of going from third to first is reacting to the ball first - he can't. He has to react to the bag. You don't want to have him standing there, cheering his buddy making a play, and then going, 'Oh, shoot, the ball is coming to me.' "

Gallego is trying to impart information a little bit at a time, but a lot of Chavez's learning will come once full-squad workouts begin - he has to get used to feeding the ball to pitchers, for instance, and to handling pickoff throws.

"The main thing I told him is, 'Don't change your mind-set because you're on the other side of the field,' " Gallego said. "He wants to 'act' like a first baseman, but most first basemen aren't as fleet of foot as Eric is, and none of them have hands like his. He's got a lot of pluses."

Gallego said he's thinking about getting a DVD together of great defensive first baseman for Chavez to study - like Keith Hernandez, J.T. Snow and Mark McGwire, who Gallego said was underrated at first. "But shoot, he can just watch Daric Barton," Gallego said. "He's a heck of a first baseman." If Chavez continues to have good health after his second back surgery, the plan is that he'll be a utilityman, playing at third, first, DH and maybe even at shortstop and the outfield.

Briefly: Justin Duchscherer's procedure to eliminate the discomfort in his sacroiliac joint was rescheduled for this morning. No reason was given for the delay. ... Dallas Braden was among the pitchers throwing at Papago Park, and he threw a 35-pitch bullpen. "He looked good, threw everything, no problem," manager Bob Geren said. ... Fautino De Los Santos, coming back after elbow surgery two years ago, "threw the ball hard and threw his breaking ball," Geren said. ... First baseman Chris Carter, one of the A's top prospects, said he didn't lose any weight during an illness that caused him to leave the Mexican winter league briefly; he has gained 5 pounds overall. ... Geren said corner infielder/DH Jake Fox is catching bullpen sessions and working with the catchers this week; he'll also catch a game or two during the spring. ... More arrivals at Phoenix Muni: outfielders Gabe Gross and Matt Carson and non-roster infielders Steve Tolleson and Eric Sogard.

## **Drumbeat: Geren talks Fox, Stassi, Souza; Duchscherer update**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Phoenix

**\*\*UPDATE\*\*** Justin Duchscherer's nerve ablation procedure to alleviate discomfort in his SI joint was re-scheduled for tomorrow morning (Tuesday) at 11:30 a.m. local time. No reason was given by the team for the delay.

Bob Geren was asked about some of the new faces in camp during his manager's media session this morning, and he said that high-profile prospect Max Stassi - considered one of the biggest steals of last year's draft because other clubs were convinced he'd go to UCLA out of Yuba City High School - doesn't catch as if he's 18. Geren said that Stassi moves extremely well behind the plate, he's quick, and he shows a lot of maturity.

"You'd think he's much further along than 18 years old," Geren said.

Stassi looks young when he's not behind the plate, though; he's the most fresh-faced of the non-roster invitees, largely because he's a good three years younger than anyone else. In fact, the next closest member of the team in age is Trevor Cahill, who will turn 22 on March 1; Stassi will be 19 on March 15. Stassi is also the smallest catcher in camp; he's listed at 5-foot-10 but he looks as if he's more than an inch shorter than Kurt Suzuki, who is 5-11. His lack of size never hurt his power in high school, though; scouts say he has incredibly quick hands.

Jake Fox, who is generally considered a corner infielder and DH, is catching bullpens this week. He caught Brad Kilby yesterday and Kilby thought Fox did a fine job. Any versatility will help, and Geren pointed out that Fox also can play left field.

"We definitely want to see what he can do behind the plate," Geren said. "He'll definitely catch in a game (this spring). And he's not just here to help with bullpens, he's here to work with the catchers."

Many of you know - and have pointed out - that Fox is not known for his glove. Some of the A's who have seen Fox take infield believe that Fox is better than advertised at third and that he's better than, say, Adam Kennedy, who played third for Oakland last year after spending his entire career at second. With Kevin Kouzmanoff now in Oakland and Eric Chavez feeling good as he tries to come back from his second back surgery, it's unclear where Fox might best fit, and a healthy Chavez could squeeze Fox out of a roster spot depending on the team's needs on the bench. Fox has options left; the only player on the bubble of a roster spot without options is second baseman/outfielder Eric Patterson.

It's always possible that Fox's hitting ability will be the difference when it comes to a roster spot. Chavez raved about Fox's bat, and Geren said today, "He can really hit. I threw to him yesterday, and you can really see that."

Geren got a look at Justin Souza yesterday; the right-hander from Galt came over from Seattle for Jack Hannahan last summer but had some arm trouble, so was shut down until instructionals, and the A's liked what they saw of him there enough to protect him during the Rule-5 draft. Geren said that Souza has a sneaky delivery with a release point that might make his pitches hard to pick up - and he also throws in the mid-90s.

Today's bullpen sessions took place at Papago Park rather than Phoenix Muni because of rain throughout the morning; the pitchers throw in the covered batting cage at Papago, which is less than ideal for fans wanting to check out the action.

Tomorrow calls for sun, however, so anyone planning to swing by Oakland's camp should find pitchers and catchers stretching on the field at 9:45 a.m. at Phoenix Muni. I'll again be updating when and where workouts are if there are any changes; check my Twitter account @susanslusser.

## **A's have solid fifth-starter options**

### **Cahill looking to hold off Gonzalez, Mazzaro**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- Trevor Cahill takes a seat near his locker at Phoenix Municipal Stadium, about 24 hours removed from his first Spring Training bullpen session.

As usual, longtime locker buddy Dallas Braden stands a few feet away giving someone a hard time.

Seconds later, reliever Andrew Bailey walks by armed with a dangerous smirk.

"You throw a perfect game today, Trevor?" Bailey good-heartedly asks his pitching teammate.

Cahill can only smile before shaking his head. If only, he thinks.

Right now, the 21-year-old pitcher has no time to worry about perfect games. For Cahill, it's all about perfect location. That, he believes, will keep him in a rotation that allowed him to make 32 starts as a rookie last season.

At the same time, he knows Gio Gonzalez and Vin Mazzaro are also trying to be as close to perfect this spring. Starting with their first workouts Sunday, all three officially entered battle for the fifth rotation spot, which is guaranteed to be a subject of much discussion for the next six weeks in Phoenix.

"When you have the choice for your fifth starter of three guys of that caliber," said manager Bob Geren, "that shows the depth we have. If we have any setbacks or injuries or missed starts, we have some solid candidates for that spot -- plenty more than last year."

Injuries have haunted the A's for the past several seasons, but only one rotation spot will be available if Ben Sheets, Justin Duchscherer, Dallas Braden and Brett Anderson leave camp without any bumps, bruises or broken bones of which to speak.

Rounding out the rotation

A look at the numbers posted in 2009 by each of the A's candidates for the fifth rotation spot.

	Cahill	Gonzalez	Mazzaro
Age	21	24	23
Games started	32	17	17

A look at the numbers posted in 2009 by each of the A's candidates for the fifth rotation spot.

	Cahill	Gonzalez	Mazzaro
Record	10-13	6-7	4-9
ERA	4.63	5.75	5.32
IP	178.2	98.2	91.1

"There are a lot of arms here," said Cahill, "and I think everybody except for a few should be competing for a job. Everyone has potential, and the team should take whoever is throwing the best to give them the best chance to win."

Cahill, the youngest of the three options who will turn 22 on March 1, seemingly has the edge having spent his entire rookie season in the big league rotation. But inconsistencies and command issues -- which resulted in an Oakland-rookie record 27 home runs surrendered -- must garner some improved attention this spring if he wants to keep Gonzalez and Mazzaro in the waiting room.

"Until you're that veteran guy, I think you have to come in here and train for a job every year," he said. "I think I learned a lot last year, and I think I'd be disappointed if I didn't use what I learned to improve."

It's easy to assume Cahill probably speaks for the other two starting hopefuls as well. Gonzalez and Mazzaro both sported ERAs over 5.00 last season while Cahill stood close by with a 4.63 mark. Of the three, though, Mazzaro arguably has the most to prove after bowing out in August with shoulder soreness following nine losses in 17 starts -- including eight in a row.

"First thing, along with a couple other guys, he needs to show us he's healthy," Geren said. "He needs to show us that his velocity is there, and it will be important to see how he progresses through the spring. How he commands the zone is big because his stuff is obviously there."

Upon entering camp straight off a hotel shuttle bus Saturday, Mazzaro deemed himself 100 percent healthy after rehabbing for four months near his home in New Jersey.

"I started throwing a month and a half ago and will have no restrictions," the 22-year-old said. "I'll be working on command and keeping the walks down. I'll try to make it hard on them to make a decision. I'm excited and healthy."

Ditto for Gonzalez, whose health never seems to be nearly as questionable as his mental state, which has caused the lefty some composure issues during the last few seasons in which he's gone back and forth from Triple-A to Oakland.

"We need to see some consistency from him, both physically and mentally," said Geren.

Said Gonzalez: "That decision, once again, is out of my hands. I will be ready to show the coaches that I have prepared, but I can't do anything beyond that. Everybody goes in with the mindset of winning a rotation spot, but the truth of the matter is you can only do as much as you can. You can't go in there demanding what's going to happen."

Another option for Gonzalez, presumably more so than for Cahill or Mazzaro, is an invitation to the bullpen to serve in a long-relief role. However, Geren said it's too soon to consider such a notion.

"Right now I'm just going to treat them all like starters and stretch them all out," the A's fourth-year skipper said. "We'll see how the next few weeks progress."

## **Lee's Leftovers: Update on Duchscherer**

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 2/22/2010

- 4:00 p.m.: Justin Duchscherer's scheduled nerve ablation procedure for noon today has been delayed until tomorrow at 11:30am, according to Bob Geren -- who couldn't say why it was moved back. The A's right-hander has been dealing with an irritated sacroiliac joint, which connects the base of the spine to the pelvic bone. He was bothered by the same problem last year while rehabbing from minor elbow surgery and has had three cortisone shots for the joint, but it is no longer responding to the treatment. The ablation will burn off the nerve ends of his SI joint using radio waves to produce heat that will destroy the nerve and relieve the pain. The right-hander insists it's a minor setback and was told that recovery time usually varies from one day to one week, but the team has to be concerned given his injury history. Plus, the burnt nerve will eventually grow back, so it is possible Duchscherer will have to undergo the procedure again sometime down the line.

Also from Geren: Dallas Braden, one of 13 guys to take in a bullpen session today, threw 35 pitches and "looked good." When I asked Braden about how his healing foot responded, he replied: "The arm feels great." ... Also making a strong impression was Tyson Ross. "His delivery looks cleaner and cleaner every time he's out there," Geren said. ... While passing by, pitching coach Curt Young noted that both Pedro Figueroa and Fautino De Los Santos had good outings. The latter, who the A's will be careful with because he had elbow surgery in 2008, showed off his breaking ball inbetween some hard strikes.

Weather forecasts indicate the rain may be gone for good, so the A's will presumably be back out on the field tomorrow morning at 9:30 for stretching at Phoenix Muni. Three days 'til position players report...

### **Lee's Leftovers: Monday morning notes**

- Jane Lee, mlb.com, 2/22/2010
- 10:40 a.m.: Thanks to a pretty steady rainfall in Phoenix this morning, the A's packed up their equipment at Phoenix Muni about an hour ago and headed to Papago Park, where they'll skip PFP (pitchers fielding practice) and simply stretch and do some conditioning before pitchers begin their throwing programs. Among those scheduled to throw bullpens today are the recovering Dallas Braden, along with Gio Gonzalez, Andrew Bailey and Craig Breslow.

Bob Geren talked with reporters this morning for a good while before venturing over to Papago. Some noteworthy comments from the skipper:

As I mentioned Saturday, Jake Fox has been in camp helping catch bullpens. When asked about Fox's catching abilities, Geren said he definitely wants to see what the newcomer can do behind the plate. "That's why he's here," Geren stated. The A's manager said Fox will be catching a few Spring Training games when not getting time as DH or at the corner infield slots and even left field. Geren threw BP to Fox yesterday and said he likes the way he hits. "You can tell a lot about how a guy approaches the plate during BP," Geren said. Fox will be fighting for a utility spot with Eric Chavez and Adam Rosales this spring.

Max Stassi, the youngest guy in camp at age 18 (he was born in 1991!), has already made quite the impression on Geren, who will be watching the young catcher closely. Geren, once a big league catcher himself, says he usually forges a strong bond with catchers. "He doesn't have the appearance of being 18 years old," Geren said. "You would think he's much older." Stassi will have plenty to learn behind the plate alongside Kurt Suzuki and Landon Powell, but Geren said the team will be careful with how they approach his offensive game. "We don't tend to make major adjustments with someone of that age," he said.

As a side note, newly acquired outfielder Coco Crisp and his playful personality showed up to camp today, as did Chris Carter, who will be watched closely this spring. Justin Duchscherer's nerve ablation procedure is schedule for noon, so hopefully I'll have more on him by the end of the day.

And even though Ben Sheets insisted yesterday that he "hates" Spring Training, he was quite eager to get on the field this morning about a half hour before stretching was scheduled to begin at 9:30 a.m. "What are we waiting for?" he announced. "I could have slept in a bit longer this morning. I'm ready to go right now!"

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