

## **A's Daily News Clips; February 27**

### **Eric Patterson hoping his versatility will land him on A's roster**

By Joe Stiglich Bay Area News Group. 2/27/10

PHOENIX- Speedy utility man Eric Patterson approached A's infield coach Mike Gallego about getting some work at third base this spring.

Patterson, primarily an outfielder and second baseman, faces stiff competition to grab a spot on the 25-man roster. He believes if he's able to play the left side of the infield it could help his cause.

He appeared in 10 games at third last season for Triple-A Sacramento.

"I'm trying to show what I can do," Patterson said. "I'm going to take some balls at third base. In general, if you look at utility infielders, they don't just play second or shortstop, they can play all three."

A's manager Bob Geren said Patterson, who turns 27 in April, will get significant at-bats during exhibitions. Although Patterson could get work at third, Geren wants him to concentrate mainly on center field, left field and second.

Barring injury, it appears Patterson will have to beat out a reserve such as infielder Adam Rosales or outfielder Gabe Gross to make the club.

Working in Patterson's favor is that he's out of minor league options. If the A's want to send him to the minors, he must be put through waivers, meaning other teams can claim him.

Newly acquired Jake Fox, another versatile player who appears on the bubble, also is out of options.

Patterson hit .287 in 94 at-bats with Oakland last season but showed a below-average arm in the outfield, where he saw most of his time.

He put on 7-8 pounds in the offseason, he said, and is concentrating on leveling out his swing to hit fewer fly balls.

Third baseman Dallas McPherson was given a non-roster invitation to camp. But before he can turn heads, he just wants to prove he's healthy.

Once a can't-miss prospect for the Los Angeles Angels, McPherson missed the entire 2007 and 2009 seasons with back problems.

He had surgery in July but is happy to be back on the field.

"You can't control those things," McPherson said of his past injuries. "The challenge is to make the most of the opportunity I have now."

Kevin Kouzmanoff, acquired in the offseason from San Diego, appears set as the starting third baseman. But the A's are trying to find more depth at the position.

If McPherson hits, he might enter the equation.

"At this point, I'm not really thinking about where I fit in on this team," McPherson said. "I just try to make it through today and see what tomorrow holds."

Rickey Henderson is expected at camp today and will work as a base running tutor through Tuesday. Previous word within the organization was that Henderson might show Friday.

Geren said he wants every player who might attempt a stolen base to work with Henderson, who set the major leagues' single-season and career stolen base marks while with the A's.

Pitchers threw live batting practice to hitters for the first time Friday. Geren thought Vin Mazzaro, a fifth-starter candidate, looked strong. Designated hitter Jack Cust agreed. "Real good curveball," Cust said.

Highly rated outfield prospect Michael Taylor hit a long homer off Brad Kilby.

## **Fremont, Oakland still in running for A's stadium**

By Matthew Artz/ Oakland Tribune 2/26/2010

Major League Baseball is still considering Fremont and Oakland as future homes for the Oakland A's, Fremont City Manager Fred Diaz said Friday.

Diaz said he expects to meet with baseball officials within the next two weeks to discuss the city's proposal for a baseball stadium in south Fremont on land owned by the NUMMI auto plant.

Diaz said baseball officials asked him earlier in the week for more details on acquiring the site, as well as on-site and off-site infrastructure improvements.

"No one's been eliminated at this point," he said.

A's owner Lew Wolff has said he'd prefer to move the team to San Jose, which baseball considers San Francisco Giants territory. While San Jose officials have moved forward with environmental analyses for a downtown stadium, the MLB formed a committee to consider various East Bay stadium sites, including three near Oakland's Jack London Square.

The committee was reported to have presented its findings to Commissioner Bud Selig earlier this month.

Baseball, the A's and the city of Oakland officials wouldn't comment Friday on the committee's work.

## **Chin Music: A's hold first full-squad workout; Rickey Henderson showing up tomorrow**

By Joe Stiglich 2/26/2010

Not a ton to report as A's take the field for first full-squad workout. The routine has been switched up this spring. Pitcher/catcher workouts were over at Phoenix Muni Stadium. The full squad will work out today through Monday at Papago, and then things shift back to Phoenix Muni starting Tuesday. ...

—Rickey Henderson will show up tomorrow as a special instructor for base running and stay through Tuesday, we've been told. So if you want to catch a glimpse, he's at Papago Saturday-Monday, and Muni on Tuesday. A's manager Bob Geren said he wants anybody who might steal a base to work with Henderson. I had previously been told that Rickey would be here today. Sorry for any confusion ...

—Geren gave his annual speech to the full squad before the first workout. He stressed the offseason additions that he believes have made the club better, and the strong second-half stretch the A's had last season. "Everybody in our division got better. It's going to be a competitive, tight division."

Commenting on the vibe surrounding his club right now, Geren added: "I think expectations are up with everybody."

—Unlike past offseasons, Geren didn't brainstorm possible lineups or batting orders. He knew there was a chance the A's could continue adding players throughout the winter (which they did), so for a while he wasn't sure what hand he'd be dealt. The up-in-the-air status of Eric Chavez also is a wild card. "I still really haven't (thought about the lineup) too much. A lot is going to depend on Eric — how healthy he is and where he can play."

The skipper did say he wants his speed guys at the top of the order (think Rajai and Coco, or vice versa).

–Pitchers are throwing live batting practice today. But on the first day, there usually aren't many swings taken, as hitters are just getting used to tracking the ball from the pitcher's hand to the glove. Still, every new wrinkle in the daily routine adds a bit of variety, so I'll be checking it out. ... I'll blog or tweet anything good.

## **Rickey Henderson to teach young A's to steal**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer 2/27/2010

Rickey Henderson will be at Papago Park the next several days, working with A's baserunners, but everyone on the team can probably benefit from the Hall of Famer's presence.

Catcher Kurt Suzuki will be among those at Henderson's base-stealing station this morning, but he's also hoping to get some tips from Henderson that might help him when he's behind the plate and a fast runner is at first.

"I'd like to know what tendencies Rickey would look for - the way guys are taking leads, what they might do in certain counts," Suzuki said. "That would be neat. He's the freakin' greatest baserunner of all time, and that might give me an idea what to do with Chone Figgins and Carl Crawford."

Suzuki is a good runner himself and could probably steal 15 bases if given the chance. Oakland became far more assertive on the bases last year, with 133 steals, fourth most in the league. That number is only going to go up with the addition of Coco Crisp, who will be at the top of the order with another speedster, Rajai Davis.

Davis stole 41 bases last year, but, he said Friday, "I can always learn from Rickey, all sorts of things. He has a wealth of knowledge."

Minor-league second baseman Jemile Weeks worked with Henderson during the Arizona Fall League, and he said that Henderson gave the A's prospects information about quickly figuring out pitchers' keys - the telltale signs that prompt a runner to go.

"I don't know if he wants his secrets out of the bag," Weeks said with a grin. "But it was very motivational for me, working with a Hall of Famer, and I'm looking forward to the next lesson. Anything I can do to try to duplicate what Rickey did, I will."

Geren imparts message: Manager Bob Geren gave his season-opening address to the team on the day of the first full workout, and he said he emphasized how competitive the AL West will be this year. He also spoke about the team's 16-4 roll in September and the fact that Oakland has even more talent now.

During that stretch, "We were one of the better teams in baseball," starter Brett Anderson said. "Hopefully, we can carry that into this season."

Briefly: Anderson threw a 35-pitch live batting-practice session, but he wasn't all that thrilled with his slider. "It was kind of dumpy," he said. Said Suzuki, "Brett expects all his stuff right now to be like it would be during midseason." ... Justin Duchscherer played catch for the second day in a row. ... The A's will stretch at Papago at 9:30 a.m., and pitchers will start throwing to hitters at about 11:10 a.m. Dallas Braden and Andrew Bailey will be in action. ... Former Stanford player Michael Taylor launched a homer to left center off Brad Kilby that the coaching staff was still buzzing about in the afternoon.

## **The Drumbeat: First full workout underway; Henderson arrives tomorrow**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Phoenix

Manager Bob Geren gave the troops the start of the season speech this morning, and he emphasized some of the offseason moves to give the team more depth. He talked about how competitive the division will be, making every game, every situation matter all the more. As he did with the pitchers on Sunday, Geren spoke about the nice roll the team had in the second half last year and the fact that the team has even more talent now. (By the second half, the A's had traded Matt Holliday, and the rotation was at times all rookies.)

Rickey Henderson will arrive tomorrow to work with most of the A's on baserunning - even Jack Cust, who told me yesterday he might steal 10 bases, and Jake Fox will be among those who will go through the Hall of Fame basestealer's station. Geren mentioned that during instructional league, Henderson worked with some of the team's prospects - and he spotted a key for runners to watch just three pitches into seeing a minor-league pitcher for the first time.

Most basestealers always key on one thing for every pitcher - they watch the heel or the elbow or something else in particular to decide when to go. Great ones like Henderson can pinpoint a different key for each pitcher, Geren said, so the hope is that he can impart that kind of information and other helpful hints in the next four days.

For those visiting Papago Park, where the team is working out each off the next three mornings, Henderson's baserunning drills will be on the centrally located half-field at about 11:30 a.m. or so, whenever live BP starts. He's also expected to be still working with the team on Tuesday, when the action moves back over to Phoenix Muni for an intrasquad game. (There's a short intrasquad game Tuesday and a longer one Wednesday.)

Justin Duchscherer tells me he feels so good after that nerve-burning SI joint procedure, he's playing catch for a second day in a row. His return to the mound should be in the next few days at that rate.

Brett Anderson is throwing first on Field 1 this morning, Vin Mazzaro first on Field 4 (facing Eric Chavez, among others). Live BP starts at about 11:40 a.m. and continues until roughly 12:30, when coaches take over throwing to A's hitters (that's when the catchers finally get to hit). The day ends about 1 p.m., and possibly sooner. Tomorrow's schedule is roughly the same, although if it changes - broken record - I'll tweet it from Twitter account @susanslusser.

## **Geren addresses A's before full workout**

By Jane Lee/ MLB.com 2/26/2010

PHOENIX -- An awakening sense of eagerness and anticipation surrounded the A's clubhouse Friday morning as players readied to take the field for the team's first official full-squad Spring Training workout.

Before making the short drive over to Papago Park, though, the A's band of brothers gathered together at Phoenix Municipal Stadium for somewhat of an opening act from manager Bob Geren.

The A's skipper, entering his fourth year as Oakland's head honcho on the field, delivered his annual welcome address during a 30-minute team meeting in front of 61 players -- catcher Joel Galarraga, dealing with visa problems in Mexico, was the only one absent.

Afterward, Geren provided reporters something of a recap of the speech he had long been waiting to give. Much of the message came from memories of a strong second-half finish in 2009 that preceded a successful winter.

"I let them know that I thought, as an organization, we had an outstanding offseason," Geren said. "We made a few trades, and I feel like everyone in the division got better. It's going to be a very competitive division."

That much is certain after a quick look at the team's American League West counterparts -- most notably Texas and Seattle, who bolstered their rotations with the likes of Rich Harden and Cliff Lee, respectively. At the same time, the A's made a similar move by acquiring four-time All-Star Ben Sheets, who appears 100 percent healthy after missing all of last season following elbow surgery.

Thus, Geren said his club's ultimate goal "is to win." "That's always the same," he said. "That's obviously the goal every year: Win the division. Go all the way."

That's easier said than done, though, which is why Geren also stressed to his players the importance of a healthy body, with guidance from the A's strength and conditioning team. Oakland used the disabled list 17 times last season for a cumulative loss of 989 games by the affected players.

"We definitely talked about health and about doing everything we can to stay on the field," Geren said.

After taking the time to go through each department and introduce the coaches, the A's skipper also touched on the depth this 2010 team brings into a fresh season.

"One thing we had last year was the desire to never quit and play hard," he said. "That's a trait we're going to maintain. And with that attitude we also have a little more talent than we had last year. That's what's going to make a difference this year. We're going to play with the same style and confidence, and we've added more depth to our roster."

Oakland opens the regular season April 5 at home with a four-game set against the Mariners before heading to Los Angeles and Seattle to take part in some more division rivalry. The A's also play AL East powerhouse New York, as well as Tampa Bay, in the first month of action.

Geren said he's yet to toy with many roster ideas -- which he's done this early in the past -- but will have a better sense of certainty when Eric Chavez's up-in-the-air health status is revealed.

For now, though, he is looking forward to meeting the few guys with whom he's yet to cross paths.

"I think the expectations are up," Geren said, "and the enthusiasm is evident by having 40 or 50 guys here four days before reporting date. I had never seen so many guys arrive early."

## **Lee's Leftovers: Rickey comes to town**

Jane Lee/MLB.com 2/26/2010

That's right, Hall of Famer Rickey Henderson will be in A's camp tomorrow as a special instructor for base running and is scheduled to stay through Tuesday. So if you're in the area and want to capture Rickey tutoring the youngins, he'll be at Papago through Monday before heading over to Phoenix Muni with the team on Tuesday. Most everybody -- at least anyone expected to steal a base this season -- is expected to get some work in with him.

Brett Anderson and Vin Mazzaro were among the A's pitchers who threw live BP today, although most hitters just stood in without swinging -- as is the norm on the first day -- just to get a feel for the ball coming out of the pitcher's hand. I talked to several of Mazzaro's teammates who said the righty looked "fantastic." He said he threw all his pitches and really felt comfortable out there, so don't count him out just yet for the fifth rotation spot, although he'll have to put up big numbers this spring to out-duel Trevor Cahill and Gio Gonzalez.

Michael Taylor put on quite a show while taking some swings in the cage today. He hit a monster homer but then was robbed of another after Jack Cust jumped up to grab the long ball...more live BP to come tomorrow, barring any big rainstorms.

## **Cust settles for return to A's**

Associated Press 2/27/2010

PHOENIX (AP) — Jack Cust would have liked to have been one of the early arrivals at the Oakland Athletics spring training camp but his new daughter, born Feb. 17, was a little more important.

Cust, who was a nontendered free agent in December, would also have liked to sign with a team closer to his home in Pennsylvania, but less than a month later he re-signed with the A's.

"I didn't know what free agency was going to be like," Cust said. "It wasn't a very good market. Unless you were one of the big talents, you had to take what you could get. There are a lot of good players without jobs right now."

With the shrinking market, Cust thought it would be better not to wait. He's been with the A's the past 2 1/2 years and felt comfortable with them.

"I was trying to get closer to home but when it came down to it, there was the familiarity of being here and the relationship I have here with the guys," Cust said. "I wasn't willing to wait any longer."

After kicking around five different organizations -- including the A's in 2005 -- he made it to the big leagues to stay in May 2007, when the A's obtained him from the San Diego Padres after Mike Piazza was hurt.

Cust hit eight home runs and drove in 20 over his first 13 games with the A's.

He's been a mainstay in the lineup ever since.

Cust joined the rest of his teammates Friday for the first official full-squad workout, and following the A's busy offseason he thinks the team could be pretty good.

"Ben Sheets is a proven winner and he had good numbers in a hitter's park," Cust said. "He should put up good numbers in a pitcher-friendly park like Oakland. Coco Crisp and Rajai Davis can run and open things up and we have a young pitching staff that's a year older."

Cust took things easy on his first day, standing in the batter's box and watching right-hander Vin Mazzaro throw strikes to catcher Josh Donaldson. In his younger days he may have tried to take a few whacks.

"You don't find your timing until you take some at-bats in a game," A's manager Bob Geren said. "The first day against pitchers the ball looks so fast. The speed is there. Once games start, whether it's the adrenaline of playing or whatever, you can start to slow the ball down."

With the birth of his second daughter, Cust wasn't able to get much batting practice before heading for Arizona. That made his decision not to swing easy.

"I would have broken something, my hands, the bat," Cust said. "I can wait."

Cust's role on the team will likely be limited to the designated hitter's spot and some outfield. The A's added outfielders Coco Crisp, Gabe Gross and Jake Fox to the mix that also includes holdovers Ryan Sweeney, Rajai Davis, Travis Buck and Cust.

He'll be a little behind for a few days, though Geren said hitters have a tendency to catch up quickly.

"I go up there with a plan and look to hit what I want to hit," Cust said. "I don't go up swinging at everything; that's when the trouble starts."

Notes: Hall of Famer Rickey Henderson is expected in camp Saturday for a series of baserunning clinics with the A's. ... Geren emphasized the A's successful late run in September and rallying from a 12-2 deficit in that stretch during the first team meeting of the spring. ... Nonroster C Joel Galarraga remains the lone player absent from camp. He's dealing with visa issues.