

## A's News Clips, Friday, March 5, 2010

### Rough start for Oakland A's in Arizona

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's resembled a team ironing out first-game kinks in their exhibition opener Thursday against the Chicago Cubs.

But Cactus League results quickly fade from memory when the calendar reads early March. So the A's will leave behind their 9-3 defeat at HoHoKam Park as well as the lopsided stats that went with it.

Seven Oakland pitchers combined to serve up five homers. The A's mustered just three hits.

"We had a little trouble keeping the ball in the park obviously," A's manager Bob Geren said. "We gave up five homers. But I saw some good things."

Among them — a solo homer from newly acquired infielder Adam Rosales in the fifth inning and a monster blast from top prospect Chris Carter in the eighth.

The long-ball theme was established early, as Cubs first baseman Derrek Lee drove a 1-2 changeup from Trevor Cahill over the wall in left-center with two outs in the bottom of the first.

Cahill, a primary candidate for the fifth starter's spot, allowed two runs on three hits in two innings, striking out two. Last season he surrendered an Oakland rookie-record 27 homers, so keeping the ball in the yard is key for him.

Cahill repeatedly shook off catcher Landon Powell's call for a fastball against Lee, opting for a changeup that he admits he's still getting a feel for this spring.

"I think I could have hit that pitch out," he said.

Interestingly, Cahill said he felt more butterflies Thursday than he did in his spring debut last season as a rookie.

"I was twice as nervous this time for some reason," he said. "I just haven't really faced hitters other than with a cage in front of me (this spring)."

Cahill was hoping to try the new curve he's working on but didn't find an opportune time to throw it. It's a slower version of last year's curve, and he thinks it could better complement his slider.

"My slider is kind of a get-me-over pitch."

Reliever Brad Kilby gave up two homers in the seventh — a solo shot to deep right-center by Brad Snyder and a two-run drive to right by Sam Fuld. Jerry Blevins and Clayton Mortensen also surrendered Chicago homers.

Of the several tape-measure shots Thursday, Carter's was most impressive. He drove a 1-1 pitch from Cubs lefty J.R. Mathes to the back portion of the lawn behind the fence in left-center.

That's the kind of power the A's envision Carter providing in the middle of their lineup at some point.

"I don't even think he got all of it either," Geren said. "I think he just missed it a touch and still hit it almost 500 feet."

The game had special meaning for Jake Fox, whom the A's acquired from the Cubs in December. Fox started at third against his former team but hardly had the game he was looking for.

He went 0-for-2 and made a throwing error in the fifth that allowed a run to score.

"I didn't have a great day, but you've got to start somewhere," Fox said. "The good thing is there's only one way to go from there."

## **Oakland A's notebook: Rajai Davis stands out in left**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

If Thursday's results were any indication, Rajai Davis will adjust nicely to his new spot in left field.

Davis, who played mostly center field last season for the A's, threw out two runners at third base as the A's opened Cactus League play with a 9-3 loss to the Chicago Cubs.

He nailed Tyler Colvin in the second inning as Colvin was trying to tag from second on Mike Fontenot's fly ball.

Then Davis retrieved Geovany Soto's single in the fourth and threw out Fontenot, who was trying to go from first to third.

"He always charges the ball well and throws the ball well," A's manager Bob Geren said. "It's a little shorter throw from left. That could play into his game."

Davis went 0-for-3 and came out in the sixth, leaving the stadium before reporters had access to him. He's switching to left to make room for Coco Crisp in center.

Ben Sheets makes his first start in an Oakland uniform today in the A's Cactus League home opener, and he'll do so against his former team.

Geren said matching up Sheets against the Milwaukee Brewers is coincidence. Pitching today will get him on rotation to go Opening Night against Seattle on April 5.

Is Geren intrigued by Sheets facing his old team?

"I want to see him throw against anybody," Geren said.

Sheets has shown no ill effects from elbow surgery that sidelined him all of last season. He'll likely pitch two innings maximum today.

Geren was impressed Thursday with the work of Justin Souza, a right-hander acquired in July from Seattle for third baseman Jack Hannahan. Souza, 24, struck out three in a scoreless eighth. A shoulder injury ended his 2009 season after five starts with Double-A Midland.

Proof that everyone is shaking off rust early in spring training:

Third baseman Dallas McPherson, who normally is No. 18, took the field in the sixth wearing No. 16. He arrived to the A's clubhouse in the morning to find the wrong jersey waiting for him.

"The clubbies put it in my locker so that's the one I grabbed," McPherson said.

## **Chin Music: A's drop Cactus League opener to Cubs 9-3**

By Joe Stiglich, Contra Costa Times, 3/5/2010

Final score from HoHoKam Park: Cubs 9, A's 3. You'll get a full story in tomorrow's paper, but here's the essentials:

The good: Chris Carter launched a monster homer in the eighth and newcomer Adam Rosales also went deep. Rajai Davis had a nice day in left field, throwing two runners out at third.

The bad: Seven A's pitchers surrendered five homers total. Starter Trevor Cahill was taken deep by Derrek Lee, and bullpen candidate Brad Kilby surrendered two shots in the seventh.

The ugly: Jake Fox, playing third base against his former team, was way off target on a throwing error to first that allowed a run to score.

—Bob Geren thought Cahill threw decent overall in two innings. He also said he was impressed with the relief effort of Justin Souza, who pitched a scoreless eighth with three strikeouts.

## **Chin Music: Trevor Cahill gives up two runs in two innings of spring debut for A's; Adam Rosales homers**

By Joe Stiglich, Contra Costa Times, 3/4/2010

Just a quick update on the happenings at A's-Cubs exhibition opener:

Trevor Cahill started for A's and went two innings, giving up two runs on three hits, including Derrek Lee's solo homer to left-center in the first. Surprisingly, Cahill said he was more nervous for this outing than he was for his spring debut as a rookie in '09. If it's because he's in a battle for No. 5 starter's spot, Cahill wasn't letting on. He just said he hasn't gotten to face hitters much in workouts before today.

Cahill is trying to incorporate a slower curve into his repertoire, to go along with his slider as a second breaking ball. He gave up Lee's homer on a changeup and said he doesn't have the feel of that pitch yet this spring.

Whatever he's throwing, Cahill needs to stay away from the long ball, which was his problem area last year. ... Not that this outing is going to carry all that much weight. Cahill will get plenty of mound time this spring.

Clayton Mortensen gave up a homer to the Cubbies' Marlon Byrd in the fourth. Newly acquired infielder Adam Rosales homered in the fifth for the A's first run — and hit — of the spring. Chicago leads 4-1 in the bottom of the fifth

## **Chin Music: Pregame updates for Oakland A's exhibition opener**

By Joe Stiglich, Contra Costa Times, 3/4/2010

The A's play their exhibition opener today against the Cubs, with first pitch a little less than three hours away. I didn't really detect a different mood in the clubhouse compared to past days. I've got to think the young guys — especially those in their first major league camp — have a few butterflies. The veterans probably take things more in stride, although many of them aren't even making the trip to Mesa. No changes in the A's lineup from the one I tweeted yesterday:

Rajai LF  
Barton 1B  
Sweeney RF  
Fox 3B  
Gross CF  
Rosales 2B  
Powell C  
Pennington SS  
Cahill P

A couple other tidbits:

—Joey Devine threw a 30-pitch bullpen yesterday and it went well. Significantly, he threw breaking balls and his elbow felt fine. He thinks he could face hitters this weekend. Could this put him on pace for the start of the season? Tough to tell ...

—Jason Jennings, signed on Sunday, threw live BP to hitters yesterday and said he'll throw in a simulated game tomorrow. Manager Bob Geren said the right-hander will appear in a Cactus League game in about a week. I think the A's are curious to see what this guy's got, either as a bullpen candidate or a fill-in starter if Justin Duchscherer isn't ready by the start of the season.

Speaking of Duchscherer, Geren says things continue to go well in his throwing program. No concrete word on when he'll throw off the mound.

Remember, you can hear today's game in the Bay Area on KTRB 860. It's a noon start (1 p.m. AZ time).

And in my shameless plug for the day, I'll mention that you can follow me at [twitter.com/joestiglich](https://twitter.com/joestiglich). Thanks to those of you who already are ...

## **After parting on good terms, Fox faces Cubs**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

**Jake Fox** said he has no bitterness toward his former organization. He appreciated **Jim Hendry's** honesty with him; the Cubs' general manager told Fox that he was trading him because he didn't want to hold him back from a promising big-league career.

"But at the same time, if you think I'll have a good career, why not let me play?" Fox wondered before the A's Cactus League opener against the Cubs. "We parted ways on good terms, but a part of you says, 'You missed a player who was right under your nose the whole time.' "

Fox was at third Thursday in Oakland's 9-3 loss to his former team, and he made some nice plays there, including tagging out runners twice on throws from left fielder **Rajai Davis**. But he also made a throwing error while trying to catch **Derrek Lee** off first base in the fifth. "I just airmailed it," Fox said.

**Trevor Cahill** started for Oakland and allowed one run in two innings, a blast to left center by Lee in the second on a 1-2 changeup. Cahill shook off catcher **Landon Powell**, who wanted a fastball.

Cahill's conclusion: His changeup needs more work. He's also working on a new curveball after shelving his old one last year, but didn't use it Thursday.

A's pitchers allowed five Cubs homers in all ("We had a little trouble keeping the ball in the park," manager **Bob Geren** said). Oakland didn't record a hit until the fifth, when **Adam Rosales** banged a one-out homer, and the team finished with three hits in all, including **Chris Carter's** solo blast in the eighth.

"He hit a bomb," Geren said. "I don't think he got all of it and it went 500 feet."

Geren liked what he saw of Cahill and also had praise for right-hander **Justin Souza**, who allowed a hit and struck out the side in the eighth.

More regulars will be in action today at Phoenix Muni, including longtime third baseman **Eric Chavez**, who will be at first base. Starter **Ben Sheets**, the A's top offseason acquisition, will face his former club, the Brewers.

**Pitchers' progress:** **Justin Duchscherer** said he's already doing work off the front of the mound as he returns from a procedure that burned the nerve endings around his sacroiliac joint. He said he will not need much time to get ready for the start of the season. ... Reliever **Joey Devine** also thinks he'll be ready to start the season. He threw a 30-pitch bullpen session Wednesday, had good velocity and threw eight to 10 breaking balls. He'll have hitters stand in against him this weekend and figures to be in a game next week. ... **Jason Jennings**, signed this week, will throw a simulated game and then appear in his first game next week.

**Briefly:** Infielder **Corey Wimberly** is out with a calf strain. ... Catcher **Kurt Suzuki** and his wife, **Renee**, will be presented with an award this evening for their work in raising funds for **Jon Wilhite**, severely injured in the car accident that killed **Nick Adenhardt** of the Angels and two others in April. The Baseball Wives Association event, featuring numerous big-leaguers and celebrities, is at 6:30 p.m. in Paradise Valley and it will benefit autism charities; details at [www.thebwcf.com](http://www.thebwcf.com).

## **Drumbeat: Cactus League opener day, strong signal for broadcast**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Phoenix 3/4/2010

Quick greetings from Phoenix Muni before I dash over to Mesa for the A's first spring game; as I tweeted yesterday (@susanslusser) the lineup is: Davis lf, Barton 1b, Sweeney rf, Fox 3b, Gross cf, Rosales 2b, Powell c, Pennington ss, Cahill p.

Cahill will go two innings at the most, but more likely one; it's about a 25-30 pitch limit for the starters this first time out. Clayton Mortensen will follow him.

Jason Jennings will throw a simulated game soon and still looks on track to get into a game next week some time.

Corey Wimberly will be out a few days with a calf strain, according to Bob Geren. I don't get the impression Wimberly is all that high on the A's radar for a big-league spot, but any time missed during the spring for a guy like that really hurts - they need to get noticed to have any shot. Also, I love Wimberly's back flips and high socks; he's fun to watch.

Today is the first broadcast of the spring on 860 AM and I know Ken Korach has completed the first manager's show of the year. Ken Pries, the VP of broadcasting, said that 860 AM is sharing a new radio tower with another station that will really boost the signal during the day. The tower is near the San Mateo Bridge, on the Hayward side, and from sunup to sundown, it make 860 AM far more powerful.

At night, though, the signal will still be tough to get from portions of Berkeley and north of there. The FCC required many stations such as 860 AM to power down in the evening, so while day games should be crystal clear, the night games will still be iffy in the northern part of the East Bay.

Chris Townsend's postgame show debuts today, too. I'd love to hear some feedback on it since I definitely won't get it here - the new tower, which started transmitting 860 AM a week and a half ago, isn't *that* good.

## **Fox hopes journey ends up in Oakland**

### **Out of options, utility player working hard to prove he belongs**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

MESA, Ariz. -- Jake Fox wasn't the only one eagerly awaiting his Thursday debut in green and gold against his former Cubs team.

In fact, his wife Allison -- along with Fox's father-in-law and sister-in-law -- was just as excited to witness the day's events.

"I think they're more excited than I am to see me play against the Cubs," Fox said Thursday morning before the A's Cactus League opener at Chicago's Hohokam Park. "Right or wrong, my family obviously has a biased opinion about my abilities, and they thought I should have been playing more in Chicago. I did too, and that's why we're all excited about me going out there and showing them what I can do."

Fox, acquired in a December trade, went 0-for-2 and committed an error at third base through five innings of play in the Cubs' 9-3 victory over the A's.

Not exactly the best way to prove your worth to a former team, but the always positive 27-year-old is still confident in his abilities to be an everyday player -- even if in the utility role. He also understands that it's never fair to draw many conclusions from the first game.

"I didn't have a great day, but you have to start somewhere," he said following his performance. "The good thing is there's only one way to go from there."

Fox is hoping that way leads him to Oakland, where he believes he can turn into something of a jack-of-all-trades player. Drafted by Chicago as a catcher in 2003, he was converted to an infielder and outfielder during the 2007 season. As a result, A's manager Bob Geren plans on giving him time behind the plate, at the DH spot and in the outfield and corner infield positions this spring.

"He'll get a chance to play all over," the A's skipper said. "He'll have plenty of opportunity to show us what he can do."

Perhaps more so than anyone else in A's camp, Fox has been racking up plenty of hours on the field. When he's not catching a bullpen session, he's sharing newcomer stories with Kevin Kouzmanoff at third base. And when he's not taking grounders, you can probably find him in the batting cage.

"Long days just come with the territory," he said. "But they help me get in shape and also give the team a chance to see me play and see what I can do and where I might fit in."

"Bob just told me, 'Look, you better be ready to move around because you're going to be playing everywhere. You might not have too many days off.' I can handle that. I don't think you can want to be an everyday player and ask for days off, too. You can't have the best of both worlds, so I want to play every day, and I'm grateful for that chance."

In 2009, Fox saw big league action for the first time since 2007, posting a .259 batting average with 11 home runs, 12 doubles and 44 RBIs in two stints -- a combined 82 games -- for Chicago. His entire 2008 season was defined by Minor League action, as he split time between the Cubs' Double-A and Triple-A teams after spending just seven games at the big league level the year before.

"Obviously Chicago has a different way of running things, and I was never really going to get an opportunity to play there," Fox said. "I knew a trade was probably going to happen. And for me, where I'm at, it was probably the best move for my career. Hopefully I'll get an opportunity here, and that's all you can ask for as a player."

Fox joins Eric Patterson as two A's players out of options, and it appears much of his future with the club heavily relies on the health status of Eric Chavez, who is penciled in as Oakland's go-to utility guy. If Chavez receives a clean bill of health at the end of camp, just two bench spots remain available between Fox, Patterson, Adam Rosales, Gabe Gross and Travis Buck.

Fox, though, neither has nor wants to take the time to consider such scenarios.

"That's out of my control," he said. "If things don't work out, then they don't work out. Right now I'm just trying to control what I can, and that means coming to the park every day and playing hard."

"It's always been an adventure as far as where I'm going to play, so this is nothing new. I just come out, have fun and let the rest take care of itself."

The having fun part of the equation has proved to be rather easy for the light-hearted Fox, who, in just two short weeks, has already presented himself as one of the more inviting and personable guys in a rather young A's clubhouse.

"You know what I like about this place?" he asked himself. "The guys who are here come out and have fun and love to play. You can't ask for anything better. I'm a positive guy. I have a lot of energy, and it's refreshing to come to a place that has the same kind of energy. People are here for the right reasons, and I feel like I'm in an organization that wants me to be here and wants me to succeed."

## **Friend and foe: Sheets to face Brewers**

## **Right-hander to debut against former ballclub**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

MESA, Ariz. -- The folks who annually put together the Cactus League schedules must certainly be sitting somewhere applauding themselves.

In what became somewhat of a tradition over the past several years, the A's and Brewers have always battled one another on their respective team's spring opening days.

Not this year.

Oakland and Milwaukee will meet for their second game. And the planning, which first seemed unusual, now appears to be of perfect timing thanks to a unique main attraction.

Enter Ben Sheets, who not only will be making his first start since 2008 but will be making it against his former team.

"It's an extra added feature," A's manager Bob Geren said. "I want to see him throw against anyone."

Geren insists the coincidence is nothing but that, as Sheets' spring bullpen sessions happened to line up his first scheduled start with Friday's home-opening contest against the Brewers.

The 31-year-old right-handed pitcher, who was brought into the Oakland fold as a free agent in January after missing all of 2009 because of elbow surgery, threw live batting practice Sunday and said everything "felt great."

"Speaking as a baseball player, I'm very excited for the season," said Sheets, who is not limited in any way this spring. "I think everybody feels the same way."

Just how strange will it be, though, to watch Sheets face a team with which he spent the first eight years of his career?

"It will be weird," said Milwaukee's Prince Fielder. "That's how it is anytime you have someone who did so well in an organization. Like when Ken Griffey Jr. [went to the Reds] it was different. But they're still the same player."

## **Rosales homers as A's drop spring opener**

### **Cahill gives up two runs over two innings in first start**

By Carrie Muskat / MLB.com

#### **CUBS 9, ATHLETICS 3**

*at Mesa, Ariz.*

*Thursday, March 4*

**Athletics at the plate:** Adam Rosales hit his first spring homer with one out in the fifth off Rule 5 Draft pick Mike Parisi. Jake Fox, traded from the Cubs to the A's this offseason, went 0-for-2. Chris Carter hit a solo homer with one out in the eighth.

**Cubs at the plate:** Derrek Lee picked up where he left off, hitting a home run in his first at-bat. Marlon Byrd, making his Cubs debut, went 2-for-2, hitting a single in his first at-bat in the second and leading off the fourth with a home run. He also scored on Mike Fontenot's sacrifice fly. Brad Snyder hit a solo homer and Sam Fuld added a two-run shot. Shortstop Starlin Castro tripled in the eighth.

**Athletics on the mound:** Trevor Cahill, who led Major League rookies in games started last season, gave up two runs on three hits over two innings in his Cactus League debut. Cahill gave up a team rookie-record 27 home runs last season, and served up a first-inning blast to Derrek Lee. Clayton Mortensen gave up two runs on three hits in one inning.

**Cubs on the mound:** Randy Wells, who won 12 games in his rookie season, struck out two over two innings in his first start. Sean Marshall, who could wind up in either the rotation or the bullpen, pitched two scoreless, hitless innings, striking out one.

**Worth noting:** Fontenot was upended at third trying to dodge Fox's tag and advance on Geovany Soto's single in the fourth. Fontenot banged his left knee on the hard infield dirt. He was lifted defensively in the next inning. Fox made a throwing error in the fifth which allowed pinch-runner Snyder to score.

**Cactus League records:** Cubs 1-0; Athletics 0-1

**Up next:** Carlos Zambrano, hoping to bounce back from a disappointing season, makes his first Cactus League start on Friday when the Cubs play host to the Arizona Diamondbacks at HoHoKam Park. Casey Coleman, Jeff Stevens and John Gaub also are scheduled to pitch. Ben Sheets will make his first start for the Athletics on Friday and it'll be against his former team. The A's play host to the Brewers in Phoenix. Sheets, who had spent his entire career with Milwaukee, missed all of last season following elbow surgery.

## **Cahill not impressive in A's exhibition loss to Cubs**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Marlon Byrd homered in his Cubs debut, one of five home runs in Chicago's 16-hit attack Thursday at Mesa, Ariz., in a 9-3 exhibition victory over the Oakland Athletics.

Trevor Cahill didn't exactly show he deserves to be the A's No.5 starter. He gave up two runs on three hits in two innings and was tagged for Derrek Lee's long homer after shaking off catcher Landon Powell.

"He wanted me to throw a fastball but ... I just really felt like throwing a changeup," said Cahill, who went 10-13 as a rookie last season. "(Lee had taken) two aggressive swings, so I figured if I could keep the same arm speed and slow the pitch down, he'd swing right over it. But I hung it right down the middle, belt high."

Oakland right-hander Jason Jennings, who signed with the Athletics on Sunday, is scheduled to pitch in a game within a week.

Jennings threw live batting practice for the first time on Wednesday and will throw one more time in game-like situations before the A's slot him into their pitching plans.

Jennings said his arm felt great the morning after his latest throwing session. The A's plan to stretch him out as a starter or long relief. He moved to the bullpen with the Texas Rangers last year.

"Hopefully I can get into a game by Sunday," Jennings said. "My arm feels good. I tried to stay on schedule at home with my own program."

A's manager Bob Geren said Thursday that he'd like to see Jennings throw again before deciding when he'll appear in a contest.

"I'd like to give him one more outing this weekend," Geren said. "But he'll get into a real game within a week."

Jennings said some anxiety stirs around inside, even before a spring appearance.

"This is my 12th spring training and I still get nervous," he said. "The fans are out there and you're putting on a uniform. You get a little extra motivation."

Jennings' pitching career started in earnest when he arrived at Baylor. Originally drafted by the Arizona Diamondbacks as a catcher in the 54th round (1,530th overall) of the 1996 draft, he attended college instead and Bears coach Steve Smith made the decision to use him as a pitcher and designated hitter.

"It was easier to pitch and catch in high school because you only played twice a week," Jennings said. "In college you play too many games."

At Baylor, Jennings earned National College Player of the Year honors in 1999, when the Colorado Rockies made him their first round pick.

NOTE

Ben Sheets, who signed to a \$10 million contract after missing all of last season with an elbow injury that required surgery, is scheduled to make his A's debut today against Milwaukee, his former team.

## **A's Sheets tests his repaired elbow against old Brewers mates**

Jorge Ortiz, USA Today, 3/5/20100

Ben Sheets' outings this spring will be followed closely because, after sitting out a year due to elbow surgery, folks around baseball want to find out whether he can return to the form that made him a four-time All-Star.

That he would happen to make his Cactus League debut against the only team he's ever played for only adds spice to the game.



Sheets, who signed a one-year, \$10 million deal with the Oakland A's in the offseason, will take the mound against the Milwaukee Brewers in Phoenix today. In eight injury-marred seasons in Milwaukee, Sheets went 86-83 with a 3.72 ERA, numbers that don't reflect his outstanding work when healthy.

That's always the question with Sheets, and he can begin to provide the answer today.

While the Boston Red Sox and Minnesota Twins meet in Fort Myers, Fla., for the second of three consecutive days, the Cactus League seems to be hosting a block party all over the Phoenix metro area. Either that or the league is trying to do its part to reduce vehicle emissions.

The eight teams that share facilities in Arizona will be facing their neighbors today, and for Chicago White Sox outfielder Juan Pierre there will be a sense of déjà vu. He's back at Camelback Ranch, the complex where the White Sox and Los Angeles Dodgers hold their camp, but on the other side and wearing a different uniform.

"It's definitely kind of weird," Pierre said, "but it makes for an easier transition, at least in the spring."

The Cleveland Indians and the newly arrived Cincinnati Reds clash in Goodyear in the first exhibition game for both clubs. The San Diego Padres will only need to walk across the Peoria Sports Complex to run into the Seattle Mariners in the second of four consecutive games between them. And in Surprise, the Texas Rangers and Kansas City Royals meet for the second of five times this spring.

## **Fuson, Beane reunite for sake of A's**

Fox News, 3/4/2010 PHOENIX

Billy Beane sets aside 'Moneyball' grudge for the sake of the A's.

Grady Fuson returned to the Oakland Athletics after an eight-year absence this spring, assuming the role of an adviser to general manager Billy Beane and the A's player development staff.

Yeah, that Grady Fuson, the former A's scouting director, who seven years ago was a prime target of the arrows in "Moneyball," which prompted him to verbally dress down Beane for the way the operation of the A's was portrayed in the book.

"If he wants to show no appreciation to the team he had in place, it's his prerogative," Fuson told San Francisco Chronicle baseball writer Susan Slusser at the time of the book's publication, "but it's sad because of the loyalty of those people who traveled from city to city and spent nights and nights away from home and are now called old codgers."

So what's up?

Nothing, really, other than Beane being Beane, driven to win to the point that he can truly let bygones be bygones.

Beane knows that Fuson understands what it takes to developing a winning organization and earlier this winter, when Fuson became a victim of the rearranging of the furniture in San Diego, Beane didn't hesitate asking Fuson to come back.

"When I got let go, it wasn't that Billy was my first call," Fuson explained. "I was his first call. He called me that afternoon."

As Beane explained, "We sort of knew what was in the wind, and if he was available I wanted him back. He is what I like. He will speak his mind and he isn't going to be intimidated by his surroundings. That's important to me -- having people who aren't afraid to speak up for what they believe in."

What the move doesn't do is indicate any remorse Beane has about "Moneyball" from a personal standpoint.

"Not at all," said Beane when asked if he ever regretted the hubbub created by "Moneyball." "It allowed me to meet some incredible people and opened a lot of doors for me."

It opened international doors to Beane with executives in other sports, and created a cottage industry for him on the public speaking circuit.

"It changed my life," he said. "I met people and created friendships."

It also painted a bull's eye on Beane in baseball circles, particularly among the scouting and player development people who were demeaned by the way they were characterized.

Beane, however, points out today what he said seven years ago, without many people taking time to listen: That "the big thing is to separate me from the book. We didn't commission the book. It was not necessarily a testament to me or our organization.

"The difficult thing is part of the misconception was that it was a template for success."

In other words, the book took a broad concept that Beane believes in -- look for an undervalued commodity and capitalize on it -- and focused on what was the commodity du jour (on-base percentage) as if it was a tried-and-true route to success.

"This game, like business in general, is fluid," Beane said. "There is no template, where, what was (the focus) 10 years ago is going to be working 10 years later. In fact, by the time the book came out, on-base percentage had become a wildly recognized state and no longer was undervalued. We could no longer afford it so we had moved on."

Among the changes, which Fuson has said makes him most comfortable, is that there were a couple of years where Beane admittedly became overly dependent on stats. He is now back to using stats more as one of several tools in evaluations.

One thing hasn't changed, though, Beane's respect for the abilities of Fuson, who initially left the A's because he was made the general-manager-in-waiting with Texas, only to have that situation erode. Then he moved to San Diego, where he was reunited with former A's president Sandy Alderson, but when the Padres were sold prior to last season to a group headed by former agent Jeff Moorad, Alderson was pushed out, and at season's end, Fuson was caught up in a front office remodeling.

Now's he back in Oakland, where his non-playing career began 28 years ago. He's back with the team that he helped build into an AL West power thanks to his ability to run a scouting- and player-development program that produced the likes of Barry Zito, Mark Mulder and Tim Hudson -- the anchors to the championship-run rotation, along with the third baseman.

He is back with the organization where one of his proteges, Eric Kubota, is now the scouting director.

And he's back alongside Beane, who does have a temper but also has an ability to regroup and move on, rarely holding a grudge.

"I don't know how long it took for things to calm down, but I know we've kept in touch over the last eight years, and I always thought he would feel comfortable (back) here," Beane said. "That is a beautiful part of our relationship.

"Do we disagree on things? That's part of a business relationship. But when it is over it's over. I have a tremendous respect for his work ethic and his ability to lead a department, and I think he likes the fact that our approach (in Oakland) is that we all work together, at every level, to get the job done."

That, in itself, has to be a welcome reprieve for Fuson, who found himself in the midst of a power-struggle in Texas, and then landed in San Diego, where the front office was split by factions who felt loyalty to Alderson, former general manager Kevin Towers and former owner John Moores.

That, as much as anything, is why Fuson is comfortable coming back to what is his baseball home.

## Oakland A's spring training postcard

Ben Reiter, Sports Illustrated, 3/4/2010

### **Prospects to Watch - Chris Carter and Michael Taylor**

Carter, 23 and acquired in 2007 from the Diamondbacks in the **Dan Haren** trade, and Taylor, 24 and picked up over the winter in a swap for fellow minor leaguer **Brett Wallace** that was part of the **Roy Halladay** deal, are ranked by *Baseball America* as the game's 28th and 29th best prospects, respectively. Neither has spent a day in the majors, but both, says Beane, could provide a boost to the A's offense this season -- perhaps sooner, rather than later. "Even conservatively speaking, I think we'd be surprised if they weren't at some point up here," the GM says. "It could be at the end of spring."

Both are physically imposing: Carter is 6'4", Taylor is 6'6". While Carter, who will likely play first base, possesses more raw power -- he hit 28 home runs last year in the minors, and 39 the year before -- Taylor is perhaps more versatile. The A's expect him to be an above-average defensive outfielder, and even though he hit 20 home runs in the Phillies organization in '09, he also displayed a plate discipline possessed by few players of his considerable size. He struck out 70 times in 116 games, and hit .320 with a .395 OBP.

Taylor also, says Beane, "puts about as good a first impression on you as you can imagine. I got off the phone with him when we traded for him, and I said, listen, this kid on the phone was about as impressive a young man as you'd want." Taylor is 19 units, or about one academic quarter, shy of graduating from Stanford with a degree in Political Science -- he focused on American government and U.S.-Middle East relations -- and intends to complete his degree, his studies for which were interrupted when he was drafted after his junior season, in short order. Of his chances of making the A's this season, he says, "You're talking to a guy who has not seen one major league pitch, so it would be a little presumptuous of me to sit here and say, yes, I'm going to provide something at the major league level. But I'm trying to get better, so that whatever skill set I have shines."

### **New Face, New Place**

#### **Kevin Kouzmanoff**

Kouzmanoff, 28 years old and now with his third team after the A's acquired him from the Padres in a trade centered on spare outfielder **Scott Hairston**, should fit well into Oakland's defensive renaissance. "He had three errors all last season, which is remarkable," says Geren of his new third baseman. "I've seen two errors on one play. I've seen three in one game." But he should also contribute some much-needed, everyday power. He averaged nearly 20 homers in his three seasons in San Diego, and his 18 last year were more than anyone on the A's roster mustered except for **Jack Cust**. Says Geren, "He has real good numbers hitting with guys in scoring position" -- a .303 average and an .838 OPS in '09 -- "and he's the kind of guy who is going to drive in runs. I don't know where he's going to hit yet, but he's going to be a middle-of-the-lineup hitter, which we need."

### **Sleeper**

#### **Dallas McPherson**

Speaking of possible sources of power, few players have ever had as much power potential as the 6'4" McPherson, a 2nd round pick of the Angels in 2001 who was *Baseball America's* 12th-best prospect in the game in 2005, and who has two 40-plus home run seasons on his minor league curriculum vitae. That C.V., though, also features three major surgeries, one on his hip and two on his back, the second of which was necessitated after he felt a twinge the day after he signed a contract with the Giants last spring. McPherson explains: "The cadaver bone they put in [during his Jan. 2007 spinal fusion procedure] overgrew and the nerve grew into it. So they had to go in, shave down that bone, free up the nerve, clean up

some scar tissue, and take out the hardware from my first surgery."

The result of all that is that McPherson is 29 years old now and has played in just 128 big league games. He's in A's camp on a minor league deal, as a non-roster invitee and is under no illusions about his standing. McPherson knows that the window for him to start a long big league career has almost closed. "Hopefully if I play well and stay healthy," he says, "some day there will be a need for me." If there's one place where his services might be needed, it's in Oakland, which has eyed him for at least two years, and which in 2007 gave a chance to a then 28-year-old slugger: Cust, who, like McPherson, had yet to find a big league home. Cust has hit 84 home runs in his three seasons as an A. "Jack's issue was he never got the chance," says Beane. "Dallas's issue is that he's never been able to stay healthy when opportunities presented themselves. If he has health, it's hard to find that kind of corner power." McPherson is as deep a sleeper as deep sleepers get, but he shouldn't be overlooked.

## Parting Shots

The television in Beane's office is usually tuned to Fox Soccer Channel, and Beane, who along with several members of his staff attended the World Cup in Germany in 2006, is borderline fanatical about the beautiful game. He particularly admires Arsenal boss **Arsene Wenger**, whom he views as a kindred spirit as far as his approach to the business of sports. He highly recommends **David Goldblatt's** sweeping 2008 history of soccer, *The Ball is Round*. "I don't read a lot of sports books," Beane says, "but this is one of the best books I've ever read. It's about 900 pages, but it's phenomenal. That's your reading assignment.".... Geren proudly showed off a digital photo of his rescue dog, Hank. As in, Hank Geren.... **Dallas Braden** should be the club's No. 4 starter, even though he still feels numbness -- similar to "pins and needles" -- in his left foot from a botched procedure to drain a cyst late last summer, which severed a nerve and prematurely ended a promising season in which he went 8-9 with a 3.89 ERA. "If I can stand, I can pitch," says Braden. Braden, a loquacious 26-year-old, visited Amsterdam during the off-season. He spent hours in the Van Gogh Museum and the Anne Frank House, and hopes to travel to Europe again next winter. "It's a little early to plan, but I think Germany, because after gathering all the information I did at the Anne Frank House I want to gain an understanding of everything that occurred over there, and enlighten myself," he says. "Plus, I hear they have some good beer."

## Thinking Man's Game

Courtesy of New England Baseball Journal 3/4/2010  
Story by Douglas Flynn

The Wall Street Journal once labeled him "the smartest man in baseball, if not the entire world," and the presence of a degree in molecular biophysics and biochemistry from Yale University would appear to support the claim.

Craig Breslow chuckles at the moniker that has stuck with him through eight seasons of professional baseball. But the Trumbull, Conn., native certainly was smart enough to realize his future on the diamond was in serious question when the Milwaukee Brewers, who had picked him in the 26th round of the 2002 draft, unceremoniously released him two years later during the 2004 season.

"When you're released as a 23-year-old after being a 26th-round draft pick, you'd have to be pretty foolish if you didn't have some serious doubts [about making it]," Breslow said. "I was really close to giving up on baseball. I felt like toiling in the minors for years when I had this great educational background wouldn't have made much sense."

For once, Breslow went with his heart instead of his brain. Rather than returning to school to pursue the medical degree that always has been his goal, Breslow gave baseball one more shot. He hooked on with the New Jersey Jackals in the independent Northeast League for the rest of 2004, then was signed by San Diego out of a tryout camp the following year.

His major league debut came with the Padres on July 23, 2005, and while there's been some more bumps along the way as he was non-tendered by San Diego and waived by three other teams, he enters the 2010 season having established himself as one of the top left-handed relievers in the majors.

"Going into this year, hopefully I have established a role for myself now," Breslow, now 29, said. "I'll never be complacent, but I think I've proven myself a bit now."

Breslow had some success in his various stops. He had a 3.75 ERA and 12 strikeouts in 12 innings with the Red Sox in 2006

and a 1.91 ERA in 47 innings split between Cleveland and Minnesota in 2008. But it wasn't until he was claimed off waivers by Oakland on May 20, 2009, that everything really came together for him.

Breslow finished the year second in the American League in appearances with 77, including 60 with the A's. He went 7-5 in Oakland with a 2.60 ERA and 44 K's against just 18 walks in 55<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub> innings. Long considered a lefty specialist, Breslow finally was given a chance to get hitters from both sides of the plate out, and actually had more success against righties (.191 opponents' average) than lefties (.204) last year.

"I like to think I can do more than just get lefties out," Breslow said. "I think if you look at my splits I've had pretty similar numbers against righties as I have against lefties."

The A's certainly are glad Breslow put off med school and stuck with baseball. So are a lot of people away from the diamond.

As much as he has contributed on the field, Breslow has proven even more valuable off it with his tireless charity work for pediatric cancer research and treatment. Breslow has a very personal reason for such efforts, as his older sister Lesley was diagnosed with pediatric thyroid cancer when she was 13 and Breslow was 11. Lesley Breslow has been in remission for over 15 years, but that harrowing experience was enough to make Breslow want to do everything in his power to prevent any other families from going through the same ordeal.

"That had a dramatic impact on my life," Breslow said. "A couple of years ago, I was playing for the Red Sox at the time, and I felt it was as good a time as ever to do something."

For many players, "doing something" would mean donating some money and maybe making a few appearances to raise more funds. That wasn't enough for Breslow, who instead chose to launch his own organization, The Strike 3 Foundation ([www.strike3foundation.org](http://www.strike3foundation.org)).

The continued and complete story about Breslow can be found in the [New England Baseball Journal](#).