

A's Daily News Clips; March 13, 2010

A's: Latest Duchscherer scare proves harmless

By Curtis Pashelka/ Bay Area News Group. 3/12/10

PHOENIX — Pitcher Justin Duchscherer said Friday that his body feels as well now as it has in five years. Luckily for him and the A's, his reflexes are also in top form.

The right-hander was hit by a comebacker from catcher Max Stassi in a scary moment that nearly derailed his first session against hitters this spring. Duchscherer escaped serious injury in the simulated game at Municipal Stadium and, depending upon how he feels today, remains on track to pitch another two innings in three or four days.

"It scared the (heck) out of me," Duchscherer said. "It was coming right at my face. And if I did not get my glove up and block it, it would have hit me right in the mouth."

Stassi's comebacker, on an inside sinker that caught too much of the plate, also hit the bottom part of Duchscherer's left hand before it grazed his right shoulder. Duchscherer hit the ground but got up quickly and walked to the dugout.

With several people looking on in silence — including an all-but-frozen Stassi — it became apparent that Duchscherer was more rattled than anything. He took a few sips of water and was smiling within a few minutes.

"It happens, but especially me being in my first camp and (against) a respected veteran, I hit him," said Stassi, who turns 19 on Monday. "I felt really bad, but I'm glad he's OK and glad he got his glove up, that's for sure."

The pitch happened to be the last of the first simulated inning (15 pitches). He returned to the mound roughly five minutes after the incident to throw 15 more pitches and didn't feel pain in his back or elbow.

Duchscherer did not pitch for the A's in 2009 after having elbow surgery in April and being diagnosed with clinical depression. He said he feels well now, mentally and physically.

Duchscherer's elbow problems began in 2006, and hip injuries cut short his season in 2007 and 2008. He has a career ERA of 3.14 but has appeared in just 39 games — including 22 starts in 2008 — since the start of the 2007 season.

Duchscherer was put on hold this spring until he had a medical procedure late last month to relieve pain in his lower back.

"I was actually nervous," Duchscherer said. "It's been so long since I've thrown with a hitter in there."

Duchscherer pitched to catcher Landon Powell, while Stassi and outfielder Ryan Sweeney wound up taking most pitches. Sweeney made solid contact twice.

"He had a lot of life in his arm, fastball had some pop on it," Powell said. "His cutter and curveball both were great. Guys weren't swinging and hitting those very well."

Duchscherer was pitching behind a screen, which he's never liked. But he did not pitch behind screens before in spring training with the A's and has been hit twice by comebackers.

"So, today, I got hit again," Duchscherer said. "Just my luck."

Other than the terrifying moment, Duchscherer's day was successful. If his body feels well today, he will be on a regular starter's schedule as he attempts to build up his pitch count.

Duchscherer would like to be able to throw 100 pitches in a game by the time the A's regular season begins April 5. He would prefer not to spend time at Triple-A Sacramento to get that accomplished, but he'll go there if necessary.

"I see myself (this year) as possibly one of the better pitchers in baseball," Duchscherer said. "That's how I've always felt about myself. Through the course of my career, injuries have been my biggest problem."

Notes: Facing his former organization, starting pitcher Brett Anderson allowed four hits and three runs in 22/3 innings as the A's lost 10-1 to the Arizona Diamondbacks at Tucson Electric Park. The Diamondbacks' Adam LaRoche hit a two-run homer in the first inning. ... A's first baseman Daric Barton went 3-for-3 in the loss and is 6-for-15 this spring.

Chin Music: Oakland A's Justin Duchscherer gets nailed by line drive during spring training throwing session

By Curtis Pashelka/ Oakland Tribune. 3/12/10

PHOENIX -- Justin Duchscherer's return to the A's almost came to an abrupt halt as the veteran right-hander was hit by a sharp comebacker from catcher Max Stassi midway through his session of throwing to live hitters at Municipal Stadium.

On the pitch, Stassi smoked a sinker back up the middle that was headed straight for Duchscherer's head. He got his glove up just in time, and the ball ricocheted off the bottom part of his left hand and the top of his glove and hit his right shoulder. Duchscherer went down in a heap, but got up quickly and retreated to the dugout.

With several people looking on in dead silence, it became apparent that Duchscherer was more rattled than anything. He took a few sips of water and was soon smiling. The pitch happened to be the last of the first simulated inning (15 pitches). He returned to throw 15 more pitches and didn't feel pain in his back or elbow.

"He hits that rocket at me and I'm like, 'Oh, my God' and I fell down to get out of the way and then I knew I was done, so I just had to gather my thoughts and come sit down," Duchscherer said.

It was the first time that Duchscherer had gone against live hitting. He had a procedure done late last month to relieve pain in his lower back and threw a side session earlier this week, and reported no problems.

Duchscherer will see how he feels Saturday, but remains optimistic that he'll be able to throw in a game in three or four days.

Pain-free Duchscherer progresses well

Susan Slusser/ Chronicle Staff Writer. 3/13/2010

Tucson- Judging by Justin Duchscherer's first time facing hitters, it's all systems go for the right-hander.

Two and a half weeks ago, Duchscherer had the nerve endings burned around his sacroiliac joint to reduce irritation in the hip area.

"This is the best I've felt in four or five years," Duchscherer told The Chronicle by phone after throwing two sets of 15 pitches Friday in Phoenix.

"There's no pain anywhere in my body. And before (the procedure), I had days where I couldn't walk."

Duchscherer is considered the No. 2 starter, but in order to be on the Opening Day roster, it's possible he could go in the fifth slot.

"I don't buy into that 1 through 5 (starter) stuff," he said. "If I get the ball, I don't care if it's to start Game 1 or Game 5. But I want my first start of the season to be in the big leagues, not somewhere else."

Last week, manager Bob Geren didn't believe Duchscherer would be ready to start the season, but Friday in Tucson, he said there remains a chance.

"We'll go start to start, but it's possible," Geren said. "We'll see how it goes."

Duchscherer is confident that he'll be ready, but, he said, "I also need to see how my results are and if I can get people out in a big-league game."

And, if he can avoid line drives, like the shot minor-league catcher Max Stassi hit right at him Friday. Duchscherer said he gets nailed by a line drive while throwing batting practice every spring, and he ducked a doozy.

"I knocked it down with my glove, so my left hand is a little sore," Duchscherer said. "But it would have hit me in the head - it was headed right toward my face."

Bullpen coach Ron Romanick monitored the proceedings, and he said it was a nervous moment.

"Justin got undressed by that liner," Romanick said. "It's like Groundhog Day, every spring he seems to have a target on him. I think Max felt bad about it, but Justin's fine."

Anderson's day: Brett Anderson allowed four hits and three runs in Friday's 10-1 loss to the Diamondbacks, including two on a homer by Adam LaRoche in the first inning.

Anderson said he used mostly fastballs and sliders while trying to get comfortable with his changeup. He threw six of his nine changeups for strikes, Geren said, and got some late swings and broken bats with it

LaRoche hit a 2-2 fastball to left-center, "a good piece of hitting," according to Anderson, because the pitch was away. It was an eventful at-bat, which began with Anderson throwing what he called a "45-foot pitch." He got his cleats caught and wound up semi-spiking the ball.

"It probably looked pretty funny," he said.

Briefly: Geren said that Coco Crisp's hamstring strain is much improved. ... Dallas Braden also will throw a simulated game on Tuesday's off day. ... Comcast SportsNet California will debut its A's season preview at 7 tonight.

The Drumbeat: Simulated game next for Duchscherer; could be OK to start season

Susan Slusser/ SF Chronicle. 3/12/2010

I came to Tucson for today's game rather than staying in Phoenix to watch Justin Duchscherer, but I just talked to him by phone and he threw two sets of 15 pitches each.

He was struck by a line drive by Max Stassi at the end of the first set, but he went back out again and was fine.

"I knocked it down with my glove, so my left hand is a little sore," Duchscherer said. "But it would have hit me in the head - it was headed right toward my face. It scared the crap out of me.

"I always get hit by line drives in batting practice, every spring. I don't know what it is."

Manager Bob Geren told me here in Tucson this morning that Duchscherer will next throw a simulated game on Tuesday in Phoenix if all goes to plan. That was news to Duchscherer, who said, "Don't ask me, I just work here."

Last week, Geren didn't believe Duchscherer would be ready to start the season with the A's, but today, he said there remains a chance Duchscherer will be on the Opening Day roster.

"We'll go start to start, but it's possible," he said. "We'll see how it goes."

Duchscherer said again today that he's confident he'll be ready, but, he said, "I also need to see how my results are and if I can get people out in a big-league game. I've got to take it day-to-day."

Duchscherer wouldn't have to start the second game of the season to be on the Opening Day roster, obviously; he could go in Game 5 on April 9 if he needed a few extra days. "I don't buy into that 1 through 5 (starter) stuff," he said. "If I get the ball, I don't care if it's to start Game 1 or Game 5. But I want my first start of the season to be in the big leagues, not somewhere else."

Tomorrow morning will be big, Duchscherer said; he needs to know how his body responds to today's outing after having had a nerve ablation two and a half weeks ago (the nerve ends near his SI joint were burned to eliminate discomfort in the area).

He's hopeful he'll feel good, because today, he came out of his outing with very little trouble. "I don't have any stiffness," he said. "That's really good. And if I feel this way tomorrow, that will be a good indication."

The SI joint procedure really did him right.

"This is the best I've felt in four or five years," Duchscherer said. "There's no pain anywhere in my body. And before (the procedure), I had days where I couldn't walk."

Geren said he ran into outfielder Coco Crisp in the parking lot this morning and that Crisp's hamstring strain was much improved.

Anderson gets in work in vs. D-backs

Left-hander allows three runs, four hits in 2 2/3 innings

By Steve Gilbert / MLB.com 3/12/2010

D-BACKS 10, A'S 1

Athletics at the plate: In an otherwise quiet day at the plate for the A's, Daric Barton had three hits, including a double down the left-field line in the third inning. The hits raised Barton's average this spring to .400 (6-for-15).

D-backs at the plate: First baseman Adam LaRoche hit his first homer in a D-backs uniform. The blast came with two outs and one on against Brett Anderson in the first. The homer followed a walk to Justin Upton. Augie Ojeda went 3-for-3 to raise his average to .313. Stephen Drew lined a double down the right-field line in the sixth to score a pair of runs. After walking in the first, Upton singled to left in the third to score Drew. Jeff Bailey belted his first home run in the eighth, a two-run shot.

Athletics on the mound: Anderson faced the team that drafted him in the second round of the 2006 First-Year Player Draft. The left-hander was dealt by the D-backs to the A's in December 2007 in a deal that sent Dan Haren to Arizona. Anderson pitched well except for a two-batter hiccup in the first. After retiring the game's first two batters, he walked Upton and allowed a homer to LaRoche. Anderson allowed three hits in the third before leaving with two outs. Jerry Blevins, who is battling for a spot in the bullpen, got LaRoche to ground out to end that inning.

D-backs on the mound: While the A's made him work, starter Ian Kennedy escaped his outing unscathed. Kennedy allowed a first-inning infield single, a second-inning walk and a third-inning double. Clay Zavada had his best outing thus far, tossing a scoreless inning. The left-hander walked the leadoff batter in the fourth, but got a double-play ball and struck out Travis Buck to end the frame. Juan Gutierrez retired the A's in order in the fifth and has not allowed a run in three spring outings so far.

Worth noting: Arizona worked out right-handed free agent Kris Benson in a five-inning simulated game at its Minor League Complex on Friday morning.

Cactus League records: A's 3-4-1; D-backs 3-5

Up next: The A's will play their second split-squad game of the spring on Saturday, squaring off against the Padres at Phoenix Municipal Stadium and traveling to Scottsdale to face the Giants. Clayton Motensen gets the starting nod for the A's against the Padres while left-hander Gio Gonzalez will start against the Giants. Every outing is important for Gonzalez, who is battling Vin Mazzaro and Trevor Cahill for the final spot in the rotation.

The D-backs play host to the division-rival Dodgers on Saturday, their second meeting with them in four days. Wednesday in Glendale, the two teams played to a 4-4 tie. In that game, a lineup snafu allowed Andrew Ethier to hit twice in a three-batter span. Kevin Mulvey, battling for a spot in the rotation, will get the start for the D-backs. Closer Chad Qualls is also scheduled to see action.

Inbox: Is Chavez A's new first baseman?

Beat reporter Jane Lee answers A's fans' questions

By Jane Lee / MLB.com 3/12/2010

After hearing about Eric Chavez smacking two home runs in Wednesday's game, it's hard to fathom him not being our starting first baseman. Daric Barton has not proven anything, offensively or defensively, and you could say he's now becoming a liability for the A's. Will Chavez be our No. 1 guy?

-- Alex Q., Pleasanton, Calif.

Unfortunately, Chavez is well past his days of being a starting anything because of his surgically repaired back and shoulder. He knows that, and so does the organization, so everyone involved has come to terms with the notion that Chavez is best suited for a utility role. However, the strides he's making at first base this spring, as well as the offensive punch he gives the lineup, could very well mean that he could be playing at first an average of three or four times a week while DHing on the other days this season. Of course he'll need plenty days off in between, but he's also an option at his former home over at third base as well. All of this is great news considering many around the A's community were already ruling him out on the

Opening Night roster before he even reported to camp. So even though I'm pretty certain Chavez won't be the No. 1 guy at first base -- no matter how many home runs he pops out this spring -- the fact he'll potentially be a lineup regular is reason enough to be excited. After all, I know Chavez is.

What's the deal with Jemile Weeks? Does he have a shot at seeing some playing time this year? If not, who will we see if Mark Ellis goes down?

-- Kevin F., Yonkers, N.Y.

Weeks is very much in the mix, and he's one of several projected future A's infielders getting playing time in camp right now. He's only played 30 games at the Double-A level, though, so he'll need to rack up some at-bats in Sacramento before getting the big league call. If Ellis goes down at any time this year, I'm sure Adam Rosales -- who has reached base safely in each of his five games this spring -- would be the team's first choice as the everyday replacement. At that point, I could see the A's bringing up either Gregorio Petit or Adrian Cardenas -- both equipped with a good amount of Triple-A experience -- to act in a backup infield role. I imagine Weeks would also have to be considered, as would Eric Sogard. Not to be forgotten is waiver pickup Steve Tolleson, who has been placed all over the infield this spring.

What's important to remember is Weeks was drafted just two years ago, and the A's don't like rushing players for the sake of it. Meanwhile, Cardenas boasts almost two more years of Minor League experience. He's also 4-for-6 with two RBIs over his past three games while playing at third and second, and is one of four players to play in every possible game thus far.

Do you have any inside information on who is in the lead for the fifth spot in the rotation?

-- Eric K., San Francisco

I think Trevor Cahill, barring any red flags, will maintain the lead for the fifth rotation spot that he earned after making 32 starts in his rookie season. This idea is not based on any "inside information," as Bob Geren and Co. have kept mum on the topic so far, but I think the trust and respect he's already gained from the organization will keep him on track to be in Oakland come April. That's not to say he's a lock, though. Cahill knows he has plenty of work to do on his slider and changeup. At the same time, I notice a big difference in his maturity level this year. And by that, I simply mean he appears much more calm and at ease when on the mound. He's been far from perfect this spring, but the same can be said of any of the A's pitchers. Cahill's not even looking to be perfect, though. He's looking to work on his repertoire and make necessary adjustments to better prepare himself for the regular season.

On the other hand, it's hard to think that the type of talent with which Gio Gonzalez and Vin Mazzaro are equipped could be headlining at Triple-A. Both -- especially Mazzaro, who faced the minimum nine batters against the Royals on Wednesday -- have looked impressive this spring, but only time will tell if they can be consistent.

Did everyone forget about Sean Doolittle? Please tell me he is still in the A's plans.

-- Chris H., Sacramento

Don't worry, no one has forgotten about Doolittle. He's just been rehabbing in the background of all the attention surrounding the big-name prospect duo of Chris Carter and Michael Taylor. Doolittle is coming off a knee injury that required surgery in October, but he's now in Minor League camp and will most likely start the season back at Triple-A if deemed healthy.

From what I've heard, Doolittle has bulked up a bit and transformed himself into an average power hitter in recent years. He was solely a first baseman until last year, when he was moved to right field to showcase his arm strength. The A's seem to think he would do just fine at either position, but I see him spending a little more time back at first this year if the knee surgery proves to affect his step.

What are the chances of Henry Rodriguez making the big league club this year?

-- Dave R., San Jose, Calif.

Based on what he's done this spring, I'd say Rodriguez has a very good chance of breaking into the big leagues this season. He threw the ball at a wicked 98 mph at least six or seven times when facing the Angels last week, but velocity has never been an issue for him. If he wants to be a steady presence in the Majors, he'll have to control his ball-to-strike ratio and really gain command of the zone. Once he proves he's capable of that, Geren has said he could be ready "real quick."

For now, the A's are well-equipped in a versatile bullpen that compiled the American League's lowest ERA (3.46) last year, not to mention even more depth-heavy with the likes of Jason Jennings and Brett Tomko in the fold.

Do you think the A's will have any players hitting more than 30 home runs this season? If so, who?

-- Dean D., Concord, Calif.

My first thought is a resounding no. Both Eric Chavez and Jack Cust have surpassed the 30 mark in past years, but I don't see either of them getting enough at-bats this season to hit it again. I imagine Cust will come close and hover around the 26-homer mark while Chavez -- if healthy all season -- could finish with 20-25 long balls. The sleeper on the team could be Kevin Kouzmanoff, who launched 23 with San Diego two years ago and has the chance to post bigger numbers now that he's not hitting in Petco Park's massive quarters.

For the fans' sake, I hope Cust and Chavez prove me wrong.

Lee's Leftovers: Duke faces live hitters

I'm technically off today, but **Justin Duchscherer** sure isn't, so I'm taking a quick break from my errands before I head off to Trader Joe's to update you all on the session he threw today. It marked the first time all spring he's faced hitters, and from all reports I've read, Duchscherer's 30-pitch session couldn't have gone better - aside from being hit by a line drive off the bat of **Max Stassi**. The right-handed Duchscherer blocked the ball with his hand before it ricocheted off his right shoulder so it wouldn't come straight at his face.

After facing Stassi and **Ryan Sweeney**, Duchscherer told reporters he feels healthier than he's felt in five years and hopes to be game-ready by Opening Day.

"I see myself as one of the best pitchers in baseball," Duchscherer told the Associated Press. "My only concern is if I have time to get ready to throw six innings. I'm hoping I don't have to start the season somewhere else.

"I threw with the intent of throwing to every location with all my pitches. My body feels great. No elbow pain. No back pain. It was nice not to have to think about if I was going to get through the pain and focus on doing my job."

The next step for Duchscherer, if all goes according to plan, will be a simulated game in Phoenix on Tuesday when the A's have a scheduled off day.

Simulated pain for Duchscherer

Pitcher takes screaming line drive off wrist in simulated-game debut

By LOWELL COHN/ THE PRESS DEMOCRAT 3/12/2010

It was the last thing Justin Duchscherer expected — a line drive screeching toward him at light speed, the ball slamming off his glove, ricocheting off his wrist, glancing off his right shoulder — and Duchscherer on the ground, pain in his glove hand, a confused look on his face as the world whizzed by.

The day started calmly enough, although truth be told, Duchscherer felt jittery, felt that way starting the night before, wondered if he would embarrass himself in this simulated start on the big diamond in the A's training complex.

He has so much to gain or to lose, depending on your perspective. He did not pitch a single big-league inning last season. He needed elbow surgery and after that he was diagnosed with clinical depression, so he's been to hell and back. Well, he hopes to be back, even though he already has undergone a medical procedure this spring for a nerve problem, setting him back two weeks.

And if he is back, the A's gain. If he can pitch and if Ben Sheets can pitch they will become the top guys in the A's rotation, pushing everyone else down two slots. With the A's there are "ifs," but if all ifs turn into positives, Oakland will have a fine pitching staff and an improved team that should win more than half its games.

It's just that the A's need Duchscherer alive and well as opposed to writhing on his back on a bright Arizona morning after being whacked by a line drive off the bat of catcher Max Stassi

This is how it seemed seconds after the knockdown, narrated by Duchscherer: "So I just walked off, holy crap. He hits that rocket at me and oh my God, and I fell down to get out of the way. So I just kind of tried to gather my thoughts and come sit down and wipe the poop out of my pants."

He sat in the dugout five minutes after getting knocked flat, drinking water and toweling off his face and checking his body parts — all there — and he tried to make sense of what just happened.

Bullpen coach Ron Romanick had wanted to reproduce a genuine pitching experience, the real deal. Most of the team had bused to Tucson, so Romanick had time and plenty of space. He made Duchscherer warm up in the outfield and then in the bullpen as he does before starts. Warming up, Duchscherer was a lonely figure, fighting a lonely battle. People waited on him. People would judge him — "What do you have?"

Finally, the moment came. He strode to the mound, where Romanick knelt behind him. Landon Powell was catching and also calling balls and strikes inside the batting cage, and Ryan Sweeney and Stassi — lefty, righty — would take turns getting their swings against Duchscherer.

Right away, Duchscherer was bothered by the protective screen in front of him. You've seen that screen in batting practice. It protects, sure, but liners often shoot right back to the pitcher.

Duchscherer moved the screen a few inches to get it out of his sightline, opening himself up to mischief. He threw fastballs and cut fastballs and sliders to Sweeney and Stassi, always looking for spots, always trying to hit the corners.

His fastball can reach 88 mph, but if he concentrates on the fastball and comes in squarely over the plate, batters hit him hard. This he has learned. So he lives on the corners and outthinks batters — he is all about mind over batter. But he was having a problem with Powell, who never had caught him before.

Whenever Duchscherer fell behind in the count, Powell would ask for a pitch over the plate. But Duchscherer wants his catcher to sit near the corners. He and Powell were not communicating. And then Powell asked for a sinker over the plate and Duchscherer threw it and Stassi ripped it — pure reflex. The ball seared the air and hit Duchscherer, and Duchscherer knew it would slam his head but his glove saved him and he went down.

At the batting cage, A's coaches and players said the F-word in unison, delivered as a panicked exhale. Had they been old enough they would have thought "Herb Score."

But Duchscherer was OK, and after recovering in the dugout for five minutes threw another 15 pitches, 30 in all, two simulated innings.

Afterward he spoke with the media in the dugout, a broad smile on his face. He described the knockdown several times because it was the event of the day. This description was picturesque — "You know when you're driving and someone pulls out in front of you and you're like, 'oh, my God,' and you get that kind of racing heart and that adrenalin? That's what it feels like when the ball's coming at your face."

Oh.

When someone asked what he expects from himself, he calmly said, "I see myself as possibly one of the best pitchers in baseball. That's how I've always felt. I've never had a problem performing. My goal if I stay healthy is to be one of the best in baseball."

And how long will it take him to be game-ready?

"Not arrogantly, but I think there's a difference between the way I pitch and other guys pitch," he said. "A guy that has a heavy sinker like (Trevor) Cahill, he might need more outings to refine that command. I'm not a power guy. I don't have power stuff."

"Having experience for 14 years pitching, I know how to be ready to do my location stuff. It's just a matter of getting my body to the point where I can throw 100 pitches. When the season starts, I'm hoping I don't have to go somewhere else to get my pitch count up. If I have to I have to."

After that, Duchscherer walked into the clubhouse to shower, a man in pursuit of a dream. Romanick lingered, then summed up the experience for the writers: "Nobody died today, so that's good."

Diamondbacks 10, Athletics 1

Associated Press 3/12/2010

TUCSON, Ariz. -- The Diamondbacks acquired [Adam LaRoche](#) for his consistent bat and stellar defense. Arizona manager [A.J. Hinch](#) also likes the first baseman's leadership.

Little seems to faze the soft-spoken LaRoche, traded from Pittsburgh to Boston to Atlanta during the season last year. He had a career-high 154 hits and made only two errors.

LaRoche belted his first home run of the spring on Friday, an opposite-field, two-run shot in Arizona's 10-1 win over the [Oakland Athletics](#).

Diamondbacks starter [Ian Kennedy](#) improved to 2-0, giving up two hits in three innings.

"Adam is a guy who other infielders can lean on for some leadership," Hinch said. "He's not going to be the loudest voice. But he's got a presence about him that brings a calmness to our clubhouse."

"He's built the right way, both mentally and physically. I don't want to jinx him, but he's almost like clockwork when it comes to run production."

The 30-year-old LaRoche, entering his seventh big-league season, hit .274 with 25 homers and 83 RBIs and had a .999 fielding percentage in 2009.

Last year, Arizona ranked near the bottom of the NL in batting average and committed 124 errors, second-highest in the NL.

LaRoche, batting cleanup against the A's, hit a fastball from [Brett Anderson](#) over the left-field wall in the first inning to give the Diamondbacks a 2-0 lead.

"Every once in a while, I get into one," said LaRoche, joking with reliever [Clay Zavada](#) in the clubhouse afterward.

Anderson pitched 2 2/3 innings, giving up three runs and four hits. The 22-year-old left-hander, who set an Oakland rookie record with 150 strikeouts last season, struck out one and registered five ground-outs Friday.

"I was happy with the ground balls," said Anderson, who was drafted by Arizona but sent to Oakland in a deal that brought [Dan Haren](#) to the Diamondbacks in December 2007. "In my first outing, I had too many fly-ball outs. "I've been working on my change-up, which will help me out a lot."

Kennedy looked strong in his second spring outing, striking out [Jack Cust](#) and [Jake Fox](#). Oakland's [Daric Barton](#) singled in the first and doubled in the third, the only two hits Kennedy gave up.

"I felt good, but I threw a little too many pitches than I wanted to," Kennedy said. "I think I was trying to be a little too fine early on."

Kennedy, who came to Arizona from the [New York Yankees](#), said he's been having success with his two-seam fastball since "finally committing to it" in the Fall League.

As for LaRoche, he hopes to find some stability with the Diamondbacks after moving his family three times in the last year. Pittsburgh traded LaRoche to Boston on July 12, but the Red Sox shipped him a few weeks later to Atlanta, where LaRoche began his career.

"I'm impressed with the talent we have here, the fire these guys have to get back to the playoffs," LaRoche said about his new teammates. "They know that last year was kind of a fluke for them."

LaRoche finds a familiar face next to him in the infield, former Atlanta second baseman [Kelly Johnson](#), another defensive upgrade for the Diamondbacks.

"We complement each other well because I'm very slow and Kelly is so fast," the 6-foot-3, 205-pound LaRoche said.

Game notes

RHP [Brandon Webb](#), who could start the season on the disabled list, told Hinch he "felt good" while doing some soft toss work Friday. ... Arizona SS [Stephen Drew](#) went 2 for 4 with a two-run double down the right-field line in the sixth inning. Oakland's Barton had three hits to raise his average this spring to .400. [Jerry Blevins](#), who is battling for a spot in the A's bullpen, kept Arizona hitless for 1 1/3 innings after replacing Anderson in the third inning.

Duchscherer throws simulated game.

Associated Press 3/12/2010

PHOENIX (AP) — With all his injuries over the past few years, Oakland right-hander Justin Duchscherer wasn't about to let a line drive off his left thumb keep him off the mound.

Duchscherer threw 30 pitches in a simulated game Friday, his first outing against hitters this spring training.

Max Stassi's line drive caught Duchscherer on his left thumb, which then ricocheted off his right shoulder. Duchscherer fell to the ground.

"I was scared seeing the ball coming at me," Duchscherer said. "If I didn't block it, the ball would have hit me in the face."

Stassi rushed to the mound along with coaches and teammates.

"I felt bad," Stassi said. "I'm glad he was able to get his glove up in time."

Duchscherer feels healthier than he's been in five years and hopes to start the season in Oakland.

"I see myself as one of the best pitchers in baseball," Duchscherer said. "My only concern is if I have time to get ready to throw six innings. I'm hoping I don't have to start the season somewhere else."

Catcher Landon Powell said his stuff was good enough to pitch in a game.

"We've all missed having Duch in the clubhouse," Powell said. "We're all rooting for him. Duch has had bad luck in spring training. I've seen him get hit every year. I'm glad he got it out of the way this year."

Duchscherer said he was distracted as the pole of the screen came back into his peripheral vision during his delivery.

"I don't like screens," Duchscherer said. "Out of my windup my eyes get a little off. In the past I've asked for the screen to be taken away and I've gotten hit. Now, even with the screen, I get hit again."

Stassi and Ryan Sweeney managed to hit one ball hard apiece as each had four at-bats each against Duchscherer. Otherwise the two-time All-Star appeared to be in control as he used all his pitches in an encouraging outing.

"I threw with the intent of throwing to every location with all my pitches," Duchscherer said. "My body feels great. No elbow pain. No back pain. It was nice not to have to think about if I was going to get through the pain and focus on doing my job."

Duchscherer's elbow problems began in 2006 and had his season ended prematurely because of hip injuries the next two years. He reported to camp last year but never threw in a game because of right elbow surgery.

He arrived at spring training this year on track to resume his career -- until needing a medical procedure to relieve discomfort in his lower back less than a week into training camp.

"I was actually nervous even though I was facing my teammates," Duchscherer said. "I didn't want to embarrass myself. I'm a pitcher, not a thrower. I don't have the velocity to throw it by anyone. After years of getting my butt kicked in the minors I finally learned that location, movement, change of speed and getting hitters guessing were more important."