

A's News Clips, Monday, March 15, 2010-03-15

A's notebook: Oakland Athletics' Trevor Cahill makes strong bid for No. 5 spot in rotation

By Curtis Pashelka_Oakland Tribune

Just about every A's pitcher received a pep talk from 1989 World Series MVP Dave Stewart on Sunday morning. Trevor Cahill just happened to be the first one to put that inspiration to use.

Starting against Kansas City at Phoenix Municipal Stadium, Cahill allowed just two hits and one walk in four innings as the A's went on to a 10-3 win. Cahill had given up five earned runs in his first four innings in two starts this spring, but he located his fastball well and used his sinker and the occasional curveball to make his best case to date for being the A's No. 5 starter.

"The biggest thing is I felt a lot more comfortable out there," Cahill said. "I was overthrowing the last two games, big time."

Stewart held a roughly hourlong meeting with A's pitchers, covering several topics but specifically competitiveness, confidence and how teams usually feed off their pitchers. Cahill and Stewart actually taped an A's commercial together this offseason, where Stewart tries to teach Cahill the stare-down.

"It's always great to have a guy that won 20 games four years in a row come in and talk to the pitching staff," Cahill said.

Third baseman Dallas McPherson was among 10 players reassigned to the A's minor league camp Sunday as Oakland trimmed its major league camp roster down to 53. McPherson, who missed all of 2009 with the Giants with back problems, had only seven Cactus League at-bats this

spring, but one was a solo homer Saturday in the ninth inning against San Diego.

"We're happy that he's in the organization," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He's going to play a lot. We want to keep his reps and at-bats going."

With less than three weeks left in spring training, the A's are at the point where they will begin to give their regulars more innings. Sunday's starting lineup, with the exception of one or two positions, looked like one the A's might employ on Opening Night.

Others reassigned were infielders Corey Wimberly, Jemile Weeks, Grant Green and Matt Whitney; catchers Max Stassi and Joel Galarraga; and pitchers Sam Demel, Matt Wright and Cedrick Bowers.

"The experience was unbelievable," said Stassi, who turns 19 today. "I learned a ton and I was fortunate enough to get the opportunity to come here."

Eric Chavez played back-to-back days for the first time this spring. He started at first base and went 0-for-3 but reported no problems afterward. He'll have the next two days off before he goes back-to-back again on Wednesday and Thursday, which he said will be a big test. ... Joey Devine (tendinitis) is still on schedule to throw midweek. "... Outfielder Coco Crisp (left hamstring strain) did some light throwing.

A'S STADIUM

Selig says there's no ballpark report yet

John Shea, CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Commissioner Bud Selig was at Scottsdale Stadium on Sunday meeting with Giants managing general partner Bill Neukom and president Larry Baer, presumably updating them on his committee that's analyzing the A's ballpark situation.

"I've been talking to both clubs," Selig said. "There are a lot of situations that I wish didn't come to me. But as they often tell me, that's why we have a commissioner. I'll wait until the committee has done its work."

Though Selig appointed the three-man committee last March, he said he hasn't received a report or recommendation despite reports to the contrary. Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums' office has said Selig received the report.

"I've talked to them a lot," Selig said of the committee members, "and they have a report that will be coming in the near future. I don't have any comment until that's done."

Selig is on record saying the A's can't survive at the Coliseum, but he's also on record saying he stands behind the Giants' territorial rights to San Jose, where the A's want to move. The Giants are prepared to fight to keep their territory exclusive.

"No change on our side," Neukom said. "They're in the middle of a process. I don't know which inning we're in."

Selig, who grew up listening to radio broadcasters throughout the Midwest, applauded Jon Miller winning the Ford Frick Award, which he'll receive during July's Hall of Fame ceremony.

"Jon Miller is today what the Bob Princes and Harry Carays and Jack Bucks and Joe Garagiolas and Waite Hoyts (were). ... That's what Jon Miller is today. Well-deserved, to say the least."

While Selig was meeting with reporters, Hall of Fame pitcher Gaylord Perry - a 314-game winner who doesn't hide the fact he threw a spitter - approached and asked Selig for a rule change so he could make a comeback.

Selig: "What rule would we have to change?"

Perry: "I think you know."

Selig: "Yes, I do. You bet I do."

A'S BEAT

Stewart teaches pitchers about grit

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

In the morning, **Trevor Cahill** and the rest of the pitchers listened to an hour-long talk by **Dave Stewart**, who spoke about how to battle through games and control the pace, things Stewart was known for in his heyday.

Then Cahill went out and put that into practice, going four innings and allowing two hits and a walk while striking out two in the A's 10-3 victory over Kansas City on Sunday. He threw his new curveball five or six times and was pleased with it.

Cahill was born in 1988, a year in which Stewart won 21 games for Oakland.

"He talked about how the rest of the team feeds off the pitcher," Cahill said. "You should want the ball and have confidence in yourself."

Cahill and Stewart shot an A's commercial this winter in which Stewart, famous for his intensity, tries to show the non-demonstrative Cahill how to do a proper glare.

"He's trying to teach me the staredown, and I wasn't getting it," Cahill said with a laugh.

McPherson sent out: First cuts claimed, among others, ex-big league third baseman **Dallas McPherson** and teenage catcher **Max Stassi**. The A's also reassigned right-handed pitchers **Sam Demel** and **Matt Wright**, left-hander **Cedrick Bowers**, catcher **Joel Galarraga** and infielders **Grant Green**, **Jemile Weeks**, **Matt Whitney** and **Corey Wimberly** to minor-league camp.

McPherson, returning from his second back surgery last year, belted a homer off the batter's eye Sunday at Phoenix Muni to tie the game with two outs in the ninth. "I was a little surprised, yes," McPherson, 29, said of getting cut. "But I'm not bitter. I know a lot of guys in camp need at-bats, and I need at-bats to know where I'm at."

Like McPherson, Stassi, who turns 19 today, was a late-game hero Sunday: Stassi ended the A's split-squad win at Scottsdale by throwing out a runner at second.

Briefly: The lineup - **Rajai Davis** LF, **Mark Ellis** 2B, **Kurt Suzuki** C, **Kevin Kouzmanoff** 3B, **Eric Chavez** 1B, **Jack Cust** DH, **Ryan Sweeney** RF, **Eric Patterson** CF, **Cliff Pennington** SS - had an Opening Day feel, minus center fielder **Coco Crisp**, who is out with a hamstring strain. ... It was the first time Chavez has played back-to-back this season. He'll get two days off and then play back-to-back again. ... **Jake Fox** ended a 1-for-20 slump by crushing a three-run homer to left in the eighth.

Selig mum on San Jose rights issue

Commissioner awaiting report on A's desire to move

By Chris Haft / MLB.com

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. -- Commissioner Bud Selig had little to say Sunday about the simmering ballpark controversy involving the Giants and Oakland A's, noting that he's awaiting a report from the committee he appointed to study the situation.

The A's are seeking voter approval to build a ballpark in San Jose, Calif. First, owners of the 30 Major League clubs must allow the A's to infringe upon the Giants' territorial rights to Santa Clara County. The city of San Jose wants an answer by June so it can place a measure on the fall ballot.

Briefly visiting the Giants-Milwaukee Brewers exhibition game, Selig looked and sounded relaxed as he addressed the A's-Giants issue. He also fielded questions about realignment, testing players for human growth hormone use and the proposed taxing of Cactus League clubs to help build a new Spring Training ballpark in Mesa, Ariz., for the Chicago Cubs.

"We don't have the controversies we've had in the past," Selig said, explaining his calm demeanor. "We're looking forward to a great year, economic conditions notwithstanding."

Regarding realignment and HGH testing, Selig said that he wouldn't comment until he receives a report from the 14-man committee he assigned to suggest ways of improving Major League Baseball. As for the Cubs' spring home, Selig said, "We need to find a solution. It's a difficult situation."

Since the scene was a Giants home game, Selig was asked to comment about Jon Miller, the San Francisco broadcaster who recently was named the 2010 Ford C. Frick Award winner.

"He's a Hall of Fame announcer. No question about it," Selig said. "I'm a guy who grew up with radio and I still love listening to baseball on the radio. Jon Miller is today what the Bob Princes and Harry Carays and Jack Bucks and Joe Garagiolas and Waite Hoyts [were in previous eras]. Well-deserved to say the least."

Just as Selig prepared to leave, Hall of Famer Gaylord Perry, in town for a series of Giants functions, ambled into the room. Greeting Selig, the 71-year-old Perry jokingly said, "I want the rules changed so I can make a comeback!"

Playfully rubbing Perry's shoulder and cap -- areas where the 314-game winner may have concealed greasy kid stuff to throw his notorious spitball -- Selig responded, "What rules need to be changed?"

Said Perry, "I think you know!"

Chavez simply enjoying the moment

A's veteran plays on consecutive days in attempted return

By Barry M. Bloom / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- A's third baseman Eric Chavez played in back-to-back games at first base this weekend for the first time this spring in his rehabilitation from last year's back surgery.

Chavez, trying to reclaim his career, started against the Padres on Saturday and the Royals on Sunday at Phoenix Municipal Stadium. No wonder he had a big smile on his bearded face on Sunday morning. This is the first spring he's been healthy in several years.

"I'm feeling really good," Chavez told MLB.com hours before going hitless in three at-bats as the A's won, 10-3, over Kansas City. "I've really enjoyed myself. The first two weeks of spring have just been phenomenal. It's not as if anything is coming easy. There's a lot of work I put in each morning just to get loose. But when I do get on the baseball field it has been fun for a change."

Chavez has played one regular-season game at first base in his 12-year career, all with the A's, and that was in 2001. Chavez is a six-time Gold Glove-winning third baseman. But Kevin Kouzmanoff now is ensconced at the hot corner after the trade that brought him over from San Diego this past offseason.

Because of a series of back and shoulder injuries to 32-year-old Chavez, the A's could no longer count on him and are now making room for him elsewhere. If he remains healthy, he'll share first base duties with Daric Burton, back up Kouzmanoff at third, and perhaps even play a little shortstop.

Asked what he expected out of Chavez this season, A's manager Bob Geren said: "Whatever he can give us. Chavez is healthy right now. He's swinging the bat good and he feels good. We'll just take it as it goes and be optimistic."

The A's plan to have Chavez play some third base later in the spring, but he knows that adjusting to the different right-side angles of fielding grounders at first base and taking throws is where his immediate future lies.

"If anything, playing first base has been a visual thing for me," Chavez said. "I just have to trick my eyes a little bit. But every day I go over there I'm getting a little more comfortable. I still know I need to play some third and also start taking ground balls at short. First base isn't actually a lock position, but I think that's the one where they think they can get me out there the most."

It's a miracle of modern medicine and his own sheer will that Chavez is back at it again, batting .286 with two homers and four RBIs this spring.

Chavez has been limited to 121 games during the past three seasons. His 2009 season ended after eight games and back surgery to repair a ruptured disk on June 23.

"The safest thing to say about last year is that I wasn't really ready to play," Chavez said.

His 2008 season wasn't much better. It began in Spring Training with Chavez recovering from a previous back surgery. It ended on Aug. 13 with surgery to repair a torn labrum in his right shoulder.

Chavez has had five surgeries in less than two years, including three on his back and shoulders during a 10-week period in 2007. Chavez hasn't played a full season since 2006 when he appeared in 137 games, batted .241 with 22 homers, 72 RBIs and won his sixth Gold Glove.

Chavez is in the final guaranteed year of his six-year, \$66 million contract that will pay him \$12 million this season. The A's have a club option for 2011 worth \$12.5 million with a \$3 million buyout.

He could easily have taken the money and run. But he didn't.

"It's going great right now, but even if it doesn't happen my mind and spirit are in the right place to move forward," Chavez said. "I'm not investing too much into, 'I've got to play, I've got to play.' I'm giving it my best effort. I'm really going to enjoy myself. But if it doesn't work out, I'm ready for that, too."

Chavez is making strong first impression

Associated Press

PHOENIX – Eric Chavez's bat was quiet, but his glove was active.

Playing in consecutive games for the first time since last April, Chavez handled seven chances without an error at first base in Oakland's 10-3 victory over the Kansas City Royals on Sunday.

Chavez, who was 0 for 3, will sit out two days and then play in consecutive games again. He said that will be his first real test of the spring.

"It was better than I thought, and that's a good sign," Chavez said. "Obviously, the next time I go back-to-back will be another hurdle. I'll let my body recover and get ready for two more."

The six-time Gold Glove third baseman is changing positions after season-ending back surgery last June. Chavez moved capably around first base in his fifth game there. He made one regular-season appearance at first in 2001.

"I really try to pick up what I can from anybody," he said. "Even if I don't use them, I like to hear other ideas and how others go about things. I'm listening to (teammate Daric) Barton. I have asked him a question every day I am at first. I try not to be surprised."

Chavez had one play, an easy grounder off the bat of catcher Brayan Peña, in which he appeared momentarily confounded and wound up underhanding the ball to pitcher Trevor Cahill. Chavez could have made the play himself.

"It was good practice," Chavez said. "I still need to get comfortable with who is hitting. The next time, I'll have that in mind, and I will know the situation better."

Kurt Suzuki doubled home two runs, and Rajai Davis had two hits and two RBIs for the A's. Jake Fox hit a three-run homer in the eighth.

Cahill's third start was his best yet. He allowed two hits and a walk in four scoreless innings and struck out two. Cahill felt so good he threw 12 more pitches in the bullpen.

"It's good to walk away from a decent outing and know what I need to work on," he said. "I tried to work on a new curveball, and I threw about five or six of them."

Cahill and the pitching staff were treated to a motivational talk from former A's ace Dave Stewart. Cahill, 22, never saw Stewart pitch.

"It was great to have somebody who has won 20 games talk to us," Cahill said. "He covered all the bases. He talked about how the team feeds off the pitcher and gives the team confidence."

Cahill filmed a commercial with Stewart, which utilizes the former World Series MVP's famed "death stare."

"It's one of those funny ones where he tries to teach me the stare-down and I wasn't getting it," Cahill said.

Cohn Zone

Lowell Cohn, Press Democrat, 3/14/2010

Commish Bud Selig just showed up in the press box at Scottsdale Stadium a few minutes ago. We were invited to ask him questions. Here's a sample.

Commish: OK, guys I said to myself coming over there were some spring trainings I did these and we had a lot of controversies and a lot of heartache. This is great. I don't really have any controversies like we've had in the past. I think the sport is poised to have a really really great year. Go ahead and ask my anything you want.

Cohn: You said you didn't have any heartache can I give you a little? What's going to happen to the A's and San Jose?

Commish: I didn't say I didn't have any heartache. I didn't have the heartache we've had in the past.

Cohn: OK this is a little heartache.

Commish: "We have a committee that's very hard at work and very thorough. It's a very complex situation and they owe me a report which will be coming in the near future. So I don't have any comment until that's done but I've appointed 3 people who are really not only sophisticated in these areas but really understood and they've done a remarkable job and I've been talking to both clubs. There are a lot of situations I wish didn't come to me but they often tell me that's why we have a commissioner. I'll wait until the committee has done its work."

What bothered me about the Commish's speech was that I actually had to get up from my chair from which I was watching the game and walk four steps to join the group around the commish. I don't think it was worth even minimal effort. Selig gave a great example of doubletalk -- saying nothing in many words.

I can tell you Larry Baer and Bill Neukom from the Giants stood on the periphery of the group. Neither smiled. They looked serious bordering on grim. I don't know why exactly. Maybe their lunch didn't agree with them.

Old friends on hot seat

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

The Rangers say they're better. The Brewers say they're better. What team doesn't this time of year? In these teams' cases, would that mean improving on last year's records - 87 wins for Texas, 80 for Milwaukee? Pushing for a division title?

Keeping their managers employed?

Ron Washington and **Ken Macha**, both with deep A's roots, have contracts that expire after the 2010 season. In October, the Brewers added a 2011 club option to Macha's contract, which is far from a guarantee. In June, the Rangers exercised Washington's option for this season.

Either way, for Washington and Macha to get contracts for 2011, their teams probably can't repeat what they did in 2009. The Brewers were two games below .500, a big drop from 2008 (18 above .500). They've added **Randy Wolf** and **Doug Davis** to the rotation, along with pitching coach **Rick Peterson** to help develop the young arms, and the Rangers brought in **Rich Harden** and **Vladimir Guerrero**.

Hall of Famer **Nolan Ryan**, part of Texas' new ownership group, set the bar high by saying a 92-win season is "realistic," as is a division title.

No pressure, Wash.

"I don't concern myself with that," Washington said of his contract status. "I really try to focus on the field and get those guys to play baseball. To me, contracts take care of themselves. I really don't focus on them."

At the same time, like any manager, his players have more say than he does about his future: "I'm tied to them. If they play well, you may end up getting another (contract). If they don't play well, you might not. So I don't worry about that."

Both managers have tasted some success. Washington guided the Rangers to a winning record last year, the team's first since 2004, and Macha had nothing but winning seasons in both the majors and minors until the streak broke in 2009.

What about their futures? Follow their players.

Never happened: What's so bad about retiring an A? Not good enough for **Nomar Garciaparra**. Not that his 65 games last year were all that memorable.

The farce known as a one-day contract enabled Garciaparra to "retire a Red Sox." It's silly. At least when **J.T. Snow** "retired a Giant," he put on a uniform, was introduced before a game, threw some grounders and was pulled before the first pitch.

Garciaparra simply held a news conference.

Wednesday, he told of how it was a thrill to come back to the Red Sox - though he had left on ugly terms, turning down a four-year, \$60 million contract and being traded to the Cubs just before the Red Sox began their run to their first World Series title in 86 years.

Several weeks back, in an ESPN studio, Garciaparra was asked to name his favorite ballpark. He named three, talking about the charm of Fenway Park, Wrigley Field and Dodger Stadium.

Those were three of his four baseball homes. The fourth was the Oakland Coliseum, the only one he didn't mention.

Around the majors: With **Joe Torre** in Taiwan with the Dodgers, bench coach **Don Mattingly** (Torre's successor?) stayed in Arizona with the remaining players. In his first game managing at any level, the Dodgers batted out of order - because the lineup given to the umpires didn't match the lineup posted in the dugout. ... **Aroldis Chapman**, the Reds' \$30.25 million man, made his second appearance Friday with two scoreless innings against the Dodgers and an impressive strikeout of **Matt Kemp**. Chapman has created such a buzz that fans at the Reds' facility took we're-not-worthy bows in his presence - and that was *before* his first pitch. ... The Diamondbacks took a hit with **Brandon Webb**'s setback following shoulder surgery (could be delayed until May), and rotation mate **Dan Haren** said there was too much pressure on Webb to return quickly, especially because shoulder surgery is "complicated to come back from." ... **Ichiro Suzuki** couldn't believe **Tim Lincecum** made an around-the-back stop of Ichiro's comebacker Thursday. "I've seen that many times on replays, but I never, ever thought I'd be a victim," Ichiro said. "Lincecum has weird movement with his shoulder blade. That's why he caught it."