

## A's Daily News Clips; March 20, 2010

### **Trevor Cahill makes push for A's fifth starter job**

By Joe Stiglich/Bay Area News Group. 3/19/10

TUCSON, Ariz. — As smooth as Trevor Cahill's first four innings went Friday against the Colorado Rockies, his best work may have come in a rocky fifth.

Singles by Melvin Mora and Ian Stewart put runners on the corners with no outs. But Cahill escaped with just one run scoring, capping an impressive five-inning outing before things got away from the A's in a 10-4 loss at Hi Corbett Field.

Cahill has allowed just one earned run in nine innings over his past two starts as he bids for the No. 5 starting job.

"If you go through spring training without getting out of a jam, you're not going to be ready for the season," Cahill said.

The right-hander allowed just the one run, five hits and no walks in 68 pitches.

Cahill believes he's also getting a feel for the "spike" curveball he's trying to add.

"Hopefully if I get a good feel for it, it can be like a two-strike pitch. Right now I don't really have one," he said.

He benefited from good defense, including second baseman Eric Patterson's circus catch in the third. Patterson elevated to grab Dexter Fowler's liner, and after the ball popped out of his glove while he was in mid-air, Patterson dove and caught it.

"That was awesome," Cahill said. "I asked him if he did it on purpose to make it look better."

First baseman Daric Barton launched his first home run of the spring in the sixth, a drive to right-center off Manuel Corpas. Barton also doubled in the fourth and is hitting .440.

"He's really played well all spring," A's manager Bob Geren said. "I like his swing, and his defense is good."

Cliff Pennington and Adam Rosales, battling for the shortstop job, started next to each other on the left side of the infield, with Rosales playing third. Both looked good with the glove and Pennington tripled in the eighth.

With Coco Crisp and Rajai Davis both nursing injuries, Gabe Gross started in center field and went 4-for-4 with two RBIs.

Right-hander Jason Jennings, signed by the A's to a minor-league deal Feb. 28, draws the start in a split-squad game today in Goodyear against the Cleveland Indians.

Though his best chance at making the roster could be as a long reliever, Jennings is also in the fifth starter conversation.

"I knew when I came in that being able to do either/or — be a long guy, spot starter, whatever they need — would give me a better chance," he said.

### **Trevor Cahill does well with new curve**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer. 3/20/10

**Tucson** --

**Trevor Cahill** held down a spot in the A's rotation all of last year, and it appears he's not going to relinquish it without a fight.

Cahill, who is competing with **Vin Mazzaro** and **Gio Gonzalez** for the fifth starter role, allowed five hits and one run in five innings Friday. He walked none and struck out one in the A's 10-4 loss to the Rockies.

He is throwing a slightly different curveball - he's calling it a "spike" curve because of the grip - and he likes it as a potential two-strike pitch, something Cahill feels he doesn't have.

Cahill generally relies on his sinker, his best pitch, to get grounders, so infield defense is especially important for him; he recorded 12 outs in the infield Friday, including one on a great play by **Eric Patterson** at second. Patterson leaped for a liner by **Dexter Fowler** in the third, tipped it in the air, and then caught the ball while falling.

"That was amazing," Cahill said. "I asked him if he did it purposely to make it look better."

**Greg Smith**, who went from Oakland to Colorado in the **Matt Holliday** deal, started for the Rockies and allowed one run in five innings; his ERA is 1.93. The left-hander said afterward that he still texts A's starter **Dallas Braden** any time he picks off a runner, even during the spring, and this spring he's up 3-0 on Braden after nabbing **Gabe Gross** in the third.

Gross went 4-for-4 to lift his average to .393; he's leading the team with nine RBIs. **Daric Barton** (.440) had two more hits, including his first homer of the spring.

**Briefly:** Manager **Bob Geren** said that **Joey Devine's** tendinitis is 95 percent gone; the reliever might resume throwing in a day or two. ... **Michael Wurtz** felt good after throwing in a minor-league game the day before, and he could pitch in his first Cactus League game in the next few days. ... Outfielder **Coco Crisp** (hamstring) might play today or tomorrow. ... Today will be **Ben Sheets'** first outing since failing to retire any of the 10 hitters he faced Monday. Sheets will start at Phoenix Muni against the Cubs; **Jason Jennings** will start the other split-squad game against Cleveland in Goodyear, Ariz.

## The Drumbeat: A's vs. Rockies: Was trading Gonzalez a mistake?

Susan Slusser/Chronicle Staff Writer. 3/20/10

Not much happening news-wise with Oakland, though I'd tweeted a little earlier (@susanslusser): Michael Wurtz felt good this morning after yesterday's minor-league game, according to manager Bob Geren, so he might be good to go in a Cactus League game in the next few days.

Joey Devine still isn't throwing, but the tendinitis that has sidelined him is 95 percent knocked out, so he could just be a day or two away from throwing. Coco Crisp could be back in the lineup tomorrow, and if not, Sunday pretty much for sure.

Since there's not much going on, the topic for today is outfielders Carlos Gonzalez, who is leading off for Colorado today and batting .370 this spring. When I went to chat with some of the Rockies this morning, Gonzalez was a hot topic, as in: What were the A's thinking trading him for Matt Holliday?

I know this has been raised before many times by Drumbeat posters, and I won't go through the whole long trail of that trade history, but the player Oakland now has as a result of the Holliday deal is outfielder Michael Taylor, who is one of the A's top prospects and who could well be up with the team by mid-summer.

Will Taylor be a better player than Gonzalez? Are they comparable? Both can hit, hit for power, run, they throw well, they're the same age, 24. And Gonzalez has played a year-plus in the big leagues now and he had a strong season last year, hitting .284 with 17 homers and 55 RBIs; he also stole 16 bases.

He's clearly a bit ahead of Taylor at this point, but Taylor came out of college and was drafted just three years ago, whereas Gonzalez signed in 2002; Taylor has got six full years of service time before free agency, too.

There are three good young players all united by these trades, and it will be interesting in several years to look back and see who's the best player: Gonzalez, Taylor or Brett Wallace, the third baseman (DH/first baseman, probably) the A's traded to Toronto get Taylor. Did the A's, Rockies or Blue Jays make the best deal?

Even if Gonzalez winds up being the best of the bunch - and the Rockies I talked to believe he'll be a star player - remember that the A's made a good deal to get him in the first place: Gonzalez came to Oakland in the Dan Haren deal, which also netted them left-hander Brett Anderson, and among others, Greg Smith - who is starting today for Colorado.

Not many regulars here for the A's today, and no Taylor, so a head-to-head showdown with Gonzalez won't happen. The lineup: Patterson 2B, Pennington SS, Barton 1B, Gross CF, Buck RF, Rosales 3B, Fox LF, Powell C, Cahill P

UPDATE: I'm starting to think maybe I should throw Smith into the equation when it comes to evaluating that Holliday trade: He's allowed only one hit through three and he picked off that runner (Gabe Gross).

And...Gonzalez has just singled and stolen second with two outs here in the third. (And he followed in the top of the douerh inning with a great catch, running down Travis Buck's drive to left center.)

In case you missed it in this morning's A's beat (it's a secondary note), the A's [tried out Dominican outfielder Wagner Mateo, 17, this week](#). The Cardinals had signed him to a \$3.1 million deal last year but voided it after Mateo failed a physical, reportedly because of an eye condition. Mateo has tried out for several Cactus League teams and is now heading to the Grapefruit League before weighing any offers. I didn't get a sense of the A's interest one way or another, but I know Mateo struck out twice against left-handers (including once against Dallas Braden) before hitting a line drive off a minor-league righty.

## Reworking curveball, Cahill stays sharp

### *Starting pitcher fighting to hold onto fifth rotation spot*

By Jane Lee / MLB.com. 3/20/10

TUCSON, Ariz. -- Trevor Cahill knows his slider isn't exactly the most impressive of pitches.

However, the young Oakland righty isn't letting that weakness get in the way of his fight to hold on to the fifth rotation spot he held all of last season.

Instead, Cahill is being proactive and reworking his curveball with a slightly different grip that has the right-hander calling it a "spike curveball."

Cahill, 22, is hoping said ball can transform into his go-to pitch when facing a batter with two strikes -- a notion manager Bob Geren heavily supports after watching his starter toss five innings of one-run ball against the Rockies on Friday.

"That curveball looked real good today," the A's manager said after a 10-4 loss to Colorado. "If it can be a finishing pitch, that's always a good thing, without a doubt."

Cahill made quick work of the Rockies through most of his performance, scattering five hits and the lone run while walking none and striking out one. He breezed through the first four frames, allowing just two hits, before giving up three consecutive singles in the fifth.

"I actually thought I was up in the zone during the first couple of innings," he said. "I felt better in the third, fourth and fifth innings."

Despite the fifth-inning hitting affair, Cahill got out of the frame seemingly unscathed by fanning former A's pitcher Greg Smith before inducing a pair of groundouts.

"If you go through spring without having to get out of a jam," he said, "you won't be ready for the season."

Cahill threw a total of 68 pitches, 45 of which were strikes and about 10 of which came on his fresh-faced curveball.

The first five I threw were balls," he said, "but then the next four or five were strikes, and the batters just kind of stared at it. I threw it a lot to left-handers."

Cahill has now started four games and thrown a total of 13 innings while compiling an ERA of 4.15 -- a number matching that of Gio Gonzalez, who, along with Vin Mazzaro, is hoping for an equal shot at a rotation spot come April.

All three pitchers have impressed this spring, making the club's decision all the more uncertain. However, Geren wouldn't have it any other way.

"That's a good thing," he said. "I'm happy with how all our starters are throwing right now, and that's what you want to see. Once we get all our relievers healthy, we'll have a strong pitching staff."

## Gross drives in four against Rox

### *Cahill goes five innings with one strikeout*

By Thomas Harding / MLB.com. 3/19/10

#### **ROCKIES 10, ATHLETICS 4**

*at Tucson, Ariz.*

*Friday, March 19*

**Rockies at the plate:** Melvin Mora had a single and a two-run double. Jordan Pacheco went 3-for-3 with a double and three RBIs after entering as a reserve at catcher.

**Athletics at the plate:** Daric Barton doubled in the fourth inning and homered in the sixth. Gabe Gross singled in each of his first three at-bats.

**Rockies on the mound:** Lefty Greg Smith became the Rockies' third straight starter to go five innings and strike out six batters. Smith gave up one run and three hits. Manuel Corpas gave up Barton's homer with two out in the sixth. Likely closer Franklin Morales entered with a two-run lead in the top of the seventh and pitched a 1-2-3 inning -- freezing Landon Powell with a slider to end it. Also, righty Ubaldo Jimenez pitched Friday against Rockies Triple-A hitters, and gave up two earned runs on seven hits with one strikeout and no walks. In his first inning since being converted to bullpen duty, righty Tim Redding gave up three hits, including a triple and a double, and two runs.

**Cactus League records:** Athletics 7-8, Rockies 11-8

**Athletics on the mound:** Athletics right-hander Trevor Cahill went five innings and held the Rockies to one run on five scattered hits.

**Worth noting:** The Athletics' Adam Rosales, vying for a utility spot, made just his second start at third base this spring. He has appeared in seven games at second base and two at shortstop for the A's while reaching base safely in nine of his 11 games. For the Rockies, Melvin Mora made his first start at second base. He also has made starts at third base, left field and center field, and he's working on playing first base.

**Up next:** Left-hander Jeff Francis will start for the Rockies against the Angels at Hi Corbett Field on Saturday.

Right-hander Ben Sheets, who surrendered nine earned runs without recording an out against the Reds in his last appearance, will look to bounce back in his fourth spring start Saturday against the Cubs. Sheets is expected to be joined by the club's regular starters at Phoenix Municipal Stadium, while recent addition Jason Jennings will take the mound in the A's other split-squad game in Goodyear, Ariz., against the Reds. Both games are slated for 1 p.m. PT.

## Lee's Leftovers: Friday pregame: Injury updates

Jane Lee/MLB.com. 3/19/10

**Joey Devine** -- who has yet to pitch in a game -- is "getting better every day," says manager **Bob Geren**. However, Devine didn't throw again Friday, but Geren said Saturday or Sunday is a "possibility." Devine has been treating a dose of tendinitis in his surgically repaired arm and hasn't been on the mound in more than a week. It remains to be seen whether the A's reliever will be ready to go come Opening Night.

Right-hander **Michael Wuertz**, who threw for the first time in a Minor League game Thursday (21 pitches), told manager **Bob Geren** that he felt "great" when he came into the clubhouse Friday. That means he'll likely make his Cactus League debut by weekend's end. "It sounds like he's doing fine," Geren said. "Hopefully we'll let him throw soon."

Geren said **Coco Crisp** (strained left hamstring) ran sprints Thursday and is "two, three, four days away" from seeing game action again. The A's new center fielder, who missed almost all of last season after undergoing surgeries on both his shoulders, will likely DH in his first game back and

potentially play defense for the first time this spring soon after. "His hamstring is real minor," Geren said. "And his arm's good -- that's the good news."

## Oakland A's 2010 preview

Stan McNeal. The Sporting News Friday, Mar. 19, 2010

Once again, the A's will have the smallest payroll and the biggest young arms in the American League. This offseason, Oakland added veteran Ben Sheets to the rotation and gave up on oft-injured [Eric Chavez](#) returning as its starting third baseman. There is depth in the rotation and the outfield, and more talented young players are on the way. The bottom line should be familiar, however: a fourth-place finish in the AL West.

### Three questions

#### 1. Where will the offense come from?

Not from the home run. After having success with small ball in the [second half](#) last season, the A's—led by Rajai Davis—will be running from the start of 2010. "We don't have a ton of power," manager Bob Geren said. "We'll pay a lot of attention to the little things—moving a runner over, getting a run in with less than two outs." Geren said Oakland got used to competing in low-scoring games last year. "We have to learn how to win those close games," he said.

Oakland also hopes two of its new starters—Coco Crisp in center and Kevin Kouzmanoff at third—will give the club a lift in the speed and power departments, respectively. Neither, however, is an offensive force. Crisp has a career [.331 on-base percentage](#), and Kouzmanoff has only 59 homers over the past three seasons (though Petco Park was his home park).

#### 2. How deep is the rotation?

If Justin Duchscherer is healthy, the A's will have enough starters to field two four-man rotations. Sheets and Duchscherer are the only 30-somethings in the group. The rest come from all corners of the country but have a couple of things in common: "Youth and talent," Geren said. Brett Anderson, 22, is the lone lock among them after making 30 starts with a 4.06 ERA last season as a rookie.

Dallas Braden, 26, will make the rotation as long as he is recovered from a season-ending foot injury in 2009. Trevor Cahill, 22, posted a 4.63 ERA in 32 starts in 2009. Gio Gonzalez, 24, has looked good in camp and is competing with Vin Mazzaro and Josh Outman. "The depth is going to make a big difference," Geren says. "If somebody has a setback, we have a lot more quality in our organization."

#### 3. What can Chavez contribute?

After all the injuries he has endured, 20 homers and 400 at-bats would be a bonus. After another winter of rehabbing, Chavez reported to spring training as healthy as he has been since having two back and three shoulder surgeries in the past two years. Hoping that reduced playing time will help him last a full season, the A's plan to use Chavez as a utility player. Chavez has been working at third, first and shortstop.

"Eric feels strong and is open to the idea of being a part-time player and playing other positions," Geren says, adding something he has said more than once regarding Oakland's longest-tenured player. "We're optimistic but time will tell how he does."

### Projected lineup

1. **LF Rajai Davis:** .360 OBP, 41 SBs after April arrival.
2. **CF Coco Crisp:** Coming back from 2 shoulder surgeries.
3. **C Kurt Suzuki:** Led AL catchers with 83 RBIs in '09.
4. **DH Jack Cust:** At least 25 HRs, 93 BBs past 3 seasons.
5. **3B Kevin Kouzmanoff:** 9 HRs at Petco last season; 9 on road.
6. **RF Ryan Sweeney:** .348 OBP but just 6 HRs in '09.
7. **2B Mark Ellis:** .663 OPS at home last season; .751 on road.
8. **1B Daric Barton:** Could lose playing time to Chavez.
9. **SS Cliff Pennington:** Must hold off Adam Rosales for job.

### Projected rotation

1. **RHP Ben Sheets:** Missed all of '09; has made 30 starts once since '05.
2. **LHP Dallas Braden:** BB/9 has improved past two seasons.
3. **RHP Justin Duchscherer:** Missed '09 with injuries, depression.
4. **LHP Brett Anderson:** Allowed .313 AVG vs. lefties in '09.
5. **RHP Trevor Cahill:** 27 HRs in 178 2/3 IP last season.

### Projected closer

**RHP Andrew Bailey:** AL rookie of the year had 1.86 ERA, second among AL closers.

### Grades

**Offense: C.** Once the A's started running last season, they started scoring. Only the Angels, Yankees and Red Sox scored more runs than Oakland in the second half. Crisp brings more speed, but a team-wide lack of power and a pitcher-friendly ballpark likely will result in another average offensive attack.

**Pitching: B.** Oakland's staff will earn an "A" if Sheets and Duchscherer are healthy and effective after their season-long layoffs, and if a couple of the young starters continue to develop. The A's bullpen led the AL with a 3.46 ERA last season and returns intact. As a bonus, reliever Joey Devine should return early in the season from Tommy John surgery.

**Bench: B.** Chavez, though not an everyday player, still could be the club's best power threat. Gabe Gross and Travis Buck add depth to the outfield, as Rosales does to the infield. Backup catcher Landon Powell provides a bit of pop.

**Manager: B.** Geren has yet to have a winning season with 76, 75, and 75 wins in his three seasons as Oakland's manager. But he does a nice job of bringing along the club's young talent, of which there is plenty.

**Sporting News prediction:** Given the youth of their pitching staff last season, the A's actually overachieved by winning 75 games. They will be improved and could push .500. But Seattle and Texas will be better, too, so another last-place finish is likely.