

## A's News Clips, Wednesday, March 24, 2010

### Infielder Adam Rosales is making serious run for roster spot with A's

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Adam Rosales didn't wear a Cincinnati Reds uniform very long, but his all-out style of play earned him a pretty nice comparison.

The infielder became known in Cincinnati as "Pete Rosales," a reference to Pete Rose, a rather famous ex-Red who also gained attention for his hustle.

Rosales has impressed the A's with more than his attitude since coming over in a Feb. 1 trade. He's played well enough this spring to put heat on Cliff Pennington in the battle for the starting shortstop job.

Despite the competition, Rosales goes about his business like a man who understands he's getting paid to play a kid's game.

"I've just kind of always listened to what the coaches said," Rosales, 26, said. "One thing that was always constant was work hard, play hard, be smart. You should always enjoy the game."

The A's knew they were getting a high-energy player when they acquired Rosales for infielder Aaron Miles and a player to be named (the A's also got outfielder Willy Taveras in the deal but released him immediately).

They like the results they've seen, as well.

Rosales has hit .333 in 14 Cactus League games, seeing action at second base and third base as well as shortstop.

He hit just .213 in 87 games last season with Cincinnati, but his versatility attracted the A's. He played all four infield spots last season.

But the first thing usually mentioned about Rosales is his hustle, not surprising for a player who hardly took the express route to the major leagues.

Cincinnati drafted him in the 12th round out of Western Michigan in 2005, and he made his big league debut in 2008 at age 25.

Rosales drew the spotlight last season by sprinting around the bases after each of his four homers. It wasn't a ploy for attention — Rosales said he's done the same thing since he was 12.

"The first time I hit one out of the park, I jogged around the bases and it felt really awkward," he said. "It felt like it took too much time."

Reds right-hander Jared Burton said he recalls his former teammate taking a bat and hitting baseballs into the corners of the outfield, then running to retrieve them. That's one way Rosales got his conditioning in.

"He's one of those guys, if he plays the game for 15 years, he'll still be like a kid," Burton said. "He appreciates every chance he gets out there."

Sometimes Rosales' up-tempo style gets the best of him.

"The biggest thing with Adam is he gets out of control at times," A's second baseman Mark Ellis said. "But he's gotten so much better since camp started. He plays very hard. He doesn't say a whole lot. He's just going about his business."

He could start the season in the minor leagues if he doesn't beat out Pennington at shortstop. Jake Fox and Eric Patterson are also fighting to make the team as utility men, and both are out of options.

"Once you start worrying about (making the team), you start pressing," Rosales said. "You've just got to keep the fun in it or else you're going to get yourself in trouble."

Notes: The A's were off Tuesday, but Brett Anderson threw five innings in a simulated game against minor leaguers. Anderson looked sharp, allowing hardly any solid contact during an 82-pitch outing. He said he felt no effects from a stiff

neck that kept him from pitching Monday. "... Gio Gonzalez will pitch tonight against the Los Angeles Dodgers along with Trevor Cahill, as both battle for the fifth starter spot. The 7:35 game will be televised on CSNCA. Thursday's 7:05 p.m. game against the Giants will air on CSNBA.

## **Gross' goal: Produce fully in limited time**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Sometimes, Gabe Gross wonders how he might have fared if he'd stuck with football.

The onetime Auburn quarterback gave up that sport in his sophomore season to concentrate on baseball, and he doesn't second-guess the decision - how could he? He has a career in major-league baseball. He does think, however, about what type of quarterback he might have been with another year or two of experience.

"I came in as a true freshman and played two thirds of that season, and I did a lot of the stupid things true freshmen do, made a lot of mistakes - I didn't have a clue what I was doing," said Gross, who went from a simple high-school offense to a complex Terry Bowden offense. "Then I hung football up my sophomore year; I wasn't starting and I had to make a decision about which sport to focus on.

"I don't regret it at all, but I'd love to see where I would have been as a junior or senior if I'd stayed and learned some things. I do think about that once in a while."

On the baseball field, Gross might have similar questions: What type of player might he be with regular playing time?

The A's new outfielder hasn't been an everyday player, really. Sure, now and then he gets a stretch of extended time when a starting outfielder goes down, but really, Gross, 30, has been a bench player in the big leagues.

That's fairly unusual, because reserves tend to be older players on the down side of their careers; young players often don't handle part-time play well. Yet, since he came to the majors at the age of 24, Gross has not had more than 345 at-bats in a season; in fact, it's usually more like 200 at-bats.

"When you have to do something, you find a way; it's sink or swim in that role," said Gross, who cited Tampa Bay coach George Hendrick as a major help in learning to succeed as a part-timer.

"I've had some success coming off the bench, but I always feel like I could have done a lot better. I haven't been satisfied at all with the way I've produced in the at-bats I've had. Some of that is me, and some of that is never getting regular at-bats."

Throughout his career, Gross has had a big leg kick as part of his swing. Any exaggerated motions or extra moving parts are hard to keep fine-tuned without regular at-bats, and Gross was finding it ever more difficult to be consistent with his timing device sometimes on, sometimes off.

"It was kind of self-defeating," he said. "I fought it for several years, I tried to keep with it, because when things went well with the leg kick, they went really well. But when they went bad, they went really, really bad. It hit me straight in the face that I needed to change. Being really stubborn, it took me four years to do it."

So this offseason, Gross began to try to minimize the kick. Now, it's more like a small step instead of a big kick, and his swing is simpler.

"No matter what you do to load (the swing), if you're not getting consistent at-bats, it's hard to maintain," said A's hitting coach Jim Skaalen, who also worked with Gross in Milwaukee. "Smaller movements are easier to maintain, and he's adding some rhythm to his stride."

It appears to be working. Gross is 13-for-36 (.361), and he has a team-high 11 RBIs while playing all over the outfield.

A knack for driving in runs should assure Gross of plenty of at-bats, but he'd still like to be in the lineup on a regular basis, even if he realizes that the starting outfield of Coco Crisp, Rajai Davis and Ryan Sweeney might make that difficult.

"I hold out hope that in some way, shape or form, I'll get everyday play sometime," Gross said. "But as long as this is my role, I'll embrace it."

## **Inbox: Long-term contract for Suzuki?**

### **Athletics beat reporter Jane Lee fields fans' queries**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

**It seems like the A's are going to be poised to make some financial moves next offseason with a huge amount of contracts coming off the books. Do you see the club possibly locking up young talent like Kurt Suzuki to a long-term deal?**

-- Jera N., Oakland

Without a doubt. It seems the A's understand how much value Suzuki lends to the team and its future. They know he's the centerpiece to their efforts in creating a playoff-caliber team and would do right by locking him up by midseason.

I've talked with several scouts who think that Suzuki, aside from the invincible and now very rich Joe Mauer, represents baseball's best catcher. At the very least, he's the club's best all-around player and an All-Star in the making. Suzuki solidified his role as a middle-of-the-order mainstay last season and led the team in RBIs while also ranking at the top of all American League catchers for games started and played. What he's done to aid the A's young pitching staff, along with his community volunteer efforts, can't be forgotten, either.

In my mind, Suzuki's already the complete package at age 26. Soon enough, I see him signing a long-term deal that will take him up until free agency following the 2013 season. That will take him through his arbitration years and give youngster Max Stassi plenty of time to prepare to take over behind the plate.

**How is the fourth-outfielder competition playing out in the eyes of management? It seems like no one has gone out there and locked down the roster spot yet. Any clues as to who is the frontrunner at this point?**

-- Adrian F., Oakland

A's manager Bob Geren has been pretty mum on this topic thus far, only going so far as saying he likes what he's seen from the likes of Gabe Gross, Eric Patterson, Travis Buck and Jake Fox. My eyes, though, tell me that Gross leads the pack as the frontrunner for the fourth outfield spot. He's a veteran guy with a solid glove and what appears to be a consistent bat with some pop. He's quietly leading the team in RBIs this spring and could offer the club a decent left-handed bat off the bench come April.

I have to say that Patterson's impressed me with his speed and aggressive style of play, but more so in the infield. And even though he's out of options, I think it's clear Adam Rosales has the utility-infield spot pretty much locked up.

As for Buck, I think he'll watch an all too familiar scene unfold and head back to Triple-A by season's start. He's been average this spring, and the same can be said of Fox, who isn't exactly a defensive expert in either the infield or outfield. Both have power, but we haven't seen enough of it in the past month to hand out any roster spots right now.

**I have been extremely impressed with my boy Tyson Ross. What do you think are his chances of making the Opening Day roster, or at least getting a shot sometime this year?**

-- TyReale R., Danville, Calif.

Ross won't make the Opening Day roster, but if he progresses at a decent pace at Triple-A this year, he could potentially be making the drive from Sacramento to Oakland in September as a late-season callup if the A's need a spot starter. He's one of just four non-roster invitees left on the club's Spring Training roster, which says something in itself. Granted, the A's relief corps hasn't exactly boasted the healthiest of guys as of late, but you have to believe Ross isn't still in big league camp only because they need warm bodies to fill the bullpen.

Geren believes this kid has a bright future, and after watching Ross strike out seven in three innings last week, it's hard not to see why. He got a taste of Double-A last season and is sure to be awarded the opportunity to play at the Triple-A level for the majority of this year. I'd think the A's are more likely to bring Henry Rodriguez into the mix before Ross, but don't be surprised if you see both in green and gold before season's end.

**Am I the only one who thinks Gregorio Petit has a real shot at being an above-average infielder on a Major League team?**

-- Grant B., Fremont, Calif.

Trust me, Grant, you're not the only one who thinks so. In fact, you can count me as a believer of his abilities. When Petit was sent down to the Minors on Sunday, he was once again frustrated by the fact he wasn't really given an extended opportunity. He hasn't exactly gotten a long look since making his Major League debut in 2008, and unfortunately I don't see him getting one given the current infield situation. As mentioned before, Rosales looks to be the go-to utility infielder. Beyond that, the club appears to have suddenly placed Adrian Cardenas and Eric Sogard in front of Petit.

At the same time, numbers don't lie, and I know Petit had a poor year at Triple-A last season. Upon his departure Sunday, he was hitting .545 but had only been given 11 at-bats -- numbers reflecting similar stints in Oakland, where he's posted decent numbers in the few days there before being sent down again.

So while I'm slightly disappointed to see him go (again), I'm not too surprised. There's simply no room for Petit in Oakland, so for his sake, I hope he's packaged in an early-season trade that will give him the chance to be productive elsewhere.

**Ben Sheets looked better in his last outing, but it's hard to forget about that 10-run disaster in his previous start. Is he really going to be OK for the season, or is that \$10 million going down the drain fast?**

-- Craig L., Phoenix

Sheets is going to be more than OK, and I'll continue to say so until his surgically repaired right elbow starts barking. You're right in saying it's hard to forget about that 10-run escapade, but it's also quite easy to remember that this is Spring Training and Sheets doesn't exactly post great numbers during this time of year. I think he showed in his last outing that movement on his fastball and curveball is starting to take shape again, and he was really pleased with the way his velocity has progressed.

Considering the A's past history with injury-prone players, it's easy to assume the worst for Sheets. But I can bet that \$10 million that he'll be 100 percent healthy come Opening Day when he takes the mound against the visiting Mariners.

**Is Eric Chavez still rocking the long locks? I hardly recognized him when I saw him in a game a couple weeks ago.**

-- Jamie P., San Jose, Calif.

Chavez is indeed sporting some long wavy hair in camp, not to mention a rather scruffy beard, as well. A couple weeks ago the A's veteran mentioned it was a result of laziness, and I think Chavez is right for worrying more about his always questioned health right now than about visiting the local Supercuts. However, his four-year-old son Diego is no longer matching daddy's length. Just two days ago, Chavez and his wife took the blonde-haired youngster for a haircut.

**Lee's Leftovers: Anderson throws in simulated game**

Both **Gio Gonzalez** and **Brett Anderson**, the latter who was scratched from his Monday start due to neck stiffness, were scheduled to pitch in Minor League games today on the team's off day. Mother Nature decided to switch things up, though. A pretty heavy rainfall through the night and into this morning forced the games to be canceled.

As a result, **Gonzalez's** start was pushed back and he'll now throw four innings after **Trevor Cahill** in tomorrow night's game against the visiting Dodgers at Phoenix Municipal Stadium.

Meanwhile, according to pitching coach **Curt Young, Anderson** threw 82 pitches in five innings in a simulated game and all went well.

The A's have back-to-back night games beginning tomorrow, the first slated for 7:35 p.m. PT and Thursday's Bay Bridge battle with the Giants scheduled for 7:05 p.m. PT in Scottsdale.

## **A year later, A's still in limbo**

By Rob Neyer, espn.com, 3/23/2010

Did you hear the news about the possible relocation of the Athletics? If not, don't worry; the news isn't new: Baseball commissioner Bud Selig met with Oakland Athletics officials on Sunday in regard to a new stadium but said there is no timetable on when a committee he formed to study the issue will put forth a recommendation on how to proceed.

"There is no question that the A's cannot compete [financially] in the venue they're in," Selig said, referring to the team's longtime home, the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum.

Selig met with San Francisco Giants officials a week ago to discuss territorial rights. The Athletics have considered a move to San Jose, among other Bay area locations. The Giants currently have a Class A team in San Jose.

"There still is information we are looking for. It is a complicated process with a lot of complex issues and is time-consuming," Selig said. "But we would still like to move as expeditiously as possible."

Perhaps. But "expeditiously as possible" can mean whatever you like.

As Craig writes, it's now been a year since Selig formed his committee ...

One year. The Allied powers figured out how the post-war partition of Europe was going to go down in less time. The Bretton Woods conference established the system that kept financial order for 60 years in less time. It didn't take too much more than a year to get a man in space after the formation of NASA. You'd think that a handful of people could figure out how to properly dispose of a baseball team in that time frame.

They could, and I suspect that they have. A handful of people could also fix Social Security and Medicare, too. I mean that quite seriously. A dozen reasonably informed people could come up with changes that would keep both programs in clover for decades to come, with no meaningful impact on anyone's actual health or general happiness.

I'm very serious about this. It really is that simple.

Ah, but the politics. Change is scary, and politicians love to scare the bejeebers out of gullible, ignorant citizens (of whom there are many millions).

Well, it's sort of the same thing in baseball. It should be 29-to-1; you can hardly blame the Giants for wanting to keep the A's out of San Jose. But it's not 29-to-1, because some of the other clubs are afraid of setting a precedent, and also because the Giants (presumably) have some favors they can call in. And despite the impression you might sometimes get, Bud Selig can't just do whatever he likes.

It's been a year (and counting) not because Selig's committee can't come up with a reasonable recommendation regarding the future of the Athletics. It's because Selig knows what that recommendation is (or will be), but hasn't yet been able to garner the support from enough owners to implement the recommendation.

This situation will be resolved, eventually. But there's still a great deal of horse-trading and arm-twisting to be done, and the Commissioner's no longer a young man.

## **Top 5 A's home openers**

by Robert Rubino, Santa Rosa Press Demo, 3/23/2010

In a countdown to the 2010 baseball season, Old School blog will run brief descriptions of the most significant home openers in the history of the Oakland A's and SF Giants — one a day, a total of five for each team. Let's start with the A's:

No. 5. April 17, 1981. Seattle Mariners at Oakland A's. Paid attendance 50,255. This was the first A's home game in which the team wasn't owned by Charlie Finley. It marked the beginning of the Walter Haas ownership era — one that would produce huge gains in attendance and three consecutive World Series appearances, including the championship in 1989.

Under manager Billy Martin, the A's had opened the 1981 season on the road with eight straight wins. They won this opener, 16-1, behind Steve McCatty, with home runs by Rickey Henderson, Tony Armas (two), Cliff Johnson and Dwayne Murphy. The A's wouldn't lose until the 12th game of the season, and they won 17 of their first 18.