

## A's News Clips, Thursday, March 25, 2010

### A's receive reliever Edwar Ramirez from Rangers in trade for infielder Gregorio Petit

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's added some insurance for their wounded bullpen Wednesday, trading infielder Gregorio Petit to the Texas Rangers for right-handed reliever Edwar Ramirez.

When spring training began, the relief corps was one area that didn't appear to need reinforcements.

But closer Andrew Bailey, Michael Wuertz and Craig Breslow all have been slowed by injuries, and Joey Devine has recovered slower than expected after missing all of last season due to elbow surgery.

"We obviously were looking for some bullpen depth with injuries and some uncertainties as far as timetables are concerned with those guys," A's assistant GM David Forst said.

Ramirez, who turns 29 on Sunday, was in uniform for Wednesday night's game against the Los Angeles Dodgers at Phoenix Municipal Stadium, which ended in a 3-3 tie after nine innings.

It was the second time he's been dealt in 15 days. The New York Yankees traded him to Texas on March 9.

Ramirez went 6-2 with a 5.22 ERA in 96 games for the Yankees over three seasons.

The A's hope his addition is merely precautionary at this point.

Bailey, Wuertz and Breslow all should be ready for opening day if they keep progressing at their current pace.

Wuertz will make his second exhibition appearance tonight after being bothered by shoulder soreness. Breslow, who has elbow tendinitis, threw from the mound Wednesday and said he hopes to get in a game this weekend.

Bailey, coming back from tennis elbow, could throw from the mound this weekend.

Gio Gonzalez drew the start Wednesday and allowed one run in 41/3 innings, striking out five and walking two.

He found trouble in the second after walking consecutive batters to load the bases with one out. But after A.J. Ellis' sacrifice fly, Gonzalez froze Rafael Furcal with a curveball for a called third strike.

"If you can minimize damage, it's a lift for any pitcher," Gonzalez said. "Gave up one, but it's better than three."

He was relieved in the fifth by Trevor Cahill, who allowed two earned runs and four hits in 42/3 innings. Cahill walked two and struck out six, all looking.

Gonzalez and Cahill appear to be the main candidates for the fifth starter's spot, and both have two spring appearances remaining.

Coco Crisp and Rajai Davis batted 1-2 in the order and started alongside each other in the outfield for the first time this spring. Crisp, who is coming off surgery to both shoulders and has been slowed by a hamstring strain, played center after being relegated to DH before Wednesday.

Davis, who missed six games with an abdominal injury, has shifted from center to left this season.

Forst was asked how much Cactus League performance will be weighed when making roster decisions on utility men Jake Fox and Eric Patterson. Both are out of options, meaning they'd have to be exposed to other teams through waivers before they can be sent to the minors.

"You have to take it into account, especially with (position players), who are going to be there opening day and have to perform," Forst said.

That bodes well for Patterson, who entered Wednesday hitting .400 over his past six games and has drawn praise from manager Bob Geren. Fox is just 2-for-32 (.063) overall.

Second baseman Mark Ellis missed his second game with a sore hamstring.

## **A's trade Petit for bullpen relief**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

With a few minor health issues in the bullpen, the A's added reliever **Edwar Ramirez** to the mix Wednesday, trading infielder **Gregorio Petit** to the Rangers for the former Yankees right-hander.

Known for a standout changeup, Ramirez, who turns 29 on Sunday, provides some experienced depth, and he has an outside shot at a bullpen spot even if the rest of the relievers are healthy. **Joey Devine** is expected to be back from Tommy John surgery and recent tendinitis by mid-April; closer **Andrew Bailey** (tennis elbow) made 30 throws at a distance of 120 feet Wednesday and expects to throw a bullpen session Saturday; **Craig Breslow** (tendinitis) threw a side session; and **Michael Wurtz** is pitching in his second game of the spring tonight.

Petit, sent down Sunday, had fallen even further down the A's chart with the offseason acquisitions of **Adam Rosales**, **Steve Tolleson** and **Eric Sogard**. According to assistant general manager **David Forst**, the Rangers had called about Petit as soon as he cleared waivers last month.

"I'm very, very excited to get an opportunity," Petit said. "I'm hungry. I'm going to make the most of it."

Ramirez said he's had a crazy spring with all the moves; he'd worked only one inning because the Yankees designated him for assignment the first day of games.

The A's had no interest in onetime Oakland reliever **Chad Gaudin**, waived by the Yankees on Tuesday.

**Briefly:** Starter **Josh Outman** (Tommy John surgery) is throwing off the mound and expects to be able to pitch in a big-league game around the All-Star break. ... Second baseman **Mark Ellis** (hamstring tightness) was given a day to go through a full workout and said he expects to be in the lineup tonight against the Giants. ... **Ben Sheets** will throw in a minor-league game at Papago Park today. ... **Dallas Braden** will start Friday's split-squad game against the Cubs at Mesa, Ariz., and **Vin Mazzaro** against the Rangers at Surprise, Ariz. ... The starting outfield was together for the first time, with **Coco Crisp** in center, **Rajai Davis** in left and **Ryan Sweeney** in right in Wednesday's 3-3 tie with the Dodgers. ... **Eric Chavez** played nine innings at first base for the first time. ... **Kurt Suzuki** threw out two runners.

## **More on Ramirez trade; injury updates; roster battle**

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Phoenix

Assistant general manager David Forst confirms that Edwar Ramirez was obtained from the Rangers today as bullpen insurance; the team is expecting Andrew Bailey (throwing today), Michael Wurtz (pitching in tomorrow)

night's game) and Craig Breslow (throwing a side session today) to be OK for Opening Day, but Joey Devine's timetable has been pushed back a bit (to mid April now, probably at the earliest).

Forst said Texas called about Gregorio Petit as soon as he cleared waivers last month, so the A's knew there was interest there.

I asked if given complete health, Ramirez might still have a shot at a bullpen spot, and Forst said, basically, let's see how he does, but sure, he might have a chance. He pointed out that Ramirez has only thrown one inning this spring because the Yankees designated him the first day of spring games, and after that 10 day waiting period, he went to Texas and just got the one inning before getting traded to the A's.

Manager Bob Geren says that Ramirez will throw in tomorrow night's game against the Giants, most likely. Ramirez said it's been a crazy spring for him: Yankees, Rangers, A's in pretty short order.

Ramirez is as thin as expected, just a wisp of a guy, but Gabe Gross tells me he throws pretty hard, low 90s, and his changeup is as good as advertised; he's got great deception, Gross says. Jake Fox played with Ramirez in the Dominican and he said he loves Ramirez - he's a talented pitcher and a terrific teammate, according to Fox.

Speaking of Fox, I asked Forst how much spring performance will weigh when it comes to the out-of-option guys, Fox and Eric Patterson. He said that it does matter, but that there are 10 days left before the team has to make a decision.

I'd assumed coming into the spring that Fox had an edge, especially because the A's just acquired him this winter, but right now, there's no comparison when it comes to the Cactus League stats. Patterson has played well at three different spots (especially at second base) and he's tied for the team lead in hits, with 13. Fox has two hits; his average stands at .063. And his defense has been mediocre at third, maybe adequate in the outfield and much better than I'd thought at catcher.

He does have power, though, and that's something the A's have little of. So this could be an interesting race right down to the wire, unless the team gets a nice offer for one or the other. (I'm pretty sure the offers would be for Patterson at this point, since Fox has struggled so much, but you never know.)

The A's lineup looks a little Opening Day-ish, minus Mark Ellis, who is getting a day to run through a full workout after missing Monday with hamstring tightness. Ellis tells me he'll play tomorrow night against the Giants.

The Opening Day outfield is finally all together, though. Here's how things look tonight vs. LA:

Crisp cf, Davis lf, Suzuki c, Kouzmanoff 3b, Chavez 1b, Sweeney rf, Cust dh, Rosales 2b, Pennington ss. Gio Gonzalez is starting and Trevor Cahill will relieve him.

My favorite joke today (I read it on athleticsnation.com, or a version of it): "Edwar Ramirez ... I hear his 'd' is lacking."

## **Patterson trying to latch on with A's**

### **Utility man, who is out of options, looking to prove his worth**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- Eric Patterson likes to separate himself from all things baseball once the offseason begins.

His brother, not so much.

So when the A's were bringing in utility guys left and right over the winter, including the likes of Adam Rosales and Gabe Gross, Patterson stayed away from the news.

His brother, not so much.

"My brother probably gives me more updates than I need," Patterson said, "but I try during the offseason to step away from the game a little bit. I'll check what's up every now and then, but I don't really look into it."

His elder sibling, 30-year-old Corey, just happens to be upholding big brother duties. He also happens to be a Major League player himself, having spent 10 years and counting with six different teams. But even Corey can't let the younger Patterson get too worked up about signings that could affect his brother's playing time.

In fact, Eric Patterson felt more comfortable coming into camp this year than in seasons past, even though he's well aware he's out of options and not guaranteed a roster spot come Opening Day.

"Last year, I got a lot of playing time, and for me, it's all I really wanted -- just an opportunity to get out there every day and be able to relax and show what I can bring to the team," Patterson said. "Coming into Spring Training, having finished the year on a good note, it's been easy for me to relax. I don't have to prove anything anymore. I just need to go out and continue to get work in everywhere.

"In years past, I haven't really felt good as far as coming in here and feeling comfortable. I never felt great at the plate and every at-bat I felt different, whether it was a different stance or something. So I just really think the way I finished last year has helped the comfort level and allowed me to relax."

Since coming over in the 2008 trade that sent Rich Harden to the Cubs, the 26-year-old Patterson has seen five stints in Oakland, the most recent being his most productive. After posting a .167 average in 12 games over his first two stints last year, he boasted a .344 mark with 14 walks and five stolen bases in his final one - which began Aug. 28 and took him to the end of the season.

Patterson knows things have changed since then, though. The A's have a solid backup infielder in Rosales, along with several fourth-outfield choices, making his role very much unknown at the moment.

"I've always been a firm believer that if you can play at this level, you're going to play," he said. "I'd love to be here with this club, but if I don't fit in with what they're trying to do here, I certainly understand that."

In 16 games this spring, Patterson has compiled a respectable .289 average with 13 hits and seven RBIs while being his aggressive defensive self in stints at second base, center field and left field. He's also reached base safely in each of his past six games, giving the A's much to think about in the next week.

"The biggest thing for me is getting the opportunity to play and show guys I can have good [at-bats] here and have an impact on this baseball team while showing some versatility," Patterson said. "That way, if it doesn't work here, I can latch on somewhere else."

Patterson joins Jake Fox as the two A's players out of options, yet he's found an upside to what many consider an unfortunate situation.

"The good thing about the whole out of options thing is that you kind of understand where you lie when all is said and done, how your team needs you, how other teams need you," Patterson said. "But all I can do right now is get my work in because whatever happens, happens."

Patterson is one of seven players competing for what appears to be three bench spots, one of which is presumably a lock for Eric Chavez if he stays healthy. The final two, though, are up for grabs between Patterson, Fox, Gross, Rosales and Steve Tolleson.

According to assistant general manager David Forst, the club will definitely "take into account" Patterson and Fox's situations.

"You have to," Forst said. "We've got 10 more days, so a decision probably won't be made until we absolutely have to."

Until then, Patterson plans on putting in as much work on the field as he's allowed, no matter the position. If you had asked the utility guy two years ago if he preferred the outfield or infield, he would have chosen the latter within seconds. Now, he says "it doesn't matter."

"As long as I'm on the field, I'm happy," Patterson said. "I need to get work in at all places, so whatever gets me in the lineup every day is fine with me."

## Gonzalez, Cahill strong on the mound

### A's pitching duo combines to strike out 11 over nine innings

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

**DODGERS 3, A'S 3**

at Phoenix

Wednesday, March 24

**Dodgers at the plate:** A.J. Ellis, Doug Mientkiewicz and Reed Johnson all drove in runs for the Dodgers. James Loney went 1-for-3 with a double, and Casey Blake, Matt Kemp and Nick Green also collected base hits.

**Athletics at the plate:** Kurt Suzuki launched his second homer of the spring to left-center in the sixth inning to put the A's on the board for the first time all night. Oakland then tied the game in the seventh frame on a wild pitch and a sacrifice fly off the bat of Adam Rosales. The A's also got hits from Jack Cust, Eric Chavez, Ryan Sweeney and Michael Taylor.

**Dodgers on the mound:** Right-handed starter Hiroki Kuroda allowed just one hit through 5 1/3 innings while walking two and fanning two. He carried a no-hitter into the fifth inning before allowing a single to Cust. Kuroda was followed by Ramon Troncoso, who tossed two-thirds of an inning and surrendered one hit and one run. Josh Lindblom pitched two innings and gave up three hits and two runs while walking a pair and striking out four.

**Athletics on the mound:** Starter Gio Gonzalez, vying for the fifth-rotation spot, allowed two hits, a run, two walks and five strikeouts in 4 1/3 innings of work. The southpaw struggled in the second frame, but then retired the next seven batters in a row before being replaced by Trevor Cahill. The A's right-hander allowed four hits, two runs and two walks while striking out six in 4 2/3 innings.

**Worth noting:** Wednesday marked the first time all spring that all three of Oakland's expected Opening Day starting outfielders played together. Rajai Davis and Ryan Sweeney joined Coco Crisp, who made his defensive debut, in the outfield grass for the first six innings.

**Cactus League records:** Athletics 9-10-2; Dodgers 7-10-2.

**Up next:** Ben Sheets will pitch in a Minor League game in the afternoon before right-hander Jason Jennings takes the mound for the A's against the Giants in Scottsdale, Ariz., beginning at 7:05 p.m. PT on MLB.TV. Manager Bob Geren said Sheets' start at Papago Park will offer the right-hander a controlled environment in order to ensure six innings of work. Meanwhile, Jennings is vying for a spot in what is currently a depleted bullpen.

While pitching staff candidates Ramon Ortiz and Josh Towers continue their tryouts for the Dodgers on Thursday at 1:05 p.m. PT on MLB.TV against the Brewers at Camelback Ranch-Glendale, attention will be diverted to a Minor League game against Texas in Surprise, where catcher Russell Martin will see his first game action since suffering a pulled groin muscle March 6. Martin was expected to miss four to six weeks, but he's vowed to be ready for Opening Day.

## Book Buzz: Brad Pitt warms to 'Moneyball' author

By Bob Minzesheimer, Craig Wilson and Carol Memmott, USA TODAY 3/24/2010

The actor and Michael Lewis have some synergy going on; 'The Pacific' is rising; and another vampire series is getting the blood flowing.

**Pitt stops:** Author Michael Lewis and actor Brad Pitt seem to have a thing going on. "I have no problem with becoming a wholly owned subsidiary of Brad Pitt," Lewis quips. Pitt has expressed interest in playing Billy Beane, the statistics-driven baseball executive in the movie version of Lewis' 2003 non-fiction best seller, *Moneyball*. Now, Pitt and Paramount have optioned *The Big Short*, Lewis' account of the collapse of the housing market, which lands on USA TODAY's Best-Selling Books list this week at No. 5. "It will be tough to do credit-default swaps in a movie," Lewis says, "but the story is told through three sane men in an

insane world." Thanks to yet another movie, Lewis' 2006 football book, *The Blind Side* (No. 36), has been on the list for 19 weeks. Next up: a sequel to *Moneyball*: "What happened to those young kids the Oakland A's drafted."

## **Trade Analysis: Petit Swapped For Ramirez**

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Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Mar 24, 2010

With spring training winding down, the next two weeks will be filled with major and minor transactions, as teams look to settle their 40- and 25-man rosters before the start of the season. The Oakland A's made their first "end of spring" deal on Wednesday, sending infielder Gregorio Petit to the Texas Rangers for reliever Edwar Ramirez. We take a closer look at the deal inside...

The Sacramento River Cats' infield will have a decidedly different look and feel this season, as Gregorio Petit is guaranteed not to be a part of the River Cats' infield for the first time since the start of the 2007 season. Petit was traded by the Oakland A's on Wednesday for reliever Edwar Ramirez in a deal designed to give the A's more depth in an area suddenly ravaged by injuries, the bullpen.

Before the start of spring training, there was no area of the organization that the A's were deeper in than their bullpen. Oakland is returning virtually all of the key players from its AL-leading 2009 bullpen and is adding a pitcher who had an ERA under 1.00 in 2008 (Joey Devine, who missed all of last season after elbow surgery).

That depth has been challenged already this spring, however. Devine has yet to throw in a spring game, and it appears that his recovery from Tommy John surgery will take him into April. A's closer and 2009 Rookie of the Year Andrew Bailey has been battling tennis elbow, while work horses Craig Breslow (elbow tendinitis) and Michael Wuertz (shoulder soreness) have been sidelined at various points this spring. In addition, John Meloan, who had a strong September call-up with the A's last season, will be out for the year after undergoing Tommy John surgery.

The A's brought in veteran Lenny DiNardo before the start of camp to provide depth for the A's bullpen and starting rotation, but he has struggled badly this spring, while fellow veteran Jason Jennings (who was also brought in to provide depth for both the A's bullpen and rotation) has been up-and-down in his appearances since signing a minor league deal with the A's. In addition, one of the A's top relief prospects, Andrew Carignan, is still rehabbing from an arm injury that kept him out virtually all of last season and he is expected to start the season at extended spring training.

The A's have three young pitchers still in camp competing for spots in the bullpen -- Brad Kilby, Jerry Blevins and Henry Rodriguez. All three have had good and bad moments this spring and none of the three have as much major league experience as Ramirez, who has pitched in 96 games for the New York Yankees over the past three seasons, posting a 5.22 ERA.

Ramirez has been well-traveled in his seven-year minor league career. The Dominican native began his career in the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim organization, but he was released by the Angels after the 2003 season after not advancing above the High-A level. He didn't play in the US in 2004, but signed with Pensacola of the independent Central League in 2005 and worked his way back into affiliated baseball by posting a 1.45 ERA in 43 appearances. It was the Angels once again who brought Ramirez into organized baseball. He pitched for the Angels' Triple-A team briefly that season before being released once again.

In 2006, Ramirez began the season in independent baseball once again before being signed by the Yankees. He would move quickly up the Yankees' chain after that. In 2006, he posted a 1.17 ERA in 19 appearances for High-A Tampa. That performance earned him a trip to Double-A the following season, and after posting ERAs under 1.00 for Double-A Trenton and Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, Ramirez made his major league debut for the pinstripes in 2007. He posted an 8.14 ERA in 21 appearances for the Yankees that season.

Ramirez would spend most of the 2008 season in the Bronx. In 55 appearances, Ramirez posted a 3.90 ERA for New York and he struck-out 63 in 55.1 innings. His performance fell off in 2009, however, as he had a 5.73 ERA in 22 innings for the Yankees and a 3.18 ERA in 51 innings for Scranton/Wilkes-Barre.

In late February, Ramirez was designated for assignment by the Yankees and he was then traded by New York to the Texas Rangers for cash two weeks ago. Ramirez had made only one appearance for the Rangers this spring, allowing a run on three hits in 1.1 innings. He struck-out three. Ramirez had appeared in some "B" games for the Rangers this spring, as well. He is scheduled to report to the A's big league camp today.

Ramirez's best pitch is a change-up that has been described in some circles as "Bugs Bunny-esque," a nod to the old

Warner Brothers bit when Bugs Bunny throws a pitch that takes a crazy route to the plate, striking out the most ferocious hitters on the other team. Ramirez's other offerings, a fastball and a slider, are merely average pitches and his velocity rarely hits above 90 MPH.

Throughout his career, Ramirez has been a strike-out pitcher, with averages of 10.6 and 12 strike-outs per nine innings in the major and minor leagues, respectively. Ramirez has struggled with walks throughout his career, however, averaging 5.1 per nine innings in the big leagues and 2.8 in the minors. He has also always had a high flyball rate and has allowed nearly two homeruns per nine innings in his major league career.

The acquisition of a pitcher like Ramirez, who doesn't have great stuff across the board but does possess one well above-average offering (the change-up), is consistent with the A's recent bullpen acquisitions. A's Director of Baseball Operations Farhan Zaidi recently told OaklandClubhouse.com that the A's look for relievers "with a 'weapon,' or plus pitch, which isn't always their fastball – an example being Wuertz's slider." Zaidi also said that the team looks for pitchers with good strike-out rates.

Ramirez was on the Rangers' 40-man roster and therefore has been added to the A's 40-man squad. Although he is a roster player, Ramirez isn't likely to make the A's Opening Day roster unless the Bailey, Wuertz or Breslow injuries linger into the regular season. And even then he will have to compete with Rodriguez, Kilby and Blevins for a spot. The A's have used call-ups from Triple-A in their bullpen liberally the past few seasons, however, so even if he doesn't make the Opening Day roster, Ramirez should see time in Oakland this season if he is throwing well for Sacramento.

If he is with Sacramento to start the season, Ramirez will be part of a talented bullpen that will likely include hard-throwing right-hander [Sam Demel](#) (one of the team's top relief prospects) and minor league veterans [Fernando Hernandez](#), Cedrick Bowers and [Marcus McBeth](#) (all of whom spent time in major league camp this spring). Right-handers [Michael Benacka](#) (a former independent league signing who had an ERA of 2.61 with 90 strike-outs in 79.1 innings for Triple-A Sacramento and Double-A Midland), [Mickey Storey](#) (who had a 71:8 K:BB ratio in 51.2 innings at four levels last season), Jon Hunton (3.33 ERA in 40 appearances for Double-A Midland last season), [Jason Fernandez](#) (who split time between the bullpen and the rotation with Midland last season), Steven Sharpe (who won eight games for Midland and 12 overall in his first full season back from Tommy John surgery) and [Jared Lansford](#) (who struggled at times last season with his command, but is still a promising bullpen arm) could also factor into the Sacramento bullpen this season. [Dan Giese](#), who made seven appearances with the A's last season, could return from elbow surgery during the 2010 campaign. Giese has a career 4.22 ERA in 35 major league appearances.

In Petit, the A's will be losing one of the best defensive infielders in their system. They are also saying goodbye to the only player in their system who had played for every A's minor league affiliate (including the A's Dominican Summer League teams) and the big league club. In addition to having a strong glove, Petit was one of the clubhouse leaders throughout his time in the A's organization.

Signed in 2001 out of Venezuela, Petit spent nearly nine years as part of the A's organization. Petit is a shortstop by trade, but he has seen significant time at second and third base during his career, as well. A singles hitter mostly, Petit has a career .268 average with a 691 OPS in seven minor league seasons, but it was his glove that made him a prospect with Oakland. Petit had a down year offensively last season with Sacramento, batting only .244, the worst average of his career. He was designated for assignment by the A's in January.

Petit will provide infield depth for the Texas Rangers, who were looking for depth at the shortstop position, in particular, after off-season signing Khalil Greene's contract was voided due to complications related to social anxiety disorder.

Moving Petit will help the A's to some extent with a potential logjam in the middle infield in Sacramento. [Adrian Cardenas](#), [Steven Tolleson](#) and [Eric Sogard](#) are expected to start the season with the River Cats and 2008 first-round pick [Jemile Weeks](#), a second baseman, could be in Sacramento soon, as well. In addition, infielder Yung-Chi Chen and utilityman Corey Wimberly will be competing for spots with the River Cats. The A's also may send either [Adam Rosales](#) or [Cliff Pennington](#) (depending on which player loses the competition to be the Opening Day shortstop) to Triple-A if Oakland decides to carry [Eric Chavez](#) as the team's primary back-up infielder. The A's may also like to see shortstop [Josh Horton](#) in Triple-A once he returns from off-season elbow surgery. Horton spent all of last season as the starting shortstop for Double-A Midland.

This move figures to be the first of several by the A's over the next few weeks. [Jake Fox](#) and [Eric Patterson](#) are both out of options and on the roster bubble, so one or both could be moved if the A's can't find room for them on their 25-man roster. With the addition of Ramirez, the A's are back to having a full 40-man roster after being down a player when the team returned Rule 5 pick [Bobby Cassevah](#) to the Angels.

## **All-time A's home openers: No. 2**

by Robert Rubino, Santa Rosa Press Democrat 3/25/2010

In a countdown to the 2010 baseball season, Old School blog is running 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. We already started with the A's, picking the 1981 opener at No. 5, the 2002 opener at No. 4 and this year's opener at No. 3. Next up:

No. 2. April 6, 1973. Twins at Oakland. Attendance 38,207. The far-less-than-capacity crowd was a particular disappointment because this was the first Bay Area home opener by a reigning World Series champion. The A's lost, 8-3, as Bert Blyleven outpitched Catfish Hunter. The A's would lose their first three games and five of their first six — on their way to their second of three straight World Series titles.

## **All-time A's home openers: No. 3**

by Robert Rubino, Santa Rosa Press Democrat 3/24/2010

In a countdown to the 2010 baseball season, Old School blog is running 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. We already started with the A's, picking the 1981 opener at No. 5 and the 2002 opener at No. 4. Next up:

No. 3. April 5, 2010. Mariners at Oakland. That's right, this season's opener is symbolically significant because the future of the team is in doubt. The word "contraction" is being bandied about again; the A's are still stuck in a baseball-unfriendly venue; and plans for a new ballpark in Fremont are dead. This might be the last A's home opener in Oakland or in the Bay Area. You never know.

## **All-time A's home openers: No. 4**

by Robert Rubino, Santa Rosa Press Democrat 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. We already started with the A's, picking the 1981 opener at No. 5. Next up:

No. 4. April 1, 2002. Texas Rangers at Oakland. Attendance 43,908. This was the first game played following an offseason in which commissioner Bud Selig targeted the A's and Minnesota Twins as prime candidates for "contraction" — commissioner-speak for elimination. The A's won, 8-3, behind Mark Mulder, with homers by David Justice and Eric Chavez. It would be the first of 103 A's victories. Interestingly, the A's and Twins would meet in the playoffs.

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

by Robert Rubino, Santa Rosa Press Democrat 3/22/2010

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.