

A's News Clips, Monday, March 29, 2010

Barton's patience paying off in quest for spot on A's roster

By Joe Stiglich, Contra Costa Times

Daric Barton is drawing walks — lots of them — this spring, and that's a good thing for the A's first baseman.

Barton recently had two four-walk games in a week's span. That's means he's seeing the ball well and waiting for his pitch, he said, which wasn't always the case during his struggles of the past two seasons.

Barton didn't play in Sunday's 6-6 tie with the Colorado Rockies, but he entered the day leading the Cactus League with 15 walks and a .538 on-base percentage.

He's hitting .343 with one homer and six doubles in 35 at-bats.

"I've seen so many full counts, but that's OK because I'm a good hitter with two strikes," Barton, 24, said.

He credited hitting coach Jim Skaalen with improving his approach, but he also added: "Mentally, I'm a little more advanced than in the past."

Barton is expected to split time at first with Eric Chavez, who's healthy right now and expected to be a utility man.

"If there are no health issues, it becomes a performance issue," A's manager Bob Geren said of who plays first.

Geren said he considers Chavez an option at shortstop during the season. If the A's think Chavez is an adequate backup shortstop, it appears whoever loses the starting shortstop battle between Cliff Pennington and Adam Rosales may head to the minors.

Pennington is 12-for-32 (.375) over his past 11 games, while Rosales is 2-for-24 over his last eight.

Brett Anderson allowed six earned runs in five innings Sunday.
Gio Gonzalez will start today against Seattle.
Trevor Cahill will pitch in a minor league game.

With Wuertz aching, A's sign Gaudin

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

The A's had planned to bring **Michael Wuertz** along slowly this spring because of his large workload last season, but even that change of pace didn't prevent a problem for the team's standout setup man.

Wuertz was scratched from Sunday's 6-6 tie with Colorado with a right shoulder that he described as "achy." He'll see orthopedist Dr. **Doug Freedberg** in Scottsdale today.

"The recovery time has been more difficult," Wuertz said of his ability to bounce back after throwing. "I just can't get over the hump."

Asked if Wuertz's availability to start the season is in question, manager **Bob Geren** said, "That would be fair."

"I've never been on the DL," Wuertz said. "That's frustrating."

Later in the afternoon, the A's signed their own former starter and reliever **Chad Gaudin**, released by the Yankees last week, to a major-league deal. Assistant general manager **David Forst** said the move had nothing to do with Wuertz's injury but was to add pitching depth, something the team has looked to do all spring, as with **Jason Jennings** and **Edwar Ramirez**.

Gaudin, who turned 27 last week, had an ERA over 8.00 for the Yankees this spring. He'll report to the A's this morning, Forst said.

The bullpen is one of the team's strengths, but two other key members, **Andrew Bailey** (tennis elbow) and left-hander **Craig Breslow** (tendinitis), will work in a game today for the first time in two weeks, while **Joey Devine** - who if healthy would be the setup man in Wuertz's absence - will start the season on the DL as he returns from Tommy John surgery. He'll rejoin the team in mid-April at the earliest. **Brad Ziegler** figures to get the bulk of the setup work if Wuertz is out.

The big concern with shoulders is rotator-cuff injuries, which have varying recovery times, and the success rate is lower than with elbow ligament replacement surgery.

"The best thing will be to get some peace of mind and find out what it is," Wuertz said.

Briefly: Brett Anderson allowed five hits, three walks and six runs in five innings and said his command was a little off, in part because his focus might not be quite what it was at the start of the spring or what it will be when the team moves on to the Bay Area later this week. Anderson, who struck out seven, said his slider was better Sunday but his changeup was not as good as it had been. ... **Jake Fox** has five hits this spring, and three are home runs. He went to minor-league camp Saturday to get seven at-bats, then homered and singled Sunday. ... **Eric Patterson**, also out of options, committed an error and was thrown out on a baserunning mistake. ... Catcher **Anthony Recker** was sent to minor-league camp. ... **Josh Outman** threw 15 pitches off the top of the mound Sunday. He hopes to be on a rehab assignment by June.

A's sign Chad Gaudin - not because of Wuertz, Forst says

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Phoenix

UPDATE: Assistant general manager David Forst emphasized that the A's did not sign Chad Gaudin to a big-league deal this afternoon because of Michael Wuertz's shoulder injury - he said the team has been looking to add bullpen depth all spring, ala Edwar Ramirez, Jason Jennings and now Gaudin.

Forst said that Gaudin, 27, will report tomorrow morning.

ORIGINAL POST:

Here's an indication of how serious the A's believe their bullpen injuries - particularly the shoulder injury that is sending Michael Wuertz to the doctor tomorrow - might be: The team signed Chad Gaudin to a deal on Sunday afternoon.

The Yankees had released Gaudin last week, and at that point, when I asked about the A's interest in him, I was told they had none. That was also the day they traded Gregorio Petit to Texas for another ex-Yankees reliever, Edwar Ramirez.

Gaudin had an ERA over 8.00 with the Yankees this spring. It's unclear if he's guaranteed a spot in the A's bullpen or not; the A's won't have much time to get a look at him before the start of the season. Will he bump Ramirez? Jason Jennings? Or someone like Brad Kilby? Whatever the case, this doesn't bode all that well for Wuertz's chances to start the season on the active roster.

Fox showing A's his power stroke

Slugger belts third spring homer; Anderson allows six runs

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

ROCKIES 6, A'S 6

at Phoenix

Sunday, March 28

Rockies at the plate: Troy Tulowitzki hit his fourth home run of the spring -- a three-run shot that represented his third homer in four games -- in the fifth inning. The Rockies tallied three doubles on the day, including one from Paul Lo Duca in the fourth that brought home a run. Clint Barmes and Seth Smith added RBI groundouts.

Athletics at the plate: Jake Fox, vying for a roster spot as a utility player, launched his third home run of the spring in the second inning. He was 2-for-2 with two run-scoring hits and a walk. Landon Powell hit an RBI sacrifice fly in the seventh, and Eric Sogard, Gabe Gross and Adam Rosales each drove in runs in the eighth to tie the game. Rajai Davis also collected a pair of hits.

Rockies on the mound: Lefty Jorge De La Rosa tossed 5 2/3 innings of one-run ball, scattering seven hits, one walk and striking out three. After fellow southpaw Randy Flores finished the sixth frame, right-hander Justin Speier came in and allowed four runs -- two earned -- on two hits and two walks.

Athletics on the mound: Left-hander Brett Anderson struggled with his command in his fourth start, surrendering eight hits, six runs and three walks while striking out seven in five innings of work. Brad Kilby followed with one shutout frame before righty Henry Rodriguez pitched an inning and gave up one hit, walked one and struck out one.

Worth noting: Eric Patterson, one of four players on the roster bubble who started the game, didn't help his cause much when he misplayed a line drive to left field and allowed Brad Hawpe to reach second base on a single. He was charged with an error on the play.

De La Rosa, who is starting the home opener, forced three double-play grounders. He has a 1.80 ERA this spring.

Cactus League records: Athletics 11-12-3; Rockies 14-11-2.

Up next: Left-hander Gio Gonzalez and right-hander Trevor Cahill will get their final shot at proving their worth as the fifth member of the starting rotation Monday, when they both face the visiting Mariners. Also slated to make an appearance are the rehabbing relieving pair of Andrew Bailey and Craig Breslow, both of whom have been set back with elbow injuries. The game is scheduled for 1 p.m. PT at Phoenix Municipal Stadium.

The race for the Rockies' final bullpen spot turns compelling when left-hander Joe Beimel makes his first Cactus League appearance on Monday afternoon against the Rangers at Surprise, Ariz, at 1:05 p.m. MST. Beimel was signed to a Minor League contract last week. He is competing with right-handers Tim Redding, Juan Rincon and Justin Speier.

The Rockies could use a lefty setup man, but Colorado also needs to have someone who can pitch on consecutive days. It's not clear if Beimel will be at that point when camp breaks. Righty Jason Hammel will start for the Rockies.

A's bullpen dealing with the injury bug

Relievers Wuertz, Bailey, Breslow all have arm concerns

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- The injury plague that has taken residence in the A's clubhouse over the past few seasons is back in action again, this time reigning over the bullpen.

Oakland's relief corps seemingly represented the club's only sure thing heading into camp, but several recent setbacks to players who significantly contributed to the 2009 season have left the makeup of the 2010 Opening Day roster not so certain.

Right-hander Michael Wuertz, one of the league's top setup men last season, was scratched Sunday morning due to the same shoulder soreness that delayed his spring debut for a couple of weeks.

The reliever will see Dr. Doug Freedberg on Monday, and much of his season status will depend on the results of that visit. When questioned if Wuertz's readiness for Opening Day is at an iffy stage, manager Bob Geren replied, "It's fair to say that."

Almost equally questionable is Andrew Bailey, who set an Oakland rookie record with 26 saves last year en route to being named American league Rookie of the Year. The right-hander, along with lefty Craig Breslow (elbow), will appear in a game Monday for the first time since March 14.

Bailey was diagnosed with tennis elbow after just four spring appearances, in which he compiled a perfect ERA. Depending on how he responds to Monday's outing against the visiting Mariners, Bailey could potentially get two more exhibition appearances and be just fine for the season.

"If everything goes right, he'll get a total of seven outings," Geren said. "He wouldn't be behind if everything went perfectly."

Meanwhile, Breslow appears set to resume his role as the staff's top lefty option in the bullpen if his Monday performance signals a green light as well. Still, all the "ifs" are cause for concern for an A's club that heavily depended on a bullpen that finished with the league's best ERA last year.

"That was a huge strength for us," Geren said. "I'm optimistic about everybody, but we won't know more until tomorrow."

Unfortunately, the club does know that right-hander Joey Devine won't start the season in Oakland. The reliever, who underwent Tommy John surgery last April, said Sunday he'll take part in extended Spring Training for two to three weeks before throwing in a Minor League assignment.

Devine's throwing program was halted for a couple weeks when he experienced tendinitis in his throwing arm, but he plans on playing catch Monday, tossing a bullpen Tuesday and hopefully throwing to hitters Wednesday or Thursday.

With much of the A's relief corps offering little certainty heading into the season, the club will look to some of the more recent pickups to aide in the bullpen recovery process.

Spring acquisition Jason Jennings, who could give the A's long-relief options, along with Edwar Ramirez, recently acquired for infielder Gregorio Petit, now have a decent chance at making the club. The same can be said of left-handers Jerry Blevins and Brad Kilby, both of whom appeared on the roster bubble before injuries surfaced left and right.

If need be, hard-throwing righty Henry Rodriguez is also available. However, Geren doesn't seem fully confident that Rodriguez is big league ready. The 23-year-old Rodriguez made his Oakland debut last September and posted a 2.25 ERA in three games, but his spring performances haven't boasted the consistency for which the club's looking.

"Anybody that can throw 100 [mph], you can say he's close to being ready," the A's skipper said. "He has to be more consistent with his command, though. He's shown flashes of greatness but also flashes of command issues."

Geren plans on carrying seven bullpen pitchers, of which only one currently appears to be a 100 percent guarantee for Opening Day. Brad Ziegler, who has a 2.17 ERA and 18 saves in 116 relief appearances in two seasons with the A's, has quietly put together an impressive spring and appears to be the club's best setup option at the moment.

"He's really been improving his game," Geren said. "He's a guy that always wants to be in the game and someone we can count on for any role down there."

Offense bails out A's

Associated Press, Mar. 29, 2010

PHOENIX – Troy Tulowitzki homered for the third time in his last four games, Jorge De La Rosa gave up one run in five-plus innings and the Colorado Rockies played to a 6-6 tie against the A's after nine innings Sunday.

Rajai Davis had two hits, and Jake Fox homered and drove in two runs for the A's.

The three-run home run, Tulowitzki's fourth overall this spring, easily cleared the 10-foot wall in left and also sailed over a 20-foot high billboard attached to the wall.

A lifetime .244 hitter in April, Tulowitzki batted .200 in the opening month of last season but finished the year with a .297 average, 32 homers and 92 RBIs.

"The only thing that feels different is I know what I'm doing with my swing," said Tulowitzki, who is batting .359 this spring. "By the same token, if my April is slow, I know I can rebound."

Oakland left-hander Brett Anderson, who missed his last start because of a stiff neck and instead pitched five simulated innings to minor leaguers, struggled with his command and acknowledged having a lack of focus while giving up eight hits and six earned runs.

"I thought he actually had pretty good stuff," A's manager Bob Geren said. "They got a couple of hits off his changeup, which he's still perfecting. I don't want him to get down on that pitch right now."

The Rockies led 6-1 before the A's scored once in the seventh and four times in the eighth to tie the score. It was Oakland's third tie this spring.

Gaudin rejoins A's – Right-hander Chad Gaudin agreed to terms with the A's to help shore up their injury-riddled pitching staff, three days after being released by the New York Yankees.

Gaudin, who pitched for the A's from 2006 to '07, struggled this spring after pitching well as a part-time starter with the Yankees in 2009. He was 0-3 with an 8.68 ERA in four outings when he was released.

Fingers back on mound – National Baseball Hall of Fame reliever and former A's star Rollie Fingers threw out the ceremonial first pitch Sunday.

Ouch – Oakland batters have been hit 16 times this spring, tops in the majors. Second baseman Adam Rosales was plunked by De La Rosa in the second.

'Baseball Codes' cracks unwritten rules of behavior

Lowell Cohn, Santa Rosa Press Democrat, 3/27/2010

Nolan Ryan adhered to the unwritten baseball code. He didn't believe in showing up other ballplayers and he didn't like to get shown up. He felt Lenny Dykstra had shown up the Astros the day before by celebrating on the field and pumping his fist at the Astros dugout and now it was Ryan's turn to pitch.

Dykstra laid down a bunt in his first at-bat against Ryan. That violated another Ryan code. No one bunted against him and he let opposing batters know it. So Dykstra was a serial violator. The next time Dykstra came to the plate, Ryan knocked him down with pure heat aimed at his neck. Nolan was retaliating, sure, but he also was educating Dykstra — this is how the game is played; this is the Code.

When he played for the A's, Frank Thomas once was the victim of the Code. In the top of the second inning, A's pitcher Joe Blanton hit Blue Jays third baseman Troy Glaus. Thomas led off the next inning for the A's and Toronto pitcher Ted Lilly hit him in the back with his very first pitch. Thomas knew the deal and approved of this retaliation. "Glaus is their biggest slugger," Thomas said, "and we got him. I knew I was going to wear it. You just take it and move down to first. That's baseball."

A pitcher who doesn't enforce the Code against someone who went too far loses respect from his teammates and from players around the majors. That is a part of baseball, as essential as balls and strikes.

I'm writing about the Code because of a book I just read. It's called "The Baseball Codes" and its subtitle is "Beanballs, Sign Stealing, and Bench-Clearing Brawls: The Unwritten Rules of America's Pastime." Local writers Jason Turbow and Michael Duca wrote it and I read it with delight and, frankly, love. This is a terrific book, a book that needed to be written. I'm amazed no one wrote it 30 years ago. It came out a few weeks ago and already is in its third printing.

Duca is an official scorer for Major League Baseball and I interviewed him over the phone and asked if it's fair for the pitcher to retaliate if a guy stands in the batter's box admiring a home run he's just hit.

"It's fair for a pitcher to feel he's been shown up if he and the game were not fully respected," Duca told me. "You (the batter) already achieved your success. To stand there and admire the home run is to rub in. It is to draw attention to yourself rather than your accomplishment."

What is Duca's feeling about pitchers throwing beanballs in retaliation?

"Never acceptable, ever. You are taking a person's livelihood and family security in your hands. No one has that right. Head hunters within the game are despised. Their own teammates despise them. Head hunters endanger the guy whose head they throw at, but they also endanger their own teammates because the other team will retaliate. It's particularly insidious in the American League because the pitcher never has to stand in against another pitcher. It's one of the primary reasons I seriously dislike the designated hitter rule."

Here is Dave Henderson on the beanball: "You can drill me all you want. But if you throw at my face, it gets personal. I kill you first, then your grandpa, your grandma — I just go down the list. The guys who get hit on the elbow, I have no sympathy for them. Big deal, you got hit. I got hit in the head twice in my career. The other stuff didn't count."

A rule of the Code: Batters never peek at the catcher to pick up the sign or see if he positions himself inside or outside.

In 1979 the Rangers determined Royals outfielder Al Cowens was a peeker. If he saw the catcher set up outside, he would lean over the plate to reach the outside pitch. Ed Farmer was pitching for the Rangers and catcher Jim Sundberg positioned himself for a pitch outside. Cowens peeked and leaned across the plate. Farmer threw inside and busted Cowens' jaw.

A rule of the Code (this is from the book's publicity release): "When an opponent has been thoroughly run into the ground, players are not supposed to swing at 3-0 pitches. When Torii Hunter once hit a 3-0 fastball when his Twins led the Red Sox 8-1 late in the game, the deed was considered so foul that Hunter's own manager forced him to apologize in person to Red Sox manager Terry Francona."

A rule of the Code involving no-hitters: "An unwritten rule for official scorers holds that the first hit of any game must be unequivocally clean; if it reasonably could have been ruled an error and no subsequent hits are tallied, outcry is certain."

Another rule of the Code involving no-hitters: Respect an opposing pitcher who's throwing a no-hitter. In 1984 George Hendrick came up with two outs in the ninth when Reds pitcher Mario Soto was working on a no-hitter. Hendrick took two strikes in honor of Soto's impending feat. On the next pitch Soto, strangely, knocked Hendrick down. All bets were off. Hendrick got up and homered on the next pitch. "I don't know why he did that," Hendrick said. "I was going to let the man have his no-hitter."

Duca believes the Code is losing its strength, mostly because players see themselves as entertainers and not competitors.

"I think the game was better-played and understood by its players when they policed it amongst themselves instead of having it policed so heavily by umpires and the commissioner's office," he said.

Because the umpire issues a quick warning for an inside pitch, a team can't retaliate. Now it is to a team's advantage to strike first. This leads to escalating antagonism which, in the past, would routinely have been worked out on the field.

What is the ultimate value of the code?

"Any endeavor requires mores and agreements among people about how you act," Duca said. "An endeavor that involves fabulously strong and young athletes throwing deadly projectiles at other athletes particularly requires agreements about the rules of conduct. With the possibility of mayhem, you must have clearly prescribed limits."

No. 1 All-time A's home opener

By Robert Rubino, Press Democrat, 3/26/2010

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, this year's opener at No. 3 and the 1973 opener at No. 2. And now, the No. 1 all-time A's home opener:

April 17, 1968. Baltimore Orioles at Oakland. Attendance 50,164. The Athletics made their Oakland debut, after 54 years in Philadelphia and 13 years in Kansas City. The A's had opened on the road, winning three of their first five games. Pre-game festivities included the introduction of Joe DiMaggio, who would be in uniform as an A's coach for the next two seasons. Before coming to Oakland, the Athletics had 15 straight losing seasons. The A's lost their first home opener, 4-1, but would go on to their first of nine consecutive winning seasons. Of note: Tony La Russa, who two decades later would manage the A's to three consecutive World Series appearances and one title, appeared as a pinch hitter.

Oakland A's MLN: A's Banged Up

Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Mar 28, 2010

Injuries have become an unfortunate annual event for the Oakland A's. A number of A's top prospects, including Adrian Cardenas and James Simmons, are dealing with injuries this spring. We have more on those injuries inside, as well as the latest releases from A's minor league camp...

On Sunday we caught-up with Oakland A's Director of Player Development Keith Lieppman, who updated us on a number of things relating to the A's minor league spring training. We will have our entire conversation with Lieppman on the site later this week. Lieppman noted that while camp was going very well, the organization is once again dealing with a number of injuries.

The latest injury is to A's second base prospect Adrian Cardenas, who has a slight tear in a thumb ligament. The injury is expected to keep him out at least a month.

Outfielder Rashun Dixon is dealing with a freak injury which has limited him for the past 10 days. He crashed into the outfield fence trying to catch a ball and wound-up with 15 stitches just above his eye.

The A's 2007 first-round pick James Simmons isn't in camp, as he is home still dealing with pain in his right shoulder. It still isn't determined what is wrong with Simmons' shoulder, but it is an injury that could keep him out for awhile.

There is better injury news on 2007 second-round pick Josh Horton, who arrived in camp today. Horton had off-season elbow surgery, but he has completed his throwing program and will now be able to start the process of getting ready for the season. He will start the year in extended spring training, however.

Lieppman also mentioned that the A's made four releases on Sunday: right-hander Steve Sharpe, Jason Fernandez and Juston Street and left-hander Nick Walters. The team will likely be making more cuts during the upcoming week.

Selig's clout on stadium appraised

By MICHAEL SASSO, Tampa Bay Tribune, 3/26/2010

In all the ugly spats over professional sports stadiums through the years, the debate about a new stadium for the Tampa Bay Rays is barely a pillow fight.

The Rays haven't threatened to leave the Bay area, and some sports law experts say team owner Stuart Sternberg has been classier than other owners seeking a new ballpark.

But in the background, Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig could become a far bigger player in the team's quest for a stadium, the sports law experts say.

Selig hasn't been that involved so far, at least not publicly. But he has a history of making threats -implied or real - that teams may leave unless they get a new stadium. In the early 2000s, a South Florida politician compared his actions in the Florida Marlins stadium fight to a character from HBO's mafia drama "The Sopranos."

"Baseball's really been aggressive about pursuing public financing," said Geoffrey Rapp, a sports law expert at the University

of Toledo. "And, so far, communities have been shy about calling their bluff."

Spokesmen for Major League Baseball did not return calls or an e-mail from the Tribune last week.

The Rays have said they can't stay at Tropicana Field until their stadium use agreement runs out in 2027, but have been cautious not to offend.

Two years ago, they pushed for a new waterfront stadium in downtown St. Petersburg, but the team eventually withdrew the plan.

Since then, a group of business leaders dubbed the ABC Coalition has been meeting to determine whether the team needs a new stadium and, if so, where it should be. The answer to the first question is yes, the group determined, and the answer to the second is either the mid-Pinellas County area near the Howard Frankland Bridge, downtown Tampa or Tampa's West Shore area.

A stadium might cost \$500 million. The public often covers 70 percent of that cost, the ABC Coalition found in its research.

Selig in the background

Selig has begun advocating for a stadium to replace Tropicana Field.

"I know it's the same message I've delivered a lot of other places, but it's so true here," Selig said during a February trip to the Bay area. "It almost boggles my mind that there's a debate. They need a new stadium."

Selig has repeated the same message in Miami, Minneapolis, Oakland and elsewhere, so much that some observers have come to expect it. Marc Edelman, a law professor at Barry University in South Florida, said there is a history of keeping certain baseball-hungry cities in reserve, threatening to move a team to these cities if the ball club's hometown won't ante up for a new stadium.

Portland, Ore., Charlotte, N.C., and Las Vegas are among the cities often held in reserve, Edelman said. Although Selig can aggressively lobby cities for new stadiums, the commissioner doesn't have the power to relocate a team. Such a move requires the approval of 75 percent of the league's owners, he said.

"I would not be surprised to see Bud Selig and other high-ranking baseball officials, if requested by the Rays ownership, to begin actively lobbying local councilmen to support paying a significant portion of a new stadium," Edelman said.

Among the recent cases in which Selig has intervened:

- Florida Marlins. Selig or senior Major League Baseball executives pushed for a new stadium for the Marlins for much of the 2000s, and eventually succeeded last year in getting local government funding for a new \$640 million ballpark with a retractable roof.

Selig made waves in South Florida as early as 2001, when he wrote to state Sen. J. Alex Villalobos, R-Miami lobbying to put state sales tax money toward a stadium.

"This current (tax rebate) plan provides a final opportunity for the Marlins to remain in South Florida," Selig wrote, according to an April 2001 Miami Herald article. "Bluntly, the Marlins cannot and will not survive in South Florida without a new stadium."

Then-state Sen. Kendrick Meek, now a U.S. Senate candidate, bristled at the letter.

"It sounds like Johnny Soprano writing that letter, trying to threaten and put pressure on us," U.S. Rep. Meek, D-Miami, told the Herald, perhaps alluding to TV mafia character Tony Soprano.

A representative said last week that Meek was unavailable for comment.

At the latter end of the 2000s, it was baseball's Chief Operating Officer Bob DuPuy, more than Selig, who was a regular presence in South Florida during stadium negotiations, said Marc Sarnoff, a member of the Miami City Commission.

DuPuy was present whenever Marlins President David Samson threatened to move the team without a new stadium, said Sarnoff, who is now chairman of the city commission.

"Baseball was always supporting Samson's threat of moving," said Sarnoff, a stadium opponent.

- Minnesota Twins. As in Miami, the fight to bring about the Twins' new \$550 million ballpark stretched out for a decade.

In the early 2000s, Selig talked about eliminating two teams in a process called contraction, and the Twins were believed to be a contraction candidate. Minnesota Gov. Jesse Ventura suggested Selig was using the threat of contraction to push

Minnesota to build the Twins a stadium.

Ventura could not be reached for comment last week. Edelman, the Barry University professor, also said Selig used contraction as a tool in Minnesota.

However, Dan Kenney, who negotiated the Twins' stadium on behalf of Hennepin County, home of Minneapolis, said Selig didn't seem to play a role in more recent years. Hennepin County and the Twins jointly went to the Minnesota Legislature to get the stadium approved, he said.

"It wasn't about stopping relocation or threats from anyone," said Kenney, who oversees the ballpark authority that runs Target Field. "It was about preserving baseball."

•Oakland Athletics. Selig has been helping to secure a new stadium for the Athletics, whose owner has been considering a move to the nearby California cities of San Jose or Fremont. With cities, including Oakland, competing for the team, Selig has formed a committee to study potential locations.

For their part, the Rays say they are not forcing the issue, and it's not clear what role Selig will play.

When asked about Selig, Rays Senior Vice President Michael Kalt said, "He'll take an interest and get involved as he deems appropriate."

Asked whether the team was pushing Selig to get more involved, Kalt said the Rays are focused on the baseball season and will let the stadium issue play out on its own.

Meanwhile, St. Petersburg City Attorney John Wolfe, who has been adamant that the Rays fulfill the contract at Tropicana Field, said he has seen no sign that Selig is applying pressure locally.

At least for now, with unemployment high and governments operating in the red, the baseball commissioner may have less bargaining power than usual, said Michael McCann, a Vermont Law School professor and sports law contributor to Sports Illustrated.

McCann said Selig may be applying pressure for a stadium, but added, "This is a tough economy to make that argument."

Spring training, by the book

Baseball season is just about here; so is the annual arrival of stories about America's pastime

By Chris Foran, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel 3/27/2010

Baseball is America's game, but it also fills America's bookshelves.

Every year, spring brings with it a promise of a new start, a pennant race, a return of the racing sausages and an upper deck full of books about, inside, re-imagining and reveling in baseball.

And like every baseball season, some make the cut and some don't. A few all-stars, such as James S. Hirsch's "Willie Mays: The Life and the Legend," reported to camp this year. Here's a look at some of the new baseball books joining the field in time for opening day.

Starting lineup

A batting lineup isn't organized from best hitter to worst; the best lineups are those that combine for maximum punch. The top of the order sets the table for the heavy hitters in the middle of the lineup, with the role players bringing up the rear.

The Baseball Codes: Beanballs, Sign Stealing & Bench-Clearing Brawls - The Unwritten Rules of America's Pastime. By Jason Turbow with Michael Duca. Pantheon. 294 pages. \$25.

To non-fans, baseball's rules are hard enough to follow (don't ask about the balk or the infield fly), but the game's unwritten rules are even tougher. What's cheating, and what's just getting a competitive edge? When can a pitcher throw at a hitter - and where? And why do all those players run out onto the field when two guys get into a halfhearted fight?

Turbow and Duca take on the biggest of the unwritten rules in "The Baseball Codes," a book that is more fun than it is helpful. The reason is buried at the end: In an age of multigazillion-dollar salaries and constant movement of players between teams, many of those rules are fading.

But the authors make up for this sobering truth with terrific anecdotes covering decades of baseball lore, with many of the participants telling their sides of the story. Among the funnier strange-but-true tales: a late 1970s prank involving Milwaukee Brewers pitchers Bob McClure, Mike Caldwell and Reggie Cleveland involving a sealed outhouse, a fan's secret and a pig on a leash. (McClure tells it much better, and funnier, than I can.)

The Man With Two Arms. By Billy Lombardo. Overlook Press. 335 pages. \$24.95.

The best baseball novels aren't about baseball, of course. W.P. Kinsella's "Shoeless Joe," for all the Hollywood romanticizing, is one of the best husband-and-wife love stories ever.

Lombardo's debut novel is about a Chicago-area high school science teacher and baseball obsessive who, through relentless training from infancy, turns his son into a great baseball player with a secret - he can pitch like an ace right-handed *and* left-handed.

But it's also about a father's hopes for his child, a son's dreams for himself, and what happens when the two collide in unexpected ways. And while the passion for the game runs through the story, it's the relationships - between father and son, husband and wife, young man and the love of his life - that give it heart.

The End of Baseball. By Peter Schilling Jr. Ivan R. Dee. 340 pages. \$14.95.

It's one of baseball's greatest what-ifs that might be a never-really-was. Nearly 50 years ago, baseball showman/entrepreneur/rascal Bill Veeck let slip the "news" that, in 1943, he tried to buy the Philadelphia Phillies with plans to stock the perennially struggling team with Negro League stars. (The deal, Veeck says in his entertaining autobiography "Veeck as in Wreck," was scuttled by then-commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis.)

Although Veeck's revelation has since been called into question by baseball historians, it's a fascinating premise, and one that Schilling runs with in "The End of Baseball," first published in 2008 but making its paperback debut this spring.

Switching the Phillies for the Philadelphia A's, he has Veeck working his magic to put together what could be the greatest team of all time, with such legends as Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, Cool Papa Bell, Ray Dandridge, Roy Campanella and Oscar Charleston coming to life in an alternate-reality version of baseball history.

To Schilling's credit, many of the characters - particularly Gibson, "the black Babe Ruth" at the end of his string; Campanella, a young man with a bright future and a selfless eye toward posterity; and Veeck himself, trying every trick to keep his scheme alive - aren't just baseball cards with dialogue, but complicated, textured figures.

It doesn't always work - casual fans of baseball history might get lost amid the dozens of real-life figures in the tale - but it's intriguing to see how the game they're playing will turn out.

Roger Maris: Baseball's Reluctant Hero. By Tom Clavin and Danny Peary. Touchstone/Simon & Schuster. \$26.99.

For a guy who was demonized, then ignored, then lionized, Roger Maris is still something of a mystery, even to fans who celebrate his breaking of Babe Ruth's single-season home run record in 1961. Although Maris and his 61-home-run season have been the subject of numerous books and movies, Clavin and Peary's version of his story tries to untangle the contradiction between the shy superstar and the proud, no-nonsense man who didn't back down from a fight.

And while the story is pretty familiar - small-town North Dakota boy lands in the limelight against his will, and, when his accomplishments are belittled, bristles at the disrespect - the writers bring it up to date, including the breaking of Maris' record by sluggers whose feats, unlike Maris', have since been tainted by scandal.

Mint Condition: How Baseball Cards Became an American Obsession. By Dave Jamieson. Atlantic Monthly Press. 288 pages. \$25.

Jamieson got his start collecting baseball cards in the 1980s, when even kids were thinking about the investment value of the cards in each pack they opened. But in "Mint Condition," due in stores during the opening week of the season, he doesn't let that get in the way of what is an engaging, playful and well-reported history of baseball cards, and how they went from being a premium in packs of gum to collectibles selling at six-figure prices at the world's auction houses.

The long, strange trip from freebie to investible takes Jamieson on a number of tangents, some of them distracting and dry but others fascinating. His recounting of the way card-maker Topps created the profitable Wacky Packages line - stickers that spoofed popular product brands, with comically absurd illustrations - is a fun and fascinating look at the unwitting creation of an American icon. And the way Jamieson tells it, Woody Gelman, the man behind Topps' most imaginative cards, is one of the most influential and interesting figures in American pop culture.

Fifty-Nine in '84: Old Hoss Radbourn, Barehanded Baseball & the Greatest Season a Pitcher Ever Had. By Edward Achorn. Harper/Smithsonian. 366 pages. \$25.99.

If you follow the game today, the numbers 19th-century players racked up are mind-boggling: Pitchers routinely pitched the entire game; most players didn't wear gloves; and injuries often were ignored.

But even in his time, Charles "Old Hoss" Radbourn was a wonder. Considered one of the best players - and weirdest characters - in the game, Radbourn set a record in 1884 that will never, ever be reached: Pitching for the small-market Providence Grays, he won 59 games and lost 12, pitching 73 complete games. (For comparison, last year, four pitchers led the majors with 19 wins; the Blue Jays' Roy Halladay led with nine complete games.) Achorn, deputy editorial page editor for the Providence (R.I.) Journal, doesn't let those stunning stats get in the way of the bigger, and better, story: of a remarkable player and person (Radbourn, among his many accomplishments, also apparently was the first person ever to be photographed giving a one-finger salute), and a remarkable time in the game's history. Thanks to relentless reporting and a straightforward writing style, both come alive.

The Eastern Stars: How Baseball Changed the Dominican Town of San Pedro de Macoris. By Mark Kurlansky. Riverhead Books. 263 pages. \$25.95.

Kurlansky, the author of "Cod" and "Salt," is a fierce, thorough chronicler of big-big subjects, and he takes a similar approach to this study of San Pedro de Macoris, the town that has produced more modern-day major-leaguers than any other. As a result, unfortunately, in "The Eastern Stars," due in stores next month, baseball itself is almost an afterthought.

When Kurlansky does get around to baseball, it's alternately matter-of-fact and overly general (at one point, he goes out of his way to explain that a grand slam is a home run with the bases loaded).

When he gets to talk to the real players, the action picks up a little. Several players recount their battles with prejudice in the States, including moody slugger George Bell's claims that he and two other Dominican players were refused service at a restaurant in Milwaukee in 1989.

For fans, the most interesting part of "The Eastern Stars" might be the appendix listing all 79 players who have come from San Pedro. The first: Amado Samuel, a middle infielder who played his first major-league game with the Milwaukee Braves on April 10, 1962.

90% of the Game Is Half Mental, and Other Tales From the Edge of Baseball Fandom. By Emma Span. Villard. 192 pages. \$15.

Span is a creature of two worlds: a huge fan, instilled with a love of the Yankees by her father; and a writer, who hits on the idea of writing about what she loves to get out of her rut. When her baseball blog caught the eye of the Village Voice, she was rescued from a string of unfulfilling jobs - and thrown into a more daunting one, as the New York alternative weekly's baseball writer. And then, when the Voice slumps into hard times, she's thrown out of it.

Span's story is engaging when she lets her own voice, and not the clichéd savvy-and-cynical New Yorker pose, dominate. In one of the book's better essays, Span recalls a trip to Milwaukee and Miller Park, to see Mets pitcher Tom Glavine try to get his 300th career win. She's amazed at the cleanliness of the ballpark, and rattled by the, well, niceness of the locals.

And even though she says she wouldn't trade the rudeness, craziness and hostility of Big Apple fans for anything, she confesses: "Okay, except for the sausage race. I'd totally trade it for that."

High Heat: The Secret History of the Fastball and the Improbable Search for the Fastest Pitcher of All Time. By Tim Wendel. 268 pages. \$25.

"High Heat" is false advertising. It's not all that secret a history - the players who take center stage here are the usual suspects, from Walter Johnson to Bob Feller to Sandy Koufax to Bob Gibson to Nolan Ryan and beyond. And it's not really a search for the fastest pitcher ever; early on, Wendel, a veteran baseball writer, admits that it's impossible to compare without consistent data.

But he does a good job of showing the dominant place the fastball, and the pitchers who throw it, has in baseball history. And talking to the players who threw it and/or tried to hit it, he shows that it's not enough to throw hard, that the best fastball pitchers are those who have taken the talent they're given and back it up with smarts and a good work ethic.

Midseason call-ups

A few of the year's most anticipated baseball books aren't due out until May. Among them:

The Last Hero: A Life of Henry Aaron. By Howard Bryant. Pantheon.

Reggie Jackson: The Life and Thunderous Career of Baseball's Mr. October. By Dayn Perry. HarperCollins.

The Game From Where I Stand: A Ballplayer's Inside View. By Doug Glanville. Times Books.

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