

A's News Clips, Tuesday, March 30, 2010

Oakland A's reliever Michael Wuertz will start season on DL, but news about ailing shoulder could have been worse

By Joe Stiglich_Oakland Tribune

Michael Wuertz was diagnosed with tendinitis in the back of his right shoulder, meaning the A's setup man will start the season on the 15-day disabled list.

But take the big picture into consideration, and the A's collectively breathed a sigh of relief Monday regarding the state of their bullpen.

Wuertz won't throw for five days, but given the minor degree of the injury, he should come off the DL as soon as he's eligible.

Closer Andrew Bailey and reliever Craig Breslow made their first appearances since being sidelined by elbow injuries two weeks ago. Though each gave up homers that made the difference in a 3-2 loss to Seattle, both relievers said they should be ready for opening night Monday against the Mariners.

"From the bullpen's standpoint, I think today was great," Bailey said. "Mike got good news on his arm. Me and Breslow got out there and felt great."

Wuertz's DL stint can be backdated to March 26, which means he could be activated April 10 if he's ready. In that case, he would miss only five games.

"We're very optimistic about the results," manager Bob Geren said.

Bailey allowed Franklin Gutierrez's homer in the top of the ninth to break a 2-2 tie. He had one strikeout.

Breslow gave up Josh Bard's solo shot in the eighth but said he was happy to throw his fastball, changeup and cutter with no pain.

Brad Ziegler, Breslow and newly signed reliever Chad Gaudin — whom Geren described as "an extremely strong candidate" to make the team — are options to absorb eighth-inning duties in Wuertz's absence.

Jerry Blevins, Brad Kilby, Jason Jennings, Edwar Ramirez and Henry Rodriguez are battling for what should be three open spots in the season-opening bullpen.

All it took was a couple Tylenol to get starting pitcher Gio Gonzalez rolling against Seattle. The lefty said he felt migraine-type pain after walking Ichiro Suzuki in the top of the first. Geren and assistant trainer Walt Horn visited the mound.

"My right eye just started closing on me. It was just like an explosion in my brain," said Gonzalez, who couldn't remember ever having a migraine before.

Horn ran two Tylenol to the mound, and Gonzalez proceeded to allow just one run on three hits in 61/3 innings, making a strong statement in his quest for the No. 5 starting job.

"I've never actually seen that, but it worked," Geren said.

Trevor Cahill, the other fifth-starter candidate, threw in a Triple-A game and allowed two runs in six innings.

Geren said he doesn't expect to name his fifth starter until after Saturday's exhibition finale against the Giants, when Cahill and Gonzalez both are due to pitch. Final cuts should come that day.

Gaudin can be used in short or long relief, or even starting if needed, Geren said. Gaudin did all three while with the A's from 2006-08.

Oakland placed reliever John Meloan on the 60-day DL to make room for Gaudin on the 40-man roster.

Tickets are available in all sections except the bleachers for Monday's opener.

Chin Music: Coco Crisp looks good so far

By Joe Stiglich, Contra Costa Times, 3/29/2010 7:34PM

It was one of those days where I couldn't possibly cram everything I wanted into my notebook for tomorrow's paper. One thing I wasn't able to address was Coco Crisp's performance in a 3-2 loss to the Seattle Mariners.

Crisp has looked very sharp since returning from a hamstring strain last week. He's 8-for-21 (.381) in six games since getting back in the lineup. He homered today from the right side of the plate in the third inning against Jason Vargas. He also homered from the left side last Monday in his first game back. Overall, he's hitting .414 in nine games.

But Crisp is expected to make his biggest offensive impact with his legs, not his power. And that's what I found most encouraging for the A's today. In the seventh, he lined what should have been a routine single into right-center, but turned on the jets rounding first and slid in with a double. It was a good test for his hamstring, and the A's hope it's a preview of what he'll do on the bases during the regular season.

The A's timed all of their players Monday in a 20-yard dash drill, which they do every spring. Crisp clocked a time of 2.82 seconds. He said only Rajai Davis and (surprisingly) Adam Rosales beat him.

As for the surgery Crisp had on both shoulders last summer, he said he's coming along well in that department. But keep your fingers crossed, as you should with all of the A's players coming back from injury ...

Chin Music: Chad Gaudin update: A's will use him in variety of pitching roles

By Joe Stiglich, Contra Costa Times, 3/29/2010 12:22PM

Thought I'd fill you in on what Chad Gaudin and manager Bob Geren had to say before today's game w/Seattle. Gaudin is obviously going to be used in relief, but Geren said he considers Gaudin a jack-of-all-trades type guy, as he was before for Oakland. "He's a guy that's going to be very versatile," Geren said. "We feel confident he can start, throw long relief, even short relief. We used him in that role in the past." Geren wouldn't say Gaudin has a roster spot guaranteed, but he labeled the right-hander "an extremely strong candidate" to make the team.

Gaudin said he's been stretched out to 80-85 pitches this spring, but that was 12 days ago. He threw from the mound today and will make his first A's appearance Wednesday against Cincinnati, the team's final game in Arizona. Gaudin made 11 appearances (six starts) with the Yankees last year after being acquired from San Diego. He also pitched in one postseason game and he'll be getting a World Series ring when the rest of the Yankees get theirs.

"Once you get a taste of (winning), that's all you really want," Gaudin said.

Thoughts on A's fifth starter, bullpen situations

By Joe Stiglich, Contra Costa Times, 3/29/2010 11:14AM

Chad Gaudin joined the A's on the field this morning, wearing his same No. 57 as his first stint w/the team. That's fitting, because Gaudin's favorite response when I used to ask him about his role with the A's was: "Hey, I'm just Employee No. 57." That was his version of "no comment."

We haven't talked to Gaudin yet about his role with the team, and manager Bob Geren wouldn't discuss his new reliever yet either. The move still hasn't officially been announced by the team, but when the player is actually on the field participating in workouts, there's nothing to keep under wraps anymore. ...

-Michael Wuertz is seeing a doctor right now, and we should get more word on his condition later today. That will shed some light on how big a role (if any) that relievers such as Gaudin, Jerry Blevins, Brad Kilby, , Jason Jennings, Edwar Ramirez and Henry Rodriguez might play.

-So Gio Gonzalez starts against Seattle today, and Trevor Cahill is going in a minor league game. How much should we read into this? One school of thought says the A's are leaning toward Cahill, if they feel content w/him throwing against minor league hitters at this stage of camp. But I think it's more likely the A's just consider Cahill more of a known quantity because he was in the rotation for all of 2009. I'd say the A's brass needs a better read on Gonzalez against major league competition. Geren acknowledged this morning he's eager to see Gonzalez against a Mariners lineup that features lots of regulars today.

A's lineup:
Crisp CF
Davis LF
Sweeney RF
Kouzmanoff 3B
Cust DH
Ellis 2B
Barton 1B
Fox C
Pennington SS

Gotta run back down to the field. That's all for now ...

Bay Area misses great sports ownership, as was exemplified by Walter Haas Jr. and Eddie DeBartolo

By Monte Poole, Oakland Tribune columnist

Lew Wolff, the man who runs the Oakland A's, wants first and foremost to move to San Jose.

Raiders boss Al Davis wants, at any cost, to remain in charge.

Jed York, who runs the 49ers, appears to want nothing more than to wield the power that comes with his crown.

Warriors owner Chris Cohan wants, above all, to clear his debt.

That the word "win" is absent is both conspicuous and intentional. Not because these local owners have no desire to win but because they clearly have higher priorities.

Eddie DeBartolo Jr. never had a higher priority than winning. Neither, from all appearances, did Walter Haas Jr. It's no coincidence that they are the last Bay Area owners to claim world championships.

DeBartolo and Haas were removed years ago from the local sports landscape. DeBartolo ran the 49ers from 1977-99, when he was forced to surrender them to the family of his sister, Denise DeBartolo York and her husband, John. The Haas family owned the A's from 1980 until Walter became gravely ill in 1995, when it was sold to Steve Schott and Ken Hofmann, who have since sold to a group fronted by Wolff.

From the looks of it, Eddie and Walter took with them Chapter One of the Bible of Ownership — if not the entire book.

Of the six major pro sports franchises in the Bay Area, only two have ownerships that have not alienated fans or run the team off the rails. Sharks boss Greg Jamison gets a pass because his teams contend regularly and do well at the gate. Giants boss Bill Neukom gets a pass because he's barely a year into the position.

The others have either lost their way (Davis), never knew the way (Cohan), been ambivalent about the way (Wolff) or seem to be on a mission to reinvent the way (York).

We recently met with Neukom, probably the most intellectual of the bunch and surely the most socially aware, to pose a number of questions, the simplest being this: What should be an owner's role?

He paused, as lawyers tend to do when gathering their thoughts. Neukom, 68, spent more than 20 years as the lead attorney at Microsoft, getting a close look at the company from its inception through its expansion into the thriving global enterprise it is today.

"My job," he finally said, "is to get the right people in the right positions and give them a clear understanding of our mission."

Like the goal of any typical executive with a clue about succeeding in any business, it's logical and linear, easily grasped. Yet our Fumbling Foursome can't seem to follow.

It's too soon to praise Neukom as the local sage. A man with Davis' accomplishments might wonder what Neukom has done to become an expert.

Well, he's not. And he knows he's not. Which is as impressive as it is important.

"Because I've had experience at such a variety of enterprises, it gives me a pretty stable base to be a problem solver here and be a manager and, I hope, a leader," Neukom went on. "Certainly what I learned as a lawyer, to marshal the facts and apply some principles in a rational way to come up with solutions, I think that's universally a very sound way to go about doing a project — whether you're a lawyer or a business person or an artist or a physician.

"And if you're the captain of a team, give your teammates credit. They will jump through the roof for you on your next project."

Haas understood this. He bought the A's from Charlie Finley, inherited a strong farm system, a thin front office and a dispirited fan base. He kept the farm system, installed a front office and within a few years, as the team improved, saw fans buying tickets at unprecedented rates.

Often strolling the Coliseum concourse wearing his green A's jacket, Haas was generous and respectful. His employees were satisfied. So were fans.

DeBartolo was at least as generous, if not always as accessible and respectful. He was emotional and obsessive. Imagine Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban, except a little less visible and a little more ruthless.

DeBartolo took a few years to realize how much his franchise benefited when employees were treated like family.

Both understood that business prospered when their clients — fans — could see the owner's goals matched their own. That he listens. That he cares about winning and will do whatever is necessary to create a winning environment.

It's not that hard, as long as you embrace the basic concept that businesses rarely succeed when owners are preoccupied with putting themselves first.

A's bullpen is a cause of concern

By Joe Stiglich_Oakland Tribune

The A's bullpen has become a growing cause for concern with opening day just one week away.

Setup man Michael Wuertz was scratched from pitching in Sunday's 6-6 tie with the Colorado Rockies because he's still bothered by right shoulder soreness. Manager Bob Geren said Wuertz would visit Phoenix-based orthopedist Dr. Doug Freedberg today, and Geren acknowledged the right-hander is questionable for the start of the regular season.

The A's turned to a familiar face to bolster the bullpen, signing right-hander Chad Gaudin to a major league deal, assistant general manager David Forst confirmed. Gaudin, who pitched for Oakland from 2006-08, was released by the New York Yankees on Thursday.

A focus for the A's entering spring training was the health of veteran starting pitchers Ben Sheets and Justin Duchscherer. But it's the relief corps, viewed as the club's strength coming into camp, that's been set back by the injury bug.

"Right now, with Wuertz being tender, it's obviously of some concern," Geren said. "I'm optimistic about his return ... but we'll know a lot more in the next 24 to 48 hours."

Wuertz, who led American League relievers in strikeouts last season, has made just two exhibition appearances.

With his status uncertain, it's even more important for closer Andrew Bailey and middle reliever Craig Breslow to return to health. Both are expected to pitch today against the Seattle Mariners after being sidelined for two weeks with elbow injuries.

"(The bullpen) is kind of up in the air right now," starting pitcher Brett Anderson said. "We've got Bailey and Breslow throwing (today), and hopefully nothing comes of Wuertz's shoulder. We should be all right."

Oakland's bullpen posted an American League-low 3.46 ERA in 2009. It looked to be stronger this season with the prospect of Joey Devine returning after missing last year because of elbow surgery. But Devine had a setback in his recovery and will stay in Arizona for extended spring training.

Geren said Bailey, the 2009 AL Rookie of the Year, can squeeze in three appearances before next Monday's season opener against Seattle. That would give him seven spring appearances, which Bailey and Geren said would be enough to get him ready.

If Bailey and Wuertz aren't ready, closing duties likely would fall to submariner Brad Ziegler, who has 18 saves over the past two seasons.

"If he's fine after (today), he should be OK," Geren said of Bailey.

The A's considered their outside options and acted quickly in signing Gaudin, 27, who served as both a starter and reliever in his first A's stint.

He was part of the trade that sent Rich Harden from Oakland to the Chicago Cubs in July 2008. He went 6-10 with a 4.64 ERA last season in 31 games (25 starts) split between the San Diego Padres and Yankees.

"It's something we've been looking at all spring," Forst said of adding bullpen depth.

If Gaudin joins Bailey, Breslow and Ziegler in the season-opening bullpen and Wuertz can't go, the A's still would have three relief openings.

Geren had good things to say about lefties Jerry Blevins and Brad Kilby. Jason Jennings — expected to return to the team today after being away for personal reasons — Edwar Ramirez and Henry Rodriguez are also in the mix.

Rodriguez, who's hit 100 mph with his fastball, is intriguing. But as Geren noted: "He's shown flashes of greatness and shown flashes of command issues."

Chin Music: A's reliever Michael Wuertz to see doctor about shoulder, Opening Day status in doubt

By Joe Stiglich, Sunday, March 28th, 2010

Here's the latest on a windy Sunday morning at Phoenix Muni ...

—The uncertainty w/the A's bullpen continues as setup man Michael Wuertz was scratched today because of his balky right shoulder. Wuertz will get examined by Dr. Doug Freedberg here in Phoenix, and there's no set date for his return. Asked if he was concerned Wuertz might miss the start of the season, manager Bob Geren responded, "It's fair to say that."

So it's even more important for the A's that closer Andrew Bailey and Craig Breslow come back healthy from their elbow problems. Both are scheduled to throw tomorrow against the Seattle Mariners. Geren said Bailey should get three more exhibition appearances, which would give him seven spring appearances total, and have him ready. That depends on how Bailey responds to tomorrow's outing.

Other relievers now come into play if Wuertz can't go. One of them is newly acquired Edwar Ramirez. It sounds as if Geren considers him a real possibility for the bullpen. Ramirez walked in a run yesterday after relieving Justin Duchscherer but looked better in his second inning. He's appeared in just three games this spring after being traded twice.

Wuertz's injury could mean that lefties Jerry Blevins and Brad Kilby both start the season in the bullpen. Jason Jennings, who's expected to return to the team tomorrow after being away for personal reasons, could also be an important option. Henry Rodriguez? He's getting another appearance today, but I'm not sure the A's are sold on him as being ready for the Opening Day roster.

The bullpen picture will become clearer in the next couple days, when we know more about Wuertz's condition ...

A'S SPRING TRAINING

Bullpen gains despite losing

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Oakland lost 3-2 to division rival Seattle when Franklin Gutierrez bashed a ninth-inning homer off Andrew Bailey, but everyone with the A's agreed: It was a pretty good day for the team in the overall scheme of things.

Bailey and Craig Breslow both pitched and felt great after being out of action for two weeks with elbow problems. And best of all for the A's, top setup man Michael Wuertz was diagnosed with posterior rotator cuff tendinitis rather than anything more significant and potentially season-ending.

Wuertz will not throw for five days, and then he'll go back to the A's usual throwing program. He is certain to open the season on the disabled list, but he'd be eligible to come off the DL less than a week after the A's opener, on April 10, because the DL can be backdated to March 26. He's only pitched in two spring training games, though, so it's possible that the team will want to send him on a short rehab assignment before he returns.

In other good news for the A's relief corps, Joey Devine (Tommy John surgery, tendinitis) will throw a bullpen session today, he said, which keeps him on track for a mid- to late-April return.

"From the bullpen standpoint, today was great," Bailey said. "Obviously, Wuertz got good news with his arm, and Breslow and I were both out there. It's like, 'OK, here we go. We can start.' "

Breslow and Bailey both said they are certain they will be ready for the start of the season.

The newest member of the A's bullpen, Chad Gaudin, joined the morning workout, wearing his old A's No. 57, after agreeing to a one-year deal the day before. He appears to be a near-lock for the Opening Day roster; Geren called him "an extremely strong candidate."

Geren said that Gaudin, who pitched for Oakland in 2006-2008, can handle long, middle or even short relief. Gaudin also is stretched out to start. After competing for the final spot in the Yankees' rotation, he's over 80 pitches. He hasn't worked in nearly two weeks after being designated for assignment, but he'll throw in Wednesday's Cactus League finale against the Reds and he'll make an appearance in the Bay Bridge series.

Gaudin left his beard in New York (the Yankees ban facial hair below the lip) but he's regrowing it - and he gained a World Series ring, which he'll probably collect when the Yankees are in Oakland next month.

"Once you get a taste of that, that's all you really want," Gaudin said of the championship. "It was awesome. I want to do it again for sure."

"He's obviously got that winning flavor now," A's starter Dallas Braden said. "Hopefully, that rubs off on everyone else."

2 Tylenols, 3-hitter perk up Gonzalez

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Gio Gonzalez had a headache so bad in the first inning Monday, that his right eye started twitching and a trainer had to take him two Tylenols with a 3-1 count to **Franklin Gutierrez**.

It worked so well, Gonzalez got a double-play grounder on the next pitch, the start to a terrific outing that might well have increased his chances of winning the fifth starter job. Facing Seattle's regulars, Gonzalez also wriggled out of a bases-loaded, no-outs situation by getting **Ken Griffey Jr.** to pop up and **Jose Lopez** to hit into a double play.

"Outstanding," manager **Bob Geren** said of Gonzalez's three-hit, one-run effort in 6 1/3 innings.

And there might be a run on Tylenol in the dugout now.

"It was kind of funny," Geren said. "Everyone asked what they gave Gio, 'Did they give him a double-play pill? I've got to get one of those.' "

"I should try to knock myself in the head before I pitch next time," said Gonzalez, who has never had a migraine before. "Maybe that would help."

Trevor Cahill, the other fifth-starter candidate, threw 5 2/3 innings in a Triple-A game, allowing six hits, two runs, one earned, and two walks. He struck out four.

Both are scheduled to pitch Saturday against the Giants, and Geren said a decision is unlikely to be made until after that game.

Powell odd man out? Jake Fox has done a lot of catching this spring, including all of Monday's game, and incumbent backup catcher **Landon Powell** has seen much less time. That hasn't gone unnoticed by Powell, who understands the roster situation. "It is concerning," Powell said. "But all I can do is what I do. Hopefully I've done enough in my career here, but if not. ... Obviously, I'm not out of options and he is. I don't make those decisions, though."

Briefly: Coco Crisp homered and doubled, taking an extra base on a ball hit to center. ... **Dallas Braden** said he's sure now it was a bug bite that caused redness and swelling on his left shin; there's some redness remaining, but no swelling.

Warriors could leave Raiders only Oakland team

Chip Johnson, San Francisco Chronicle

With the sale of the Golden State Warriors now officially on the table, East Bay residents stand to lose two of their three professional sports teams, leaving the Oakland Raiders as the most firmly rooted team at the city-and-county-owned sports complex.

Now that's a scary thought.

Less than a week after the NBA team owner Chris Cohan announced his intention to sell, at least one potential buyer has expressed interest in seeing the club move from Oracle Arena to San Francisco, just south of AT&T Park, according to Chronicle colleague C.W. Nevius in his Thursday column.

The argument in favor of such a move includes a study that projected a 30 percent higher franchise value should the team move to San Francisco. Corporate sponsorship opportunities, which have been meager in Oakland, would also be greater.

Let's face it, Oakland's persona works for the Raiders more than it does for the other two teams. At a Raiders football game, you expect to be jostled at some point by one or more of the team's proud but rowdy fans. You know how Oakland police catch troublemakers at Raiders games? They wear the jerseys of the visiting team - because that's about all it takes.

From a marketing standpoint, San Francisco has a reputation for civility that Oakland does not share. Hey, I live in Oakland. I own a home here, but I have to be honest.

The choice of attending a ballgame in San Francisco, where fans could walk to a neighborhood sports bar or tony restaurant, or a game in Oakland, where a car or BART ride is required to get you to a more amenable part of the city, is a no-brainer. Geographically, a downtown San Francisco basketball arena would be just as close as the coliseum for many Oakland residents.

But if the team did move, Alameda County Board Supervisor Scott Haggerty said, the new owner would face a contractual poison pill - the remainder of a \$140 million upgrade paid for by a municipal bond approved as part of the Oakland Raiders' return to the city.

"If they leave prior to 2027, they have to close the debt service on the \$140 million upgrade," Haggerty said. "Whoever buys the team may not know about that debt service."

In addition, the estimated cost of buying out the Warriors' lease in Oakland through 2027 is around \$60 million.

As a financial resource, the Warriors are about a breakeven operation, said Deena McClain, interim executive director of the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum Authority and its chief legal counsel. Revenues from Warriors games brought in about \$12.7 million last year while operational expenses cost about \$15.5 million, she said.

If the Warriors were to jump ship, the team would join the Oakland Athletics as the latest sports franchise to bail on Oakland.

Never mind Oakland City Hall's last-stand attempt to cobble together three possible sites late last year, A's owner Lew Wolff has set his sights on leaving town.

Oakland City Councilman Larry Reid, who represents East Oakland and serves as a commissioner on the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum Authority, is adamant about retaining the basketball team. He is equally convinced that unless redevelopment efforts are undertaken near the sports complex to build hotels with convention facilities, office and retail space and housing, the city could well lose those teams.

Reid regularly drums up interest in the area and leads developer tours through two city-owned properties near the sports complex. He hosted former state Treasurer Phil Angelides last week. Angelides is a partner with former NBA star Earvin "Magic" Johnson in the development firm of King and Johnson.

"It's going to take two or three developers working together to pull off this vision, and the city needs to step up its game and find someone interested in partnering with the Raiders," Reid said. "If we don't do something, and continue to drag our feet, we may lose all three sports franchises," he said.

I guess turnabout is fair play, after all. San Francisco certainly isn't the only city or county ignoring boundaries. Santa Clara County officials are hoping a new stadium proposal will lure the 49ers south, and San Jose has not given up on the Athletics.

Finally, if Coliseum officials have their way, Oakland will soon have a football-only stadium that is home to the Raiders and its crossbay rivals, the San Francisco 49ers.

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.

Drumbeat: Wuertz has rotator-cuff tendinitis; Gonzalez conquers migraine

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Phoenix

Probably the best possible scenario for the A's with Michael Wuertz's shoulder problem: He was diagnosed with posterior rotator cuff tendinitis and he'll be shut down for five days.

As I mentioned yesterday, shoulder injuries are tricky and surgery doesn't have the same rate of success that elbow surgeries do. So even though Wuertz will open the season on the DL, he'll be eligible to come off less than a week after Opening Day, on April 10, and it sounds as if that might be too far off when he's ready to come back unless the team wants to send him out on a rehab assignment.

So this is great news for Oakland, especially considering how important Wuertz is for that bullpen. And this pretty much assures that his workload (74 appearances last year) won't be as extreme this season. Scouts told me numerous times last year that Wuertz might be heading toward arm trouble because of how frequently he was used; he even expressed some apprehension about his workload during midseason. Telling me he felt "physically drained."

Andrew Bailey and Craig Breslow had similar injuries (elbows), similar times off (two weeks) and both gave up solo homers in their first games back today. They also both felt terrific afterward, so more good news for the bullpen. (Bailey, BTW, came out throwing all fastballs until what he calls "three missiles" in a row were hit, including a homer by Franklin Gutierrez. Then he started mixing his pitches up and he was fine.)

Gio Gonzalez pitched very well today, allowing one run and three hits in 6 1/3 innings against the Mariners' A-lineup, but he had an unusual moment in the first. With a 3-1 count to Gutierrez, manager Bob Geren went out with a trainer and then Gonzalez was given a drink of water. As it turns out, Gonzalez had had a migraine since the first pitch of the game, and his right eye started twitching - two Tylenols later, with the cup of water, and he was fine: The next pitch was a double-play ball.

"Everyone on the bench was asking what they gave him, a double-play pill? They were all saying, 'I've got to get one of those!' " Geren said with a chuckle.

Trevor Cahill, Gonzalez's competition for the final starter spot, threw 5 2/3 innings in a Triple-A Game, allowing six hits and two runs, one earned. He walked two and struck out four. Gonzalez walked three and struck out four, and got three double-play grounders. This is a pretty close call here - Gonzalez might have the edge in sheer stuff, but Cahill was in the rotation all last year and hasn't done anything to lose the spot. It's going to be a tough decision, in a good way as far as the A's are concerned. That's exactly what a team hopes for, a spirited competition with good results.

Crisp, Gonzalez shine for Athletics

Center fielder goes deep; lefty tosses 6 1/3 solid innings

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

MARINERS 3, A'S 2

at Phoenix

Monday, March 29

Mariners at the plate: Seattle's first run came in the third on a wild pitch and was scored by Rob Johnson, who doubled in the inning. Josh Bard then homered in the eighth to tie the game, and Franklin Gutierrez hit one of his own in the ninth. The Mariners tallied just five hits on the day, the other two coming off the bats of Chone Figgins and Milton Bradley.

Athletics at the plate: Coco Crisp went 2-for-4 with a home run and a double, and Kevin Kouzmanoff drove in the A's other run with a ground-rule double. The A's also got hits from Jack Cust and Ryan Sweeney.

Mariners on the mound: Left-handed starter Jason Vargas scattered four hits, two runs, four walks and a strikeout in five innings of work. He was followed by righty Brandon League, who pitched a perfect inning, before Sean White came in and gave up one hit in one inning.

Athletics on the mound: Lefty Gio Gonzalez, making his bid for the fifth spot in the rotation, tossed 6 1/3 innings of three-hit ball, surrendering one run and three walks while fanning four. Brad Ziegler finished the seventh, and lefty Craig Breslow took the mound in the eighth for the first time since March 14. He surrendered the homer to Bard before Andrew Bailey, also coming back from elbow soreness, gave up a go-ahead home run in the ninth.

Worth noting: Gonzalez was visited by the A's trainer in the first inning with a runner on first and one out and was given aspirin to relieve a sudden migraine. Gonzalez then got Gutierrez to ground into an inning-ending double play and allowed just three hits the rest of the way.

Cactus League records: Athletics 11-13-3; Mariners 10-16-1.

Up next: Right-hander Ben Sheets, slated to take the mound Opening Night in Oakland against the Mariners, will make his final spring start Tuesday, when the A's travel to Glendale, Ariz., to take on the White Sox. Sheets is 1-2 with a 17.28 ERA this spring, but he's never taken much stock in exhibition numbers and is instead focusing on his healthy shoulder, which forced him to miss the 2009 season. First pitch is scheduled for 1:05 p.m. PT.

The Mariners' last few days in Arizona include a day off on Tuesday, which comes at a good time. Starting on Wednesday, they will play 15 consecutive days in seven cities -- Surprise, Ariz., Peoria, Ariz., Albuquerque, N.M., San Francisco, Oakland, Arlington and Seattle. Cactus League actions resumes on Wednesday at 1:05 p.m. PT with right-hander David Pauley, sent to the Minor Leagues last week, starting against the Rangers in Surprise. But most of the attention will be at a Minor League game in Peoria, where ace right-hander Felix Hernandez tunes up for his Opening Night assignment against the Athletics in Oakland. His second start of the season will be against the Rangers, so manager Don Wakamatsu wants to keep Felix out of the Rangers' sight until then.

Gaudin reunites with Athletics

Right-hander previously pitched in Oakland from 2006-08

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- Back in green and gold, Chad Gaudin made his way onto the field Monday morning wearing the same number he sported in his first stint with the A's from 2006-08.

It was during that time the right-hander, stamped with No. 57, was transferred from the A's starting rotation to the bullpen -- a move that never sat quite well with him. He was then shipped to the Cubs along with Rich Harden in the middle of the 2008 season and has since been traded again and released twice.

Now he's back -- with a one-year contract worth \$700,000 plus incentives. And he's ready to serve in any role the A's send his way.

"It feels real good," Gaudin said. "All the guys welcomed me with open arms. It's good to see familiar faces and be a part of something. I want to do what I can to help this team."

Initial reports about Gaudin's return surfaced Sunday, when assistant general manager David Forst confirmed the deal. However, the A's didn't officially announce the signing until Monday.

Gaudin, 27, gives the A's another right-handed setup option for a rather depleted bullpen, which got word Monday that righty Michael Wuertz will miss Opening Day with rotator cuff tendinitis. As a result, manager Bob Geren deemed Gaudin an "extremely strong candidate" to land on the 25-man roster come season's start.

"He's a guy that can be very versatile," the A's skipper said. "We're confident that he can start. He can long relief, even middle and short relief. He's done that before in the past, too. At this point where he's at, we'll be looking at him as a reliever ... and kind of go from there."

Gaudin most recently played with the Yankees, with whom he garnered a World Series ring last year after going 2-0 with a 3.43 ERA in 11 games for New York. However, his spring numbers -- 0-3 record with a 8.68 ERA -- quickly left him out of the fifth-starter competition, which led to his release Thursday.

"I was in the fight for the fifth spot in the rotation, and I was just trying to iron out some things," Gaudin said. "We had a lot of guys throwing little innings, so it was hard to get work in."

Gaudin quickly got to work with the A's on Monday morning, as he threw a bullpen session and is slated to appear in a game Wednesday. He's stretched out to 80 pitches and mentioned he's "pretty resilient wherever they need me."

"They need some bullpen help from what I've heard, so I'm going to come in and help the team," he said. "Where I end up is where I end up, but I'll be locked in 100 percent wherever that is."

Gaudin said he considered "a couple" other teams before deciding on a second tour with the A's, but in the end, it became a "fairly easy" decision considering the history he built in Oakland -- where he hopes to bring along the winning ways he experienced in pinstripes.

"Once you get a taste of that, it's what you want," Gaudin said. "It's fun to win. I'm just going to come in and help where I can."

When traded by the A's in 2008, the right-hander expressed a sense of shock since he figured Harden's departure meant a rotation spot for him in Oakland. On Monday, though, he appeared very much content with the way things transpired.

Said Gaudin: "Of course, anytime you get traded from something that you're enjoying -- love the clubhouse, love the guys, love the team -- I guess you could say it's a disappointment and brings up mixed emotions, but it's part of the game and comes with the territory, so I embraced it. But that was in the past and now I'm here."

As for the present, Geren believes Gaudin's versatile presence will lend the A's much comfort in the midst of dealing with a battered relief corps.

"It's very helpful knowing him as a player and person," Geren said. "His experience with us makes it much quicker to have him ready."

A's get good news out of the bullpen

Bailey, Breslow return pain-free; Wuertz won't be out long

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- A spring loss against the Mariners on Monday quickly turned into a win in the A's book after compiling rather good news about their recovering bullpen.

Following the game, manager Bob Geren announced that Michael Wuertz, who has made just one spring appearance due to shoulder soreness, will not throw for at least five days due to rotator cuff tendinitis, and subsequently, will likely miss the season opener.

That's a relatively positive report for the A's, who were uncertain how long their top right-handed setup man was going to be missing from the bullpen. Wuertz was slated to pitch in Sunday's game but was a morning scratch, and instead, made plans to visit local orthopedist Dr. Doug Freedberg on Monday.

"He won't throw for five days, but we'll start him back up after that," Geren said. "It won't set him back too far. I don't know how to classify it, but we're very optimistic about the results."

Because Wuertz is almost guaranteed to start the season on the disabled list, he won't be able to return to the mound until April 10 at the earliest, as the team can backdate the injury to March 26.

Meanwhile, fellow relievers Andrew Bailey and Craig Breslow, whom have both been nursing sore elbows, made one-inning appearances in Monday's game for the first time since March 14.

Bailey, who set an Oakland rookie record with 26 saves en route to being named the American League Rookie of the Year last season, struck out one and gave up one hit -- a go-ahead home run to Seattle's Franklin Gutierrez in the ninth.

"I was trying to establish my fastball and feel back on the mound," Bailey said. "I felt it went outstanding, even though we lost."

"I feel back on schedule. Now that that's over with, you can go back to working on your other stuff, focusing on command and your secondary pitches."

The A's right-hander solely threw fastballs at the beginning of his outing, but after watching a few hard-hit balls he deemed "missiles" pass him, he mixed it up with a couple cutters and a curveball in an effort to "not feel hesitant out there."

Breslow, who also witnessed his only surrendered hit turn into a home run, knows the feeling. The A's southpaw said he felt great physically but was holding back a touch mentally.

"Everything felt good," Breslow said. "Now it's just a matter of feeling comfortable out there again. I think that just comes with time, so I'll keep improving my next couple times out."

Bailey and Breslow's pain-free outings, along with a clearer timetable for Wuertz, now give the A's a greater sense of comfort surrounding their bullpen situation.

"From a bullpen standpoint, today was great," Bailey said. "Mike got some good news with his arm, and Breslow and I were back out there, and we both felt good."

"That's my fifth appearance and we can go from there. There's still some time to get used to game action again, but I'll definitely be ready for Opening Day."

Lee's Lefovers: Fifth starter competition still going strong

For about 30 seconds today, I thought the battle for the fifth starter competition was done. Dead. Finished. Not by an out-dueling performance, but rather by default.

Gio Gonzalez silenced the press box during the first inning of Monday's game when he signaled for a trainer with a 3-1 count against Franklin Gutierrez with a runner on first and one out. Gonzalez was also joined by manager **Bob Geren**, battery mate **Jake Fox** and the umpire, as he appeared to rub his eyes. He was then given a glass of water before he went back to work and managed to force an inning-ending double play ball. Furthermore, he went on to toss 6 1/3 innings of solid three-hit ball while allowing just one run (on a wild pitch) and walking three and striking out four.

So the big question of the day involved the contents of the mentioned cup of water. Turns out Gonzalez experienced a sudden migraine and simply popped two Tylenol to take care of what he described as an "explosion in my brain."

"My right eye just started closing in on me," he said. "They were telling me it was going to take 15 minutes for the aspirin to

kick in, but I said with the adrenaline I have right now, it will probably take less than two minutes."

Try two seconds. Gonzalez looked like a completely different pitcher after the unusual visit and quickly disregarded any thought I conjured about him surrendering the rotation spot to **Trevor Cahill**. He said he had never experienced any sort of migraine and was surprised by its sudden presence.

"I felt fine in the bullpen and warming up," he said, "and then after that first pitch to Ichiro it was like 'woah.' That was definitely a first for me."

Gonzalez followed up the first with a 1-2-3 second, including strikeouts to **Milton Bradley** and **Ken Griffey Jr.**, before allowing **Rob Johnson** to score in the third on the wild pitch and loading the bases in the fourth. However, he got Griffey to pop out and then forced a double play groundball off the bat of Jose Lopez to escape the jam.

"That was huge," he said. "It was after that my confidence just skyrocketed, and I started throwing first pitch strikes to everyone. I was excited about that, and it felt like 100 pounds lifted off my shoulder."

Gonzalez said he relied mainly on his fastball Monday while also getting a little work in on his changeup. He also kept in mind what he called the famous words of **Joey Devine**: "Let it eat."

"So that's exactly what I was doing," he said.

Gonzalez is well aware of the rotation situation and hopes his impressive string of spring starts continues to make Geren's decision a difficult one.

"I did enough to show them that I'm ready and that I feel great and feel strong," he said. "The decision is up to them. I'm just grateful to be throwing a baseball and feel healthy."

At the beginning of the game, Gonzalez appeared slightly nervous -- but rightfully so, considering he's on the roster bubble with seven days before Opening Night. After the game, though, he was just...Gio. He even joked about the Tylenol interruption.

"I'm going to do a commercial for them," he said with a smile. "I really had it all planned out. That was all a commercial stunt, guys."

Meanwhile, Cahill made a start in a Triple-A game over at the A's Minor League complex. He said he gave up two runs -- including a homer -- in six innings and basically described his outing as "nothing great, nothing bad."

Like Gonzalez, he's been fine tuning his changeup all spring and mentioned it's still not working as well as last year but sees it coming around pretty quickly.

In general, Cahill evokes a much more relaxed personality than Gonzalez, and it definitely shows on and off the mound. They're two very completely different pitchers, and I think that's what's making this competition so much fun to watch. It seems the general consensus is that Gonzalez boasts the best natural stuff of the two -- possibly even of the entire staff -- but just can't keep his composure and command in check to bring it out consistently. Then there's Cahill, who has a devastating sinker but otherwise average stuff. Yet the maturity and composure he brings with him to the mound, especially at the age of 22, elevates that average stuff to a different level.

In my mind, Cahill had the edge entering camp -- and still does. But I have to say Gonzalez is very much still in the mix and is greatly impressing the club right now. I also can't see him starting the year at Triple-A -- he's too good for that. At the same time, it's hard to imagine the A's keeping him in the bullpen. So now it's just a wait-and-see type thing, and you can bet Geren won't make an announcement until he absolutely has to this weekend.

No word on whether Gonzalez or Cahill will start the game Saturday in Oakland, but they'll both presumably be pitching then against the visiting Giants. Curious to hear your thoughts on which one will be starting against the Angels in Anaheim on April 9...