

## A's News Clips, Tuesday, March 2, 2010

### A's Mortensen seeks to make amends after DUI arrest

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 3/2/2010

Spring training provides a clean slate for every player, and nobody on the A's looked forward to the new season more than right-hander Clayton Mortensen.

Mortensen was part of the three-player package the A's received from St. Louis in July for outfielder Matt Holliday. He joined the A's rotation in September after injuries depleted the staff.

But he generated unwanted attention when he was arrested the morning of Oct. 4 for suspicion of driving under the influence of alcohol.

Mortensen issued an emotional apology in front of reporters that day at the Oakland Coliseum, after the A's final game of the season. He said he couldn't wait to report to camp this spring, eager to restore his image in the eyes of the front office.

"It's a fresh start," Mortensen said. "Last year was not a great way to end. I've wanted to sit down and talk to (manager) Bob (Geren). My first impression wasn't very good."

Geren said he considers the incident in the past, adding it won't factor into how Mortensen is evaluated this spring.

"He made a mistake," Geren said.

Mortensen, who turns 25 in April, went 2-4 with a 7.81 ERA in six starts with the A's in 2009. He's an outside candidate for the fifth starter's spot.

"He has a nasty sinker, good velocity," Geren said. "Repeating that delivery and controlling that sinker is going to be the key to his success."

The A's have set their rotation for the beginning of Cactus League play. As previously reported, Trevor Cahill will start Thursday's opener against the Chicago Cubs, with Ben Sheets going against Milwaukee on Friday.

That puts Sheets on rotation to start Opening Night against Seattle on April 5.

Dallas Braden goes Saturday against the Los Angeles Angels, suggesting that Braden is being prepped as the No. 2 man in the rotation.

Where does Justin Duchscherer fit? He had minor surgery on his lower back Feb. 23, and Geren said Duchscherer would need about two weeks from that date to return to the mound.

That could leave Duchscherer iffy for the start of the regular season. But Duchscherer said it wasn't out of the question he could be back sooner.

Rajai Davis is getting lots of instruction on making the switch from center field to left. But the best preparation, he said, is reading the ball off the bat during batting practice.

"That's the closest you can get" to game conditions, he said.

Davis has played left field in just 38 games during his professional career, according to [baseball-reference.com](http://baseball-reference.com).

"He needs a lot of reps out there," Geren said. "The spin of the ball is different."

Newly acquired Coco Crisp is expected to play center.

The A's play intrasquad games at Phoenix Municipal Stadium today and Wednesday. Brett Anderson and Braden will start in today's game, which begins at 12:30.

### **Chin Music: Dallas Braden, Brett Anderson start A's intrasquad game Tuesday**

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 3/1/2010

It was Photo Day at A's camp this morning, where players have to show up early to the clubhouse, don their game uniforms and sit through numerous photo shoots. In general, they like this stuff about as much as a cat likes getting dumped in a bath tub, but they get through it. Not that they relish having us beat writers stick a notebook in their face every day. But this team is a pretty easygoing bunch, and they cooperate well with writers and photographers.

We're getting closer to watching real baseball, which is always welcome at this point of spring training. Exhibitions start this week, and the A's have posted their scheduled pitchers for the next few days ...

Dallas Braden and Brett Anderson are set to start Tuesday's intrasquad game at Phoenix Muni (12:30 p.m. start for those in the area). Also scheduled to pitch: Tyson Ross, Pedro Figueroa, Brad Ziegler, John Meloan, Fernando Hernandez and Fautino De Los Santos.

Gio Gonzalez and Matt Wright start Wednesday's intrasquad affair, with Henry Rodriguez, Marcus McBeth, Sam Demel and Bobby Cassevah also going. No word on that start time, although 12:30 is a good bet.

Trevor Cahill takes the hill in Thursday's Cactus League opener against the Cubs in Mesa with Clay Mortensen, Justin Souza and Jerry Blevins also slated. Ben Sheets starts Friday against the Brewers in Phoenix, followed by Vin Mazzaro, Andrew Bailey and Brad Ziegler. On Saturday, Braden starts against the Angels in Phoenix with Tyson Ross, Pedro Figueroa, Michael Wuertz and Blevins scheduled to follow.

All of this is subject to slight alteration, of course, because some guys aren't able to get into their scheduled games on occasion.

It's funny how I really look forward to each new stage of camp, just to break the monotony of the drills I've watched for the first 10 days or so. Right now the idea of an intrasquad game sounds pretty exciting, even though it's basically just a controlled scrimmage. I'll take it. ...

And I'm watching baseball in Arizona every day. Can't complain too much, right?

That's all for now ...

## **New polls show growing support for A's to San Jose, but Santa Clarans split on 49ers stadium**

By Tracy Seipel, Mercury News 3/1/2010

Support is growing in San Jose over a proposed move by the Oakland A's, but Santa Clara voters are split over whether the city should partner with the 49ers on a new football stadium.

That's according to two recent polls from an Oregon-based researcher whose numbers raised objections from both supporters and opponents of the NFL team's efforts to relocate to the South Bay.

San Jose voters polled approve the A's move by 53 to 35 percent — a significant jump from two previous polls done by the same firm in October and June of last year.

But in Santa Clara, pollster Rick Lindholm found a 45-45 dead heat among likely voters asked about the \$937 million stadium project. The rest were undecided.

Critics of the polls, both of which Lindholm performed in mid-February, say the number of 200 likely voters polled in each city is too small a sample. And, they said, the questions don't include enough details, particularly about costs of the facilities to the public.

"We have read it over and we find the poll ... to be a very sterile one," said William Bailey, treasurer of Santa Clara Plays Fair, the group opposed to building the 49ers stadium in Santa Clara. "They mention only the glitz and hype and buzz of the stadium, but they do not talk about the money it costs."

Meanwhile, Lisa Gillmor, spokeswoman for Santa Clarans for Economic Progress, the 49ers-backed group that supports the stadium, said the results "are statistically inaccurate."

"They didn't poll enough people, and this goes completely against the type of response we're getting when we're talking to Santa Clarans, face-to-face," she said. Once they "find out the positive benefits of have a stadium in our city, the answer is a resounding yes."

Lindholm defended his methodology, saying the polls are "not something you would use for a campaign strategy. It's something to get a general gauge of what people are thinking." The margin of error in each study was 7 percent.

Lindholm said pollsters read Santa Clara voters the exact ballot measure language provided by the city that says the stadium would carry "no new taxes for residents."

In Santa Clara, he noted, the poll showed middle-income voters, who earn between \$30,000 to \$75,000, were more likely to be opposed to the stadium. Wealthier voters were more inclined to support it. Lindholm noted that it's possible this has something to do with the likely increase in the city's property values.

In San Jose, Lindholm said, the latest approval numbers for the proposed A's move follows a 46 percent to 44 percent approval in his June poll and a 45 percent to 43 percent margin in October.

The poll also reveals that registered Democrats and men are more likely to favor the team's move.

Lindholm noted that one reason behind the increase in support from previous polls may Mayor Chuck Reed's increasing efforts to tout the proposed move. But Major League Baseball must first clear the way for the A's to negotiate a move to San Jose, which is currently under the territorial rights of the San Francisco Giants.

Giants officials had no comment on the new poll, while Reed said he was "not surprised. The more people find out this is going to be privately financed, privately built and privately operated, the more people are supportive of the project."

Lindholm said he was not hired by anyone to conduct either survey. He said he does polling on a variety of issues in the Bay Area, using the results to help him build a database for his other polling work for private clients.

## **A'S SPRING TRAINING**

### **Souza's inspiration close to home**

[Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer](#)

Whenever his workouts get tough or the gym regimen takes its toll, A's right-hander Justin Souza finds inspiration in his younger brother, Cory.

"When my cardio gets hard and I have to push myself, I think of my brother, and I keep going," Souza said Monday. "He can't do this, so I will. I have to take advantage of my health, I can't forget that."

Cory Souza, now 20, received a double lung transplant when he was 9 years old. Doctors in Sacramento had told his parents, Rick and Kathy, that Cory's cystic fibrosis had advanced to the point that he had only three days to live.

"I'll never forget this - they told my parents to tell my brother, 'It's OK to give up,' " Justin Souza, 24, said. "That will never work in our family, especially with my brother. He's the strongest person I know."

The Souzas moved their son to Childrens Hospital in Los Angeles. There, Rick and Kathy each donated a lung to their younger boy.

"It was kind of scary because my whole immediate family was in surgery at the same time," said Justin Souza, who was 13 at the time. "I was sitting there in the waiting room with my grandparents. It was a weird feeling."

The Souza brothers are extremely close, and Souza's parents knew that Cory's health problems were difficult for Justin, too.

"Justin is such a fantastic young man, though - through all of this, his great character really stood out," Rick Souza said. "He always kept his grades up, he never stopped working at baseball, he never missed time in the gym and he's always helped his brother."

Cory Souza's health is still fragile and he has spent much of the past year in and out of the hospital while experiencing rejection problems with one of his lungs. Rick Souza said that Cory is working essentially off one lung, and Justin said that Cory has trouble walking down the street and must rest often. All the medication he has had to take most of his life, as well as a restricted diet, have left Cory small of stature; Rick said that he is about 5-foot-7 and weighs 97 pounds.

Souza was able to visit Cory in the hospital in L.A. when Justin was en route to Arizona for spring training, and he said that helped his brother's spirits and Cory was well enough to return home recently.

His brother was a primary reason that Souza was thrilled to be traded from the Seattle organization to Oakland in exchange for infielder Jack Hannahan last summer; Souza hopes that Cory will be able to see him pitch, either in Oakland or at Triple-

A Sacramento. Justin also grew up an A's fan in the small town of Galt, between Sacramento and Lodi, and he saw his first big-league game at the Coliseum.

He's also well aware of what the A's organization is able to do with young pitchers, and like all the minor-leaguers in camp, Souza would love to be the next Andrew Bailey. Souza's taking advantage of all the instruction he can get, and cutter guru Gil Patterson has been working with him on that pitch.

The A's shut down Souza with a lat strain early in August, but they liked what they saw of him during instructional league, enough so to put him on the 40-man roster. He's now throwing in the mid-90s, hitting as high 97 mph.

"His stuff is electric," Double-A Midland coach Scott Emerson said. "He has major-league stuff; he just has to refine it. You see the potential this kid has - he's a very nice addition to the core group of young pitchers here. It's our job to keep him a phone call from the big leagues, and the rest is in Justin's hands."

## Anderson serious about conditioning

[Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer](#)

**Brett Anderson** looks a little different on the mound this spring.

The left-hander doesn't have a new delivery. He hasn't changed his position on the rubber. But he has lost 5 pounds, and as strength and conditioning coordinator **Bob Alejo** said, Anderson has redistributed the rest, making it really more like a 10-pound swing. Basically, Anderson has gone from a little chunky to closer to svelte.

"I'll never have a six-pack (abs) or anything," said Anderson, who will be one of the starters in today's intrasquad game.

"But I can see my kneecaps now."

Anderson didn't change his diet much apart from trying to steer clear of soft drinks, but he spent the offseason in Oklahoma City lifting weights and doing cardio.

"A lot of StairMaster," he said. "That makes you sweat after 10 minutes. Nobody likes the Stairmaster, I call it 'the gauntlet.' We have a love-hate relationship."

Anderson hasn't thrown enough pitches yet to know if his stamina will be better in a game, but he knows that he's running faster, and when the pitchers did their "30-70s" (three sets of 10 70-yard runs), he was able to get through them fine. Last year, Anderson struggled.

"Now look: He's at the front when they're running," Alejo said. "He had never done anything like this program before, but Brett said, 'OK, let's do it,' and really trusted it."

Both said that Anderson's time running to first to take throws will improve, as will his agility around the mound, which was one of the few areas in which Anderson had difficulty in his strong rookie season.

**Briefly:** The four-inning intrasquad game will start at 12:30 p.m. at Phoenix Muni. ... **Jason Jennings** threw a 50-pitch bullpen session and pitching coach **Curt Young** said of the A's newest addition: "Good stuff. We know he relies on movement and a good slider, and that's what he showed today." ... Manager **Bob Geren** said that **Rajai Davis** is working on his transition from center to left field, and it's not an easy move because the angles and the spin on the ball are different. ... First cuts are likely to come Sunday, when minor-league camp opens. ... **Dallas Braden**, also pitching today, will start the third Cactus League game.

## Veteran arms offer A's sensible options

### Tomko, Jennings signings not a reaction to health issues

By Tom Singer / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- It is reasonable to assume red lights and uh-oh flares went up among A's fans late Sunday when the club announced the signings of a pair of veteran right-handers.

That might have been a natural reaction among followers of a team that entered Spring Training with a trio of pitchers seeking to resume careers following a season lost to injury.

Are Ben Sheets or Justin Duchscherer or Joey Devine giving off warning signs? Is that why Oakland general manager Billy Beane had to reach out to Jason Jennings and to Brett Tomko?

(a) Insurance, or merely (b) ingenuity?

Relax, and go with (b).

Sheets is coming along ideally, remaining on the accelerated path back from elbow surgery, penciled in to start Oakland's Cactus League home opener, Friday against the Brewers.

And it is no secret that Duchscherer and Devine are both on slower tracks, very long shots to be able to assume their roles in the rotation and bullpen, respectively, at the start of the season. Under those uncertain circumstances, adding two experienced arms only made sense.

Even with everyone in perfect health and on an unobstructed path to the season, pitching isn't like ice cream. You can't have too much of it.

Complicating Duchscherer's fight back from an elbow surgery and depression, he was sidelined by acute lower-back pains that necessitated a nerve ablation procedure, performed last Tuesday.

The doctor's immediate recommendation was that the pitcher not step back on a mound for two weeks. Even if able to resume throwing then, Duchscherer would be three weeks behind everyone else.

Devine, also making his way back from elbow surgery, is "throwing at 85 percent," according to A's manager Bob Geren, who said, "It's 50-50 he'll be ready to go at the start of the season, or shortly after."

Thus it seemed only prudent to secure a couple of guys who have been high-end pitchers, when they have been healthy.

"We didn't necessarily sign Jennings due to the situations with Duke and Devine," Geren said Monday, as the rain clouds withdrew from the Valley and only sunshine flooded the fields. "I thought he pitched very well last season, and he's a good pitcher who was available.

"And Tomko is our Bedard," Geren added, referring to the Mariners' re-signing of lefty Erik Bedard, who isn't expected to return to the mound until June off shoulder surgery last August.

Tomko's impressive late-season stint in Oakland was derailed by an irritated nerve after six starts, of which the 36-year-old had won four with a 2.95 ERA.

"He pitched well for us last year, and I talked to him on-and-off during the winter. He was on our radar all along," Geren said.

While Tomko reported to Oakland's Minor League complex and will continue to work his way back there -- a late-May return is considered the earliest -- Jennings quickly checked into the big league camp and had his first bullpen session Monday.

Jennings, 31 and eight years removed from being the National League's Rookie of the Year, chose the A's offer over several other teams which made him offers -- but not because of any overt concerns about Duchscherer or Devine, whose absences obviously would create his opening.

"They do know I can step in for a couple of starts if someone goes down," Jennings said. "And after pitching out of the bullpen for the first time last year, I can do that, too. I'm pretty much open to both."

Before going 2-14 as a starter in 2007-08 with the Astros and the Rangers -- who converted him into a crack long reliever last season -- Jennings had an admirable six-season run in the pitching Death Valley of Colorado. Rockies pitchers aren't famous for hauling in awards, but Jennings ran away with 2002 rookie honors and still ranks as that franchise's second all-time top winner with 58.

"They didn't quite say whether they're looking at me to start or stay in relief," Jennings said of the A's, "but I have an opportunity to do both. I feel healthy, like I'll be able to pitch the way I know how.

"I think I offer the type of experience any team can use."

His most important offer, however, is that of security. Ordinarily, the bullpen isn't playing musical chairs; all the seats are taken by Andrew Bailey, Brad Ziegler, Michael Wuerz, Craig Breslow, Brad Kilby, Jerry Blevins -- and Devine.

Having Jennings in camp, and Tomko in the wings, at the very least affords Geren and pitching coach Curt Young to bring Devine and Duchscherer along slowly, smartly, not rashly.

The first of two intrasquad games is Tuesday. Cactus League play begins Thursday. Although as a fresh camp arrival who has not yet been formally scheduled for an outings, Jennings will make several appearances before either Devine or Duchscherer surface. So it will be an interesting progression to monitor.

## Olympic hockey fever sticks with A's

### Gold-medal thriller stirs patriotic, competitive juices

By Tom Singer / MLB.com 3/1/2010

PHOENIX -- They were scattered throughout the Valley by the time Zach Parise willed the deflected puck into the net and the game into breathtaking overtime.

So the Oakland A's pitchers captivated by Olympic hockey erupted into celebration alone, yet in tune with an entire nation. And did so fervently.

"I just jumped off my couch, yelling, I was so excited," Brad Ziegler said. "Anytime we have a team playing for national honor, I really get into it. There is so much grit and passion.

"When you see someone competing for your country ... I'll always be there supporting them as much as I can."

"What a great game!" exclaimed Jerry Blevins, replaying in his mind Canada's eventual 3-2 overtime victory over the United States in the Olympics' gold-medal game. "As much as I was disappointed by the outcome, you can't fault the U.S. team for how hard they played."

"Of course," Michael Wuertz said, "we're going to have to hear about that all year from players from Canada.

The A's do not have any Canadian natives in their Spring Training camp -- none of the 20 who played in the Majors last season -- so they'll be spared any up-close lip.

Nor do any of them have a personal history with hockey. But the Midwest natives, among them pitching coach Curt Young from Michigan, were among the most into the Vancouver spectacle, which also stirred their patriotic and competitive juices. However, interest in the game cut across geographic lines -- Texan Brett Anderson and Andrew Bailey, from New Jersey, were also among those stricken with hockey fever.

"I'm from Minnesota," Wuertz said, "and hockey's a pretty big thing there. And for a guy from Minnesota [Parise hails from Minneapolis] to score the goal that sends a gold-medal game into overtime, that's one of the greatest things in the world."

Ziegler, a product of Kansas, admitted to being only a quadrennial hockey fan. NHL ... never mind.

"But anytime there is an international challenge for the United States, I get wrapped up in it," Ziegler said. "When I see the red, white and blue uniform, I get really passionate."

An audible buzz went through camp Sunday as persistent rains made it obvious that workouts would be abbreviated, freeing the A's to settle in front of televisions by the 1:30 p.m. faceoff.

"We watched the first period here [in the clubhouse of Phoenix Municipal Stadium], then scattered to watch the rest of the game in our apartments," Wuertz said. "It was amazing to see a team that had been together for ... what, two weeks ... get that far."

"It says a lot when the goalie of the silver-medal team [Ryan Miller] is named MVP of the whole tournament," Blevins said.

In pointing out one of the appeals of Olympic hockey, Wuertz inadvertently touched on the issue endangering baseball's Olympic future.

"You had players who are NHL teammates playing against each other on the U.S. and Canadian teams. That's what makes it so tremendous," Wuertz said.

For baseball to do likewise, of course, would necessitate a similar suspension of the regular season.

"It will be interesting, if they'd ever agree to such a break," said Wuertz, conceding that was a big question not answered easily even in the afterglow of a model international competition.

None of the A's could begrudge Canadians' pride over being the first host country to snare hockey gold since Lake Placid in 1980.

Ziegler was a year old for that Miracle on Ice.

"But I've seen the movie and documentaries," he said, eyes growing wide. "That was a lot different, with the team made up of a bunch of unknown amateurs ... and for them to do that ... it was one of the greatest achievements in U.S. sports history."

The A's came close to seeing the sequel live. Comparable underdogs in the American League West, they have found some of their inspiration.

## **Spander: A's deflect distractions to concentrate on baseball**

By: Art Spander, Special to The Examiner

SAN FRANCISCO — This is about the other team from the Bay — the one which chooses to put faded tarps on a third of the seats of its stadium, the one which makes us remember the way it was and causes us to think it never will be that way again.

This is about the would-be-San-Jose-but-shouldn't-leave-Oakland A's.

There they were Monday, in their great-looking home whites, posing for photo day, not worrying about small-market desperation or an owner so intent on shifting the franchise he won't consider talking to similarly inflexible officials from the area where the team has been more than 40 years.

Baseball: That's what the baseball players were thinking about, and only baseball. As is proper.

"You always have something to prove," said Ben Sheets, the pitcher to whom the A's gave \$10 million after arm surgery — a contract that's a fifth of the franchise payroll — and who has a lot to prove.

Sheets is not exactly this year's Matt Holliday, but there is much in common — a player whose location beyond July (meaning current club or different club) is absolutely connected to the team's location (meaning place in the standings).

"Oh absolutely," said Billy Beane, the general manager. "Ben knows that. We know that. Ideally that's not the case, but if a guy like Ben's out there and you don't do it, yeah, I don't think there's any hiding of the possibility.

"Saying anything else would be disingenuous. We got him because we're hoping he can help these young guys, help this club take a step forward."

Billy Beane, aka Mr. Moneyball, once turned flax into, if not gold, then a playoff contender. But now the other teams are using his ideas in conjunction with something he is unable to use: cash.

"We've seen a significant shift in valuation of skills," said Beane. "Ten, 11 years ago we used to have a bunch of big, slow guys who hit home runs and got on base. Guess what? Those guys are the highest paid in the game right now. A younger Matt Stairs — finding that sort of power cheaply — would be paid much more money now."

So it's money ball, not Moneyball.

And for the A's, with Coco Crisp and Rajai Davis, it's laying down a sacrifice bunt and stealing a base, not that Beane believes in that style.

"Listen," he said, "if I thought there was a correlation between bunting and scoring runs, then we would do that. But there is no correlation. What we want to do is score runs anyway we can."

And keep the other team from doing the same. With Sheets, if he meets the challenge; Justin Duchscherer, if he's healthy; Trevor Cahill, if he keeps improving; and Andrew Bailey, Josh Outman and Brad Ziegler, the A's appear to have a greater chance of succeeding that way.

"Our payroll's in the mid-50s," said Beane. "Some of our competitors in the league are four times that."



Manager Bob Geren can only work what we has, a reality as evident as the bucket in the middle of his office at Phoenix Stadium.

"The roof leaks," said Geren.

For the A's, better the roof than the bullpen.

## **Crisp learns from idol Rickey Henderson**

PHOENIX (AP) — Coco Crisp never saw Rickey Henderson play in the Oakland Coliseum, even though he spent parts of his summers visiting relatives in nearby Richmond.

That didn't stop the young Crisp from wanting to play like him and from wanting to collect every baseball card ever produced of Henderson.

These days Crisp is getting tips from the famed base stealer and leadoff hitter. It made him a little bit nervous at first. Now he's trying to absorb everything he can from Henderson.

"My goal as a kid was to go out and find every Rickey Henderson baseball card," Crisp said Monday. "It got to be kind of a grind, but I still have most of them. There's been several more produced after I stopped collecting them."

Crisp, who didn't play after June 12 last season because of surgery on both shoulders, particularly found Henderson's lesson on sliding head first informative.

"He gave us pointers on a few things and that was one of them," Crisp said. "Basically it takes pressure off the body by getting lower and pushing into the slide rather than jumping into it."

Crisp signed a \$5.25 million, one-year contract with Oakland because he wanted to play for a team in California, because he had family in the area and because "this is where I hit my first home run ever" -- a tennis ball he hit over the fence of a Richmond park.

His shoulders feel fine, though Crisp will likely be used as a designated hitter early in spring games.

"Injuries are always frustrating and it was a tough decision to make not to continue playing," Crisp said. "Normally I would just play hurt, and if it were one shoulder, I would have. I couldn't do it with both shoulders hurting."

He hit .228 with three home runs and 14 RBIs in 49 games for the Kansas City Royals, who declined an option and paid a buyout. Crisp can play all three outfield positions but primarily is a center fielder, where the A's plan to use him.

"It was Rickey, Ken Griffey Jr., Ozzie Smith and Brett Butler," Crisp said of his childhood heroes. "They all had different skill sets which made it fun for me to watch. I was a little nervous talking to Rickey at first but now I feel fortunate. I'm able to sit down and talk with him, not just say 'hi' to a favorite player, but listen to talk about his experiences. It's an exciting time for me."

Notes: A's manager Bob Geren announced that RHP Trevor Cahill would start Thursday's spring opener against the Cubs in Mesa. He'll be opposed by Randy Wells. Clayton Mortensen, Jerry Blevins, Brad Kilby and Lenny DiNardo are also scheduled to pitch. ... A's radio announcer Vince Cotroneo recorded about 30 promos in succession for the team's 15 affiliate stations. He said his record is 180 "Peter Pan Peanut Butter" promos that were used nationwide in 1990.

## **Oakland A's MLN: Spring Camp Notes**

---

Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Mar 1, 2010

In one week, pitchers and catchers will report to the Oakland A's minor league spring training camp. In advance of the start of camp, we have news and notes on whether players such as Sean Doolittle will report to camp on time, if Fautino De Los Santos will be pitching out of the rotation or the 'pen, and if some of the A's youngest prospects will have a chance to play for a full-season affiliate.

## Youth Movement In Kane County

Generally, the Oakland A's have filled the roster of their low-A affiliate, the [Kane County Cougars](#), with players the team drafted out of college the season before. Occasionally, when the A's have had a particularly precocious high school draft pick, they have sent that player to Kane County, as well. [Trevor Cahill](#), [Jared Lansford](#), [Craig Italiano](#), [Vince Mazzaro](#) and [Matt Sulentic](#) are recent examples of high school draft picks who went to Kane County at the start of their first full professional seasons.

The Cougars may have another wave of young prospects on their roster in 2010. Two of the A's most high-profile draft picks in 2009 were high schoolers [Max Stassi](#) (fourth round) and [Jan Krol](#) (seventh round). Both Stassi and Krol signed late in the draft pick signing period last season, but they acquitted themselves well in limited action with short-season Vancouver during the final weeks of August and played well during the A's Instructional League camp.

According to A's Director of Player Development Keith Lieppman, both Stassi and Krol will be battling this spring for spots on the Cougars' roster. Stassi is currently in big league camp, so he will have a leg up on the competition for a spot with the Cougars. If Krol makes the Kane County squad, he will be pitching in his own backyard, as the left-handed pitcher is from Naperville, Illinois. Both Stassi and Krol will be 19 for most of the 2010 season.

The Cougars may also have some youth in the outfield. Despite struggling to the tune of a .214 average with short-season Vancouver in 2009, [Rashun Dixon](#) is in the mix to break camp with Kane County, according to Lieppman. Dixon was the MVP of the A's Instructional League last fall and he had a strong season with the A's Rookie League club in 2008. Dixon won't turn 20 until late August.

Another teenager likely to be on the Cougars' roster this season is 19-year-old shortstop [Nino Leyja](#). Leyja began last season with short-season Vancouver, but when a spate of injuries struck the Kane County infield, he was promoted to Kane County. Leyja hit .231 with the Cougars last season in a part-time role. He is likely to have a more regular role with the team in 2010.

The A's most high-profile teenage prospect, [Michael Ynoa](#), isn't likely to be in Kane County this season, however. According to Lieppman, Ynoa is expected to pitch for the A's Rookie League club in Arizona. If Ynoa exceeds expectations during regular and extended spring training, he would head to Vancouver.

---

## Rehab Updates

Throughout the off-season, we have been tracking the progress of a number of A's prospects who finished the 2009 season with injuries. Below are updates on the status of some of those players.

According to Lieppman, first-baseman/outfielder [Sean Doolittle](#) and left-handers [Justin Marks](#) and Bobby Cramer are expected to report minor league camp on time. Doolittle is coming off of knee injury which required surgery in October. That he is reporting to camp on-time qualifies as good news, as it means he is likely to start the regular season on an active roster.

Marks will also have the opportunity to start the regular season on an active roster. The A's second pick (third round) last season made only one appearance after signing with the team before injuring his groin. He missed the rest of the regular season and all of the Instructional League. Despite having less than an inning of professional experience, Marks could break camp with a full-season affiliate. He was considered a polished prospect when he was drafted out of [Louisville](#).

Cramer was limited to 62.2 innings last season thanks to arm problems, but he is set to report to minor league camp on-time. The southpaw had a 3.88 ERA for Sacramento, Midland and Stockton last season. He recently competed for the Indios de Mayaguez in the Mexican Winter League and had a 2.75 ERA in 19.2 innings.

The news isn't quite as promising for A's prospects [Dusty Coleman](#) and [Andrew Carignan](#). According to Lieppman, both Coleman and Carignan will report to camp, but both are expected to start the regular season at extended spring training.

Coleman is rehabbing a fractured wrist that he had surgically repaired at the conclusion of the 2009 season. He played through wrist pain for much of last season and posted a .247 average with nine homers for Kane County and Stockton. Carignan missed virtually the entire 2009 season with arm problems. The closer had 28 saves and a 2.01 ERA for Stockton and Midland in 2008.

---

## Fautino Heading To The Bullpen

After missing most of the past two seasons recovering from May 2008 Tommy John surgery, Fautino De Los Santos will be moving to the bullpen in 2010, according to Lieppman. De Los Santos, who is currently in the A's big league camp, will head either to Stockton or Midland at the end of camp. De Los Santos was one of the top pitching prospects in the A's system at the time of his elbow surgery. The 24-year-old has never pitched above the High-A level. He was added to the A's 40-man roster this off-season.

