

A's News Clips, Friday, April 30, 2010

Injuries, along with losses, are mounting for Oakland A's

By Joe Stiglich_Oakland Tribune

Each day seems to present the A's a new concern on the injury front.

Thursday night's unwelcome news arrived in the fourth inning of a 6-3 loss to the Toronto Blue Jays, as right-hander Justin Duchscherer left the game after injuring his left hip.

Duchscherer was in visible pain after missing with a 1-2 pitch to Jose Bautista. He was visited by manager Bob Geren and assistant trainer Walt Horn but remained in after a lengthy conference. He left the game after Bautista singled a few pitches later.

Duchscherer had his right hip operated on twice — ending his 2007 and 2008 seasons prematurely. He said the pain in his left hip began only this season, but he'd been able to pitch through it.

"It started a couple of starts ago but it was manageable," he said. "Today was the first time it was really painful."

Duchscherer (2-1) missed all of last season while recovering from elbow surgery and dealing with clinical depression. But he hadn't allowed an earned run in any of his previous three starts entering Thursday.

Asked if his left hip feels anything like what he felt previously in his right hip, Duchscherer said it was "almost identical." He'll undergo an MRI.

That development is of greater concern than the A's third consecutive loss to start this road trip.

Toronto catcher John Buck homered three times and had five RBIs, sending a charge through the 10,721 fans at the Rogers Centre.

Immediately after Duchscherer left, Buck greeted left-hander Jerry Blevins with a three-run shot — Buck's second homer of the game — to put the Blue Jays on top for good, 5-3.

The A's made 64 disabled list transactions from 2007-09, including an Oakland-record 25 in 2008. But they're easily outpacing that number this season, and the calendar still reads April.

Catcher Kurt Suzuki, who's missed the past five games, is expected to go on the DL today with a strain in his rib cage. He would account for the A's 10th DL transaction already.

Over the past nine days alone, the A's have put pitcher Brett Anderson, second baseman Mark Ellis and outfielder Travis Buck on the DL, and Suzuki and Duchscherer are likely to follow.

"We've been having it the past three years," Suzuki said of the A's injury problems. "This is my first time (being hurt), and it's not fun. It's frustrating and having to sit in the dugout, knowing you have no control over anything, is really irritating."

The A's have shown signs of being a competitor in a division that seems wide open this season. Though they're now just one game above .500, they have spent 23 straight days with at least a share of first place in the American League West.

But the starting rotation has been their strength, and potentially missing both Anderson and Duchscherer for extended periods would be a huge blow.

"We've got five months left in the regular season," Geren said. "We're going to do everything we can to stay positive, get these guys that are in there (playing well), and get the guys who are injured back on the field again. And we'll be fine."

Jake Fox's two-run double in the third helped the A's take a 3-0 lead. But Buck and Travis Snider hit back-to-back homers off Duchscherer in the bottom half of the third, snapping Duchscherer's string of 21 straight innings without allowing an earned run.

TODAY: A's (Trevor Cahill 0-0) at Blue Jays (Brandon Morrow 1-2), 4:07 p.m. TV: CSNCA. Radio: 860-AM; 1640-AM

A's update: Trevor Cahill will replace injured Brett Anderson in starting rotation

By Joe Stiglich_Oakland Tribune

Cahill replaces Anderson in the starting rotation

TORONTO — Trevor Cahill didn't have a long wait in returning to the major leagues.

The right-hander was announced as today's starter against the Toronto Blue Jays in place of Brett Anderson, who was placed on the 15-day disabled list Tuesday.

Cahill could have an extended stay in the rotation if he's effective, with Anderson expected to miss four to five weeks with a left forearm injury.

Vin Mazzaro was the other candidate to be promoted and, like Cahill, has pitched well for Triple-A Sacramento.

"He did a nice job for us last year," manager Bob Geren said of Cahill. " "... They were both good candidates, and we went with Trevor."

Mazzaro is a logical choice to join the rotation if Justin Duchscherer is put on the DL.

Cahill spent the entire 2009 season in the A's rotation as a rookie and went 10-13. But Gio Gonzalez beat him out for the fifth starter's spot this spring.

A stress reaction in his left shoulder hindered Cahill, and he began the season on the DL before being optioned to Sacramento.

Cahill flew to Toronto on Thursday but didn't join the team at the Rogers Centre for a 6-3 loss to the Blue Jays. Catcher Josh Donaldson, who was playing well for Sacramento, also flew to Toronto and is expected to be called up today for his first big league duty. Starting catcher Kurt

Suzuki appears headed for the DL with a rib cage injury.

The A's will have to clear a 25-man roster spot for Cahill today and also would need to clear a 40-man roster spot for Donaldson.

Donaldson, 24, was one of four players the A's received from the Chicago Cubs in the Rich Harden/Chad Gaudin trade of July 2008.

At the time of that trade, the A's considered pitcher Sean Gallagher the marquee acquisition. But some scouts said then that Donaldson was the hidden gem in the deal.

Toronto catcher John Buck hit a solo homer in the third, a three-run shot in the fourth and another solo shot in the sixth. It was the 15th time in Blue Jays history a player had homered three times in a game. "He's always had power," Geren said of Buck. "If you don't locate the ball, he can do damage."

Center fielder Coco Crisp will get his fractured left pinkie finger X-rayed again May 7. He estimates he's between 10 days and two weeks away from starting up full baseball activity.

Chin Music: Justin Duchscherer update

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 6:05PM

To summarize what we know so far about the injury that knocked Justin Duchscherer from tonight's game in the fourth inning: It was announced that Duchscherer hurt his left hip. That's interesting, because it's his right hip that's given him problems over the years. His 2007 and 2008 seasons ended prematurely because of right hip surgery. Last season, his physical problems involved his right elbow and, later in the season, his back.

We'll hopefully know more after the game. You can talk about Eric Chavez's shaky health history, and the A's lack of power in their lineup, but any kind of long-term injury to Duchscherer (to go with fellow starter Brett Anderson's injury) is devastating to the A's chances this season. We know the A's won't score a ton of runs, so they'll go as far as their starting pitching carries them.

Remember, you can follow me at twitter.com/joestiglich to get brief, more immediate updates. I'll keep tweeting tonight as I get more information, and I'll try to update the blog as much as possible ...

Chin Music: Trevor Cahill to start tomorrow night for A's; catcher Josh Donaldson also joining roster

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 4/29/2010 3:52PM

It's been an entertaining scene here at the Rogers Center in Toronto, where the retractable roof first was closed, then began to open, then started to close again, and now is open. It's pretty good weather to play the A's-Jays game in open air, but there was a nearby fire blowing black smoke toward the stadium, so I think that's why they were thinking of closing the roof.

Equally tough to figure out was the A's starting pitcher for tomorrow night. The team still hasn't made an official announcement, but I've got it confirmed that right-hander Trevor Cahill and catcher Josh Donaldson will be called up (this news was first reported by Comcast SportsNet's Mychael Urban. So Cahill will start tomorrow night's game, and Donaldson will get his first taste of the big leagues because Kurt Suzuki likely is headed to the DL with an intercostal strain in his rib cage. The A's will still have to send a player down to make room for both additions.

—Rajai Davis returns to the lineup but is batting ninth, with Cliff Pennington still leading off. Adam Rosales, one of the A's hotter hitters of late, moves up to the fifth spot.

—It's looking like we'll get a very small crowd tonight. There was a piece in today's Toronto Sun about the poor home crowds for Blue Jays games (though they're pulling a great TV audience). There was much written in Tampa Bay about the Rays' poor crowds as well. So the Oakland Coliseum isn't the only place with lots of empty seats. And speaking of that topic, check out Brad Ziegler's open letter to A's fans. Very well-written and worth reading ...

Tonight's lineups

A's: Pennington SS; Barton 1B; Sweeney RF; Kouzmanoff 3B; Rosales 2B; Fox DH; Powell C; Patterson LF; Davis CF; Duchschere RHP

Jays: Lewis LF; Hill 2B; Lind DH; Wells CF; Overbay 1B; Gonzalez SS; Bautista 3B; Buck C; Snider RF; Romero LHP.

Study: New ballpark would bring billions of dollars to Oakland, Alameda County

By Chris Metinko, Oakland Tribune

Claiming they are still in the game when it comes to keeping the A's in Oakland, city officials and others trying to keep the team in town released results of a study Wednesday claiming a new waterfront baseball park is worth millions to the city's coffers and billions to the local economy.

The study, commissioned by the nonprofit group Let's Go Oakland, claims that building a new 36,000-seat, \$500 million baseball-only stadium in the city's Jack London Square area immediately would create 1,661 new construction jobs in Oakland while also generating about \$2.6 billion in total economic activity for the city over the next 30 years.

"We really need and want the A's to stay in Oakland," said City Council President Jane Brunner. "The real reason we need to have the Oakland A's is for economic development."

Last December, city officials unveiled three sites in Jack London Square — Howard Terminal, Victory Court and Jack London Square North — where they believe a new ballpark for the Oakland A's can be built. At that time, city leaders also listed the current Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum site as a potential area for a new stadium, although the study released Wednesday did not analyze the economic impact on the area for that site.

Let's Go Oakland commissioned the firm Gruen Gruen + Associates to perform the study and analyze the impacts on the city of Oakland and Alameda County as a whole.

The study's findings included that the city would save 885 current jobs related to baseball operations at the Coliseum while creating an additional 162 jobs. It also estimates property value near Jack London Square would be increased \$4.7 billion in 30 years with a new stadium there as opposed to not having a stadium there.

Due to that increase in property values, the study suggests an additional \$930 million in property tax funds would come to local agencies in the next 30 years, including \$594 million to Oakland and its redevelopment agency. Alameda County would receive \$79 million more in property tax money.

In contrast, the study claims the negative economic impacts associated with the A's leaving would be 900 lost jobs — full and part time — and \$75 million in lost total economic activity for Oakland. Alameda County stands to lose 950 jobs and \$83.5 million in total economic output, according to the study.

Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums said there is another reason to keep the team besides dollar signs, saying that the team "speaks to the spirit and character of Oakland" and that the city has become synonymous with baseball.

Dellums said he believes the next "three to four months will be very critical" in determining the A's future home. He said he believes Oakland has an upper hand because of the Giants' territorial rights in Santa Clara County and because Oakland offers a chance to build a stadium near mass transit, cutting down on car emissions.

"Whether Major League Baseball and the commissioner of baseball and the owner of the A's see it that way," he said, "we'll find that out as time goes on."

Major League Baseball has created a special committee to determine the best city to land the A's. That task force has yet to make any of its findings public.

A's spokesman Bob Rose said the team has no comment on the study released Wednesday and will not comment on stadium issues until the Major League Baseball committee releases its findings.

A's sign policy infringes on fans' freedom, city attorney says

By Chris Metinko, Oakland Tribune

While the A's are battling it out for first place in the American League West, the team may be facing another battle with the city of Oakland over its policy on fans' homemade signs at the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum.

In a letter to Oakland police Chief Anthony Batts — as well as A's, Coliseum, county and city officials — Oakland City Attorney John Russo said he "strongly (urges Batts) to instruct his officers to refuse to enforce the A's unconstitutional sign policy" at the Coliseum because the policy may not be legal and may leave the city on the hook for damages resulting from its enforcement.

The memo comes after Jorge Leon, 25, of Oakland, was removed from the stadium during the April 7 game against the Seattle Mariners for refusing to put away a sign that said sign that read, "Wolff Lied. He Never Tried."

The sign is in reference to A's co-owner Lew Wolff, who has made little secret of his belief the team's future lies in San Jose. Some Oakland fans question whether he ever wanted to keep the team in the city.

A's spokesman Bob Rose said the team has had a policy in place for more than 30 years banning any signs with negative personal messages and prohibits signs in bad taste aimed at a specific person. Rose added that the team has received Russo's letter and is reviewing it but currently has no comment.

Russo said that because the Coliseum is a publicly owned stadium, it is a "limited public forum." Therefore, Russo wrote in the memo, "the A's may not impose restrictions against personal attacks or bad taste — unless the restrictions are explained by a legally compelling reason."

Those reasons would include if the sign could incite violence, lawless action, or contains threats or obscenities. Russo said the Wolff sign in question did none of those things and only criticized the team ownership.

"The mere criticism of the A's themselves — or their management — I do not believe will pass constitutional muster," Russo said.

Along with the policy's being unconstitutional, Russo said, the city also could be held liable for damages resulting from enforcement of the policy.

Russo points to two times when courts struck down guidelines governing what signs could and could not be displayed at stadiums because compelling reasons could not be made for the policies. In one of the cases, *Aubrey v. City of Cincinnati*, the city was held responsible for damages because of its relationship to the police.

Russo said the same could happen in Oakland if city police help remove a fan with a sign the A's deem in bad taste. Oakland police did help remove Leon from the stadium in the April 7 incident.

Leon, who said security told him the sign had to be removed because it included Wolff's name, said he is tempted to bring out the sign again, or another one he has that reads, "Lew Wolff Hates Oakland." A banner with that message was marched around the Coliseum on April 5.

"Yeah, I'm definitely thinking about it," he said.

Russo said he hopes the city and the A's can work together to craft a policy that would protect free speech.

"We're willing to sit down with the A's and fashion a constitutionally sound sign policy," Russo said. "What they have now is unconstitutional."

Suzuki heads for DL, Duchscherer may follow

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Really? *Really?*

Oakland's crowded injury train gained another passenger Thursday, this time starter Justin Duchscherer, who came out in the fourth inning of the A's 6-3 loss to the Blue Jays with a left hip problem.

With a fixed, grim expression on his face after the game, Duchscherer left no doubt that he's concerned, saying that the injury feels "almost identical" to one that necessitated two surgeries on his right hip.

The A's are already expected to place their top everyday player, catcher Kurt Suzuki, on the disabled list today with a rib-cage strain. Trevor Cahill is starting tonight's game in place of talented young left-hander Brett Anderson (forearm strain).

Those three alone - Duchscherer, Suzuki, Anderson - would be significant enough, but the A's are also missing second baseman Mark Ellis (hamstring), top set-up man Michael Wuertz (rotator-cuff tendinitis), center fielder Coco Crisp (fractured pinkie) and left fielder Travis Buck (oblique).

And there's more at Disaster Central; the DL total less than a month into the season will be nine with Suzuki's addition and would hit double digits if Duchscherer's injury warrants a DL stay.

"We've had it the past three years I've been here," Suzuki said. "It's my first time doing it, and it's not fun. ... It's a little irritating."

Duchscherer added, "It's frustrating. We're not here to be hurt, we're here to play games."

The deluge appears to be taking a toll on the A's, who got off to a fast start but have dropped three in a row and fallen into a first-place tie with the Angels.

Oakland is on pace for 66 DL uses this season, more than doubling the team record. Since the start of 2007, the A's have used the DL 74 times. Duchscherer has accounted for a portion of that with five stints in five years. He said this hip discomfort - which feels like "a sharp, quick jolt" - surfaced several starts ago but had been manageable with treatment.

With one out in the fourth Thursday, Duchscherer looked uncomfortable after throwing a pitch to Jose Bautista, and manager Bob Geren went to the mound along with a trainer. Duchscherer stayed, hoping to get out of the inning so he could get loosened up in the trainer's room, but after Bautista singled, Geren went and got him.

Jerry Blevins took over, given all the time he needed to warm up, and surrendered a three-run homer to the first man he faced, Toronto catcher John Buck, who homered a career-high three times.

An inning before his exit, Duchscherer gave up home runs on consecutive pitches to Buck and Travis Snider, ending his string of innings without allowing an earned run at 21.

Suzuki heads for DL with rib-cage strain

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Kurt Suzuki is Oakland's most important player, excelling behind the plate, working well with the team's pitchers and also producing in the batter's box.

Now, the A's will have to be without their catcher for another week and a half - an MRI exam showed that Suzuki has an intercostal (rib-cage) strain and he is expected to go on the disabled list today.

It's thought that Suzuki will need only the minimum time on the DL in order to get healthy, putting his return at May 11. Without Suzuki in the lineup, the A's have lost three of their past four games.

Minor-league catcher **Josh Donaldson** was en route to Toronto with tonight's starter, **Trevor Cahill**, on Thursday afternoon.

Donaldson, 24, was acquired in the **Rich Harden** deal with the Cubs and he has a team-high 19 RBIs at Sacramento. Oakland will need to make a move to place him on the 40-man roster; putting reliever **Joey Devine** on the 60-day DL is one possibility. To get Donaldson on the big-league roster, the team is likely to send down infielder **Steve Tolleson** or outfielder **Matt Carson**.

Cahill is 1-0 with a 1.04 ERA at Sacramento, though he missed the first two weeks with a sore left (nonpitching) shoulder.

Vin Mazzaro, who had been the A's other option to pitch tonight, could now slot quite easily into **Justin Duchscherer's** spot next week if needed. He started at Sacramento last night, so he'd be exactly on turn.

Briefly: Reliever **Michael Wuertz** is scheduled to make a rehab appearance - probably his final one - for Triple-A Sacramento tonight. ... **Ryan Sweeney** has reached base in all 22 games he's played this season. ... **Andrew Bailey's** scoreless streak is at a career-high 17 innings. ... **Adam Rosales** was moved up to fifth in the lineup and went 1-for-3 with a walk. He's hitting .327. ... **Rajai Davis** was back in the lineup and hit ninth.

Giants, A's fans are most plugged in

Gwen Knapp, San Francisco Chronicle

During an impressive April on the field, the Giants and A's generated the best online buzz in Major League Baseball, according to a study of attitudes expressed in Internet forums.

The Nielsen Co., famous as the source of TV ratings, used a formula based on keywords indicating positive, negative or neutral feelings about a product to arrive at its findings. The study, the first of its kind, assessed a variety of blog posts and comments, message-board chatter and tweets from April 4 through April 25.

In the study, the ratings could have potentially ranged from a plus-5 to a minus-5. The Giants finished first with a 4.5 in the "overall sentiment score," and the A's took second with a 4.2. Cleveland, with a 0.9, narrowly beat the Red Sox for last place, while the presumably despised Yankees finished fifth from the bottom.

The formula relies on automated screening for a variety of words that could be construed as positive (good, great, like, love, well) or negative (hate, ineffectual, poorly). The method also takes into consideration whether, for example, the word "not" appears in conjunction with the word "good." A positive or negative expression about a particular team had to occur within six to seven words to be counted as a plus or minus.

Twenty percent of the comments about the Giants were positive, while 1 percent counted as negative. The A's had 18 percent in the positive category and 2 percent in the negative.

The company concedes that misspellings, emoticons and nuanced sarcasm cannot be taken into account in the analysis. The formula has safeguards to screen out posts about tigers in a post about zoos as opposed to the upper-case variety in Detroit, or cardinals in Rome versus the Albert Pujols crew, said Aaron Lewis, a Nielsen publicist.

The research was uncommissioned. Nielsen did the work on a suggestion from the Wall Street Journal, according to Lewis, in part to showcase its capacity for assessing online buzz about various products. Lewis said that the research would not be ongoing, but that the company might repeat it in other brief intervals.

A'S LEADING OFF

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Saving his strength: Andrew Bailey has had only two save opportunities this month. "With all the minor injuries I had during the spring, it's nice to start the season slow," he said. "It's nice to be able to play catch up."

Duchscherer leaves with hip injury

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Toronto 5:35PM

This is reaching ridiculous proportions: Justin Duchscherer left tonight's game in the fourth with what the A's are calling a left hip injury. Duchscherer has had two surgeries on his right hip, and he has been on the DL five times in his career.

If this requires a trip to the DL - and the way things are going for the A's, that's a good bet - it would be his sixth trip to the DL in five years.

It would also be 11 DL uses by Oakland, if Kurt Suzuki also goes on the DL tomorrow as expected.

What next?

The good news if there is any is that this is Vin Mazzaro's night to start. In the previous Drumbeat from all of 90 minutes ago, I mentioned that he'll get his chance soon if he keeps pitching so well. I didn't actually think that might mean next week.

Duchscherer hurt; A's bested by Jays

Righty leaves with hip injury; Oakland allows four homers

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

TORONTO -- An all-too familiar story lengthened Thursday when Justin Duchscherer took the mound against the Blue Jays.

Well, more like when the Oakland starter left the mound, actually.

And unfortunately for an already battered A's team, that time came well too early in an eventual 6-3 loss to Toronto at Rogers Centre.

The 31-year-old Duchscherer, who has fallen victim to the injury bug in each of the last five seasons, left Thursday's affair with one out in the fourth inning with what was deemed a strained left hip.

The pain, which he admitted initially surfaced a couple of starts ago, escalated on a 1-2 pitch to Jose Bautista in the frame. Duchscherer was visited by manager Bob Geren and an A's trainer before waving them away and surrendering a single to the Blue Jays third baseman a couple of pitches later.

"I threw a few pitches that didn't feel very good," Duchscherer said, "and then that one in particular -- it's hard to explain unless you feel it. ... It feels like a real sharp jolt.

"When they came out, I told them my hip was hurting, but I thought maybe if I could get a double play or get out of the inning, I could come in to get it stretched out or something. But every pitch after that was pretty much the same."

Lefty Jerry Blevins relieved the ailing Duchscherer with two on base and quickly surrendered a three-run homer to John Buck, who tallied three home runs in the game. As a result, Duchscherer was left with four runs attached to his name to go along with five hits, two walks and three strikeouts.

The A's righty surrendered half of those runs in the third, when he watched back-to-back home runs -- including Buck's first of the game -- leave the yard. At the same time, he put to rest a 21-inning streak of no earned runs allowed.

"I threw a curveball to Buck that I was waiting for to bounce," he said, "and then I threw a fastball that didn't sink or anything. Two pretty bad pitches that weren't in good locations."

Toronto tallied a total of four homers off an Oakland staff that entered the game having given up just 16, which was good for third best in the American League. The long balls, though, were of little discussion in a noticeably quiet clubhouse.

Rather, the long list of wounded A's players conjured much talk following the team's season high-tying third straight loss.

"It's frustrating," a teary-eyed Duchscherer said. "We're not here to be hurt. We're here to play games. I've been through this enough to know that the only thing I can do is stay positive. That's what I'm going to do."

The A's pitcher said he will receive an MRI, and while he's hoping the injury is nothing serious, he can't help but think that the pain "feels identical" to that experienced in his surgically-repaired right hip.

"It started a couple starts ago, but it was manageable," Duchscherer said. "Today was the first time it was real painful. It wasn't bad before. It crept up on me a little bit, and I thought it wasn't a big deal.

"Hopefully it's nothing compared to what I had done on the other one."

The A's have already used the disabled list nine times this year -- the most recent addition being lefty Brett Anderson, who suffered a strain near his flexor tendon and isn't expected to return for at least five weeks.

Furthermore, Kurt Suzuki -- arguably the team's most prolific all-around player -- has been sidelined for five consecutive games with an intercostal strain in his left side. The A's catcher mentioned Thursday night he's "just going day by day with it" and waiting to hear if he's indeed headed for his first career DL stint.

"I've never dealt with something like this in my career," Suzuki said. "It's the first time I'm dealing with the possibility of missing a significant amount of time -- well, more time than I would like. It's really just a bad spot to have any kind of pain in. ... I don't know what the plan is for me."

Without Suzuki's bat in the lineup, the A's mustered just five hits off Toronto's pitching staff, led by starter Ricky Romero, on Thursday. The Blue Jays' lefty gave up three runs on four hits and four walks while striking out six through six innings.

Oakland failed to regain the lead after having jumped out, 3-0, following the first three frames. Kevin Kouzmanoff singled home Ryan Sweeney in the first, and Jake Fox added a two-run double in the third, but the A's put just four baserunners on board the rest of the game.

The club has now lost four of its last five while watching its pitching staff allow 30 runs during that period -- a time during which the trainer's room has suddenly turned into a packed house.

"It's baseball," Suzuki said. "It seems this has been happening the three years I've been here. It's not fun. It's frustrating having to sit in the dugout knowing you have no control over anything. It's a little irritating.

"We've obviously hit a bump in the road right now, but it's still early in the season. This is just going to make us stronger. We'll move forward and understand this is all part of the game."

Duchscherer exits with strained left hip

Righty has history of pelvic problems, to undergo MRI

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

TORONTO -- Maintaining a positive state of mind is a constant battle for Justin Duchscherer, who last year, missed time on the mound while recovering from a bout with clinical depression.

The A's right-hander will now have to continue fighting that much harder for those glass-half-full thoughts after leaving Thursday's 6-3 loss to Toronto with a strained left hip.

The 31-year-old Duchscherer, who admitted initially feeling the pain a couple of starts ago, felt it escalate on a 1-2 pitch to Jose Bautista with one out in the fourth in a 3-2 game. He was visited by manager Bob Geren and an A's trainer before waving them away and surrendering a single to the Blue Jays third baseman a couple of pitches later.

"I threw a few pitches that didn't feel very good," Duchscherer said, "and then that one in particular -- it's hard to explain unless you feel it. ... It feels like a real sharp jolt.

"When they came out, I told them my hip was hurting, but I thought maybe if I could get a double play or get out of the inning, I could come in to get it stretched out or something. But every pitch after that was pretty much the same."

Lefty Jerry Blevins relieved the ailing Duchscherer with two on base and quickly surrendered a three-run homer to John Buck, who tallied three home runs in the game. As a result, Duchscherer was left with four runs attached to his name to go along with five hits, two walks and three strikeouts.

Now, Duchscherer is set to undergo an MRI -- one he hopes doesn't reveal anything "compared to what I had done on the other one."

The "other one," of course, refers to the pitcher's right hip, which underwent surgery on July 11, 2007 and then again on Sept. 29, 2008. Unfortunately, as an emotional Duchscherer explained, the pain in his left hip "feels identical" to that experienced in his surgically-repaired one.

"It started a couple starts ago, but it was manageable," said Duchscherer, who has endured lengthy stints on the disabled list in each of the past five seasons. "Today was the first time it was real painful. It wasn't bad before. It crept up on me a little bit, and I thought it wasn't a big deal."

Oakland has already used the DL nine times this year -- the most recent addition being lefty Brett Anderson, who suffered a strain near his flexor tendon and isn't expected to return for at least five weeks.

Right-hander Trevor Cahill, who made a team-leading 32 starts as a rookie last year, will make his season debut Friday in Anderson's place after having started the season on the disabled list before being sent to Triple-A Sacramento.

The A's have yet to make a subsequent transaction, but Cahill flew to Toronto on Thursday night to join the team. His arrival was announced at the same time as Duchscherer's injury, which the club is hoping doesn't lead to yet another roster move.

In the event Duchscherer joins a handful of other teammates on the DL, though, the A's would likely recall righty Vin Mazzaro, who has given up just four earned runs in 19 1/3 innings for the River Cats.

However, a disappointed Duchscherer is still hopeful that won't be necessary.

"It's frustrating," he said. "We're not here to be hurt. We're here to play games. I've been through this enough to know that the only thing I can do is stay positive. That's what I'm going to do."

Young pitchers square off in Toronto

By Doug Miller / MLB.com

Two pitchers viewed as playing huge factors in the futures of their clubs will face off in Rogers Centre on Friday night.

For the visiting Oakland A's, who have been beset with injuries to their starting rotation of late, it'll be right-hander Trevor Cahill, who made close to a full season of big league starts last year before beginning this year in Triple-A Sacramento.

For the hometown Blue Jays, it'll be Brandon Morrow, who has seemingly righted himself in his last two starts after opening the year in a rough spell.

Cahill, 22, was named Friday's starter in place of promising lefty Brett Anderson, who suffered a strained flexor tendon and went on the 15-day disabled list this week. Cahill is familiar to A's fans after making the team out of Spring Training last year and going 10-13 with a 4.63 ERA in 178 2/3 innings.

He began this season on the DL with a left scapula stress reaction and was activated April 20 before being sent to Sacramento, where he made two starts and went 1-0 with a 1.04 ERA.

"He did a nice job for us last year," A's manager Bob Geren said. "He was in competition for the fifth starter spot right to the end in spring, and he was doing well in Sacramento. Our five had been doing pretty good, but now we need him. It was a pretty easy choice."

The Blue Jays will likely choose to get most of what they've gotten out of their hard-throwing young right-hander, Morrow, in his last two starts.

In 13 innings over that span, he's given up only two earned runs while fanning 16 batters. Then again, his propensity to miss bats doesn't always occur with strikeouts. Morrow issued free passes to six batters in his start last Sunday and was helped greatly by catcher Jose Molina, who threw out a career-high four baserunners.

"Overall, I thought I threw well, but I need to keep the pitch count down," Morrow said. "One of the ways to do that is to cut down on the walks."

A's: Duchscherer leaves early

Starter Justin Duchscherer left Thursday's game with one out in the fourth inning against the Blue Jays because of a strained left hip. Duchscherer, 31, has a history of problems with his right hip, which has been surgically repaired twice. ... Oakland has already used the disabled list nine times this year. ... In two career starts against Toronto, Cahill is 0-1 with a 6.75 ERA. He surrendered 13 hits and eight runs in a combined 10 2/3 innings vs. the Blue Jays last season.

Blue Jays: Buck goes deep thrice

Catcher John Buck had a career night Thursday, homering three times in the Jays' win over the A's. His first homer came on a 1-2 pitch from Duchscherer in the third inning, and in the fourth, he hit a 1-0 pitch from reliever Jerry Blevins for a three-run homer. In the sixth, Buck hit a 2-2 pitch out to center for his third homer, becoming the 15th player in Blue Jays history to launch at least three home runs in one game. The last three-homer game in the Majors was also completed by a Blue Jay when Adam Lind accomplished the feat last Sept. 29. The last catcher to do it was Victor Martinez for Cleveland on July 16, 2004. The last Jays catcher with three in one game was Darrin Fletcher on Aug. 27, 2000. ... Morrow, who came to Toronto in an offseason trade with Seattle, has had plenty of experience pitching against Oakland, going 2-0 against the Athletics with a 4.13 ERA over 32 2/3 career innings.

Worth noting

With their loss to the Jays on Thursday night, the A's are 12-11 with only one game left in April, so a Friday win can ensure that they have a winning first month of the season. Oakland has only had a winning April once in the last six years (16-11 in 2008). ... With their win over the A's on Thursday and starter Ricky Romero's six innings of three-run ball, the Blue Jays moved into first place in the American League with 15 quality starts this season. They had been tied at 14 with the A's.

Catcher Suzuki deemed day-to-day

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

TORONTO -- A change of scenery proved to be of no help for an ailing Kurt Suzuki, who missed his fifth consecutive game Thursday with what was deemed an intercostal strain in his left side.

Manager Bob Geren said the A's catcher was day-to-day, but before Oakland took on host Toronto for the first of a four-game set, reports surfaced that Minor League catcher Josh Donaldson was on his way to join the club -- a move that would signal a trip to the disabled list for Suzuki.

However, Geren mentioned nothing of a move and simply stated that the club will "wait and see how [Suzuki] is tomorrow" to determine his availability.

It appeared on Wednesday that Suzuki had recovered from the soreness in his left side, but he was scratched from the starting lineup less than an hour before first pitch in Tampa Bay. During the game, he underwent an MRI, which on Thursday, revealed the strain.

This marks the first time over the last three seasons that Suzuki has gone more than three straight games without starting at catcher. If a transaction is made, it would represent his first career stint on the DL.

Before being sidelined, the A's catcher was 4-for-9 with two home runs in his last two games. Meanwhile, both Jake Fox and Landon Powell have received starts behind the plate in Suzuki's stead.

Cahill to make first start on Friday

TORONTO -- The A's announced during Thursday's game against the Blue Jays that right-hander Trevor Cahill has been recalled from Triple-A Sacramento and will get his first start of the season Friday in Toronto.

Cahill, who began the year on the disabled list with a left scapula stress reaction, was activated April 20 and immediately sent to Sacramento, where he was 1-0 with a 1.04 ERA in two starts. He takes the rotation place of Brett Anderson, who suffered a strain near his flexor tendon and was placed on the 15-day DL earlier this week.

The 22-year-old Cahill spent the entire 2009 season in the A's starting rotation en route to posting a 10-13 record with a 4.63 ERA. He joined Anderson in making the jump from Double-A Midland to the big leagues, where he made 32 starts and compiled 178 2/3 innings.

Davis back in lineup, but batting ninth

TORONTO -- A familiar name returned to the A's starting lineup Thursday in a rather unfamiliar spot.

Rajai Davis, who didn't start the team's last three games after slumping into a 9-for-57 bout, was back in the lineup batting ninth for Oakland's first of a four-game set in Toronto.

It's a slot Davis has seen just 26 times since joining the A's in 2008. He was deemed Oakland's leadoff hitter at the start of the season, but his struggling ways -- combined with Cliff Pennington's hot bat -- influenced manager Bob Geren to place him at the bottom of the order.

"Hopefully, we'll get Raj going here," the A's skipper said. "We just want to see him getting consistent at-bats. He's been working real hard. He should be fine."

Pennington, meanwhile, received his fourth start at the leadoff spot, where he established career highs with four hits and four RBIs in Tuesday night's game. He entered Thursday's contest batting .264 with a team-leading 15 RBIs.

Rosales promoted to fifth spot in order

TORONTO -- A beaming Adam Rosales sprinted around the visitor's clubhouse Thursday afternoon before the A's took on the Blue Jays.

Needless to say, the Oakland infielder showed no ill effects of a late flight from Tampa Bay to Toronto that put the team on the ground around 2:30 a.m. Thursday.

Instead, he bounced around like his usual self while preparing for just his second career start in the fifth spot of the starting lineup. All of Rosales' previous starts had come at one of the bottom four slots.

"He's been swinging the bat well and definitely deserved to move up," manager Bob Geren said. "He's been great in every phase of the game."

Rosales entered Thursday's matchup against Toronto having tallied back-to-back multi-hit games for the first time in his career. He has also driven in a run in three consecutive games.

The 26-year-old, who has received a significant amount of playing time in the injured Mark Ellis' stead, has hit safely in each of his last five games.

Worth noting

Ryan Sweeney notched a double in the first inning of Thursday's game vs. the Blue Jays and has now reached base safely in all 22 contests this season. ... Andrew Bailey, who pitched a perfect eighth, extended his career-high scoreless streak to 17 innings dating back to last season. ... The A's, who enter Friday's matchup 12-11, need a win to clinch a winning record in the month of April for just the second time in the last seven years. The only other time was in 2008, when they went 16-11.

Buck hits 3 HRs; Duchscherer hurt in A's loss

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TORONTO — John Buck became the first catcher to hit three home runs in six years, Travis Snider added a solo shot and the Toronto Blue Jays beat the Oakland Athletics 6-3 Thursday night.

Buck led off the third inning with a drive off right-hander Justin Duchscherer into the left field bullpen. His next two homers came off left-handers. He greeted reliever Jerry Blevins with a three-run homer into the second deck in left in the fourth and connected against Craig Breslow for a solo shot in the sixth, off the center field restaurant.

Buck got a standing ovation from the crowd of 10,721 when he led off the eighth against Oakland righty Andrew Bailey. He swung and missed the first two pitches, fouled one back, then flied out to right. The fans remained standing as Buck jogged back to the dugout.

It's the first three-run homer game and sixth multihomer game of Buck's career. It was the first three-homer game by a Blue Jays player since Adam Lind did it at Boston on Sept. 29, 2009.

Victor Martinez was the last catcher with a three-homer game, doing it for Cleveland at Seattle on July 16, 2004.

Oakland lost Duchscherer to a sore left hip three batters into the fourth. Manager Bob Geren and trainer Stephen Sayles came to the mound to check on Duchscherer when he grimaced after throwing a pitch to Toronto's Jose Bautista.

Duchscherer stayed in the game but was replaced by Blevins after Bautista lined a single to center. He limped back to the dugout.

Duchscherer (2-1) missed all of last season after having elbow surgery.

Toronto left-hander Ricky Romero (2-1) allowed three runs and four hits in six innings. He walked four and struck out six.

Shawn Camp and Scott Downs each worked an inning and Kevin Gregg struck out the side in the ninth for his sixth save.

Kevin Kouzmanoff's RBI single gave Oakland a 1-0 lead in the first and the Athletics added two more off Romero in the third. Kouzmanoff reached on a fielder's choice, Adam Rosales walked and both runners advanced on a wild pitch before Jake Fox followed with a two-run double.

Toronto cut the deficit to one in the bottom half when Buck and Snider homered on consecutive pitches from Duchscherer, snapping his scoreless innings streak at 21. For the Blue Jays, the homers ended a 19-inning scoreless drought.

Duchscherer left with runners at first and second in the fourth. Blevins came on and served up Buck's second homer, putting Toronto up 5-3.

Buck capped his night with a one-out blast off Breslow in the sixth, matching his career high with five RBIs.

Duchscherer came in with a 1.82 ERA in four starts but allowed four runs and five hits in 3 1-3 innings in this one, raising his ERA to 2.89.

NOTES: Darrin Fletcher was the last Toronto catcher to hit three homers in a game, doing it Aug. 27, 2000 at Texas. ... An MRI taken Wednesday on Oakland catcher Kurt Suzuki revealed a strained intercostal muscle in left side, forcing him to miss his fifth straight game. ... The Athletics called up RHP Trevor Cahill from Triple-A to start against Toronto Friday in place of LHP Brett Anderson (elbow).

New A's ballpark in Oakland could reap \$2.6B, study says

Eric Young, San Francisco Business Times

A new baseball stadium in Oakland would generate about \$2.6 billion in total economic activity over the next 30 years, according to an analysis released Wednesday.

The study commissioned by **Let's Go Oakland**, a group that wants to keep the A's in the city, said a new ballpark also would create more than 1,600 construction jobs during the estimated three years of construction.

The study comes as city leaders try to make a case to keep the A's in Oakland, where the team has played since 1968 after moving from Kansas City. Oakland has identified four sites - including the current Oakland Coliseum location and three sites near the Jack London Square waterfront - where the team could build a new facility.

The A's owners, however, have been looking elsewhere to build a new stadium, claiming that past efforts to build a new home in Oakland were futile.

The next few months could prove critical in determining where the A's call home in the future. San Jose is wooing the team and is close to purchasing enough land downtown where the team could build a stadium. Meanwhile, **Major League Baseball** has commissioned a group to study where the A's should move, or whether the team should move at all.

The A's declined comment on questions of the team's move.

The team's lease in the Oakland Coliseum, which is owned by the city and county, expires in 2010 with three one-year options to extend.

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

River Cats can't topple Grizzlies on road

By Annie Becker / Sacramento River Cats

Chris Carter and Jack Cust extended their combined homer streak to five consecutive games, but it wasn't enough as the visiting Sacramento River Cats fell 5-4 to the Fresno Grizzlies.

Grizzly Joe Borchard's two-out, three-run homer scored Brock Bond and Buster Posey to lift the Grizzlies to an early lead against the visiting Sacramento River Cats.

Sacramento had a chance in the first inning to continue their momentum from a series win against the Las Vegas 51s when Grizzlies starting pitcher Joe Martinez walked the bases loaded. Fresno squelched the rally when Michael Taylor grounded into a 6-4-3 double play.

Sacramento starter Vin Mazzaro (1-1) loaded the bases in the second when Ben Copeland singled, Brad Boyer was hit by a pitch and Brock Bond walked. Mazzaro escaped, however, with two swinging strikeouts to end the inning. Mazzaro faced another bases loaded jam in the third with two outs, but escaped again.

The Cats inched closer in the third with a Chris Carter homer, his fifth for the season, on a line drive to left field that scored Eric Sogard. Jack Cust's solo homer, his fourth of the year, tied the game, 3-3, in the sixth for the River Cats.

The Grizzlies regained the lead in the bottom of the sixth when Ryan Rohlinger singled on a line drive scoring Mike McBryde, who had singled and advanced to second on the same play with an error by right fielder Michael Taylor.

The River Cats responded in the eighth to tie the game, 4-4, when Corey Brown singled home Jack Cust, who had been walked for the fourth time.

But it was the Grizzlies who took control with yet another home run, this time by Rohlinger, his first of the year.

The River Cats will continue their road trip in the second game of the four-game series against the Grizzlies in Fresno on Friday night at 7:05 pm. They will return home to begin another homestand against the Salt Lake City Bees on Monday.

Hornbeck Collects First Double-A Win

By Bob Hards / Midland RockHounds

Thursday at Corpus Christi, a collision in center field on the game's second play opened the door for a 2-0 RockHounds lead. Ben Hornbeck took that lead into the last of the first, but it evaporated ... fast ... on a lead-off (1-2) 1-2 single and three straight walks. With the score now 2-1, the bases were loaded with no outs. Remarkably, when Ben departed the game after 5.0 innings, he would be in line for the win.

Hornbeck, like a fighter who finds himself on his backside in the first round, "got up off the canvas" and pitched four, scoreless innings. The bullpen of Daniel Sattler, Derrick Gordon, Justin Souza and Beau Vaughan went the last 4.0 innings without allowing a run, meaning the Hooks first three batters of the game scored ... and that would be "it."

Hornbeck's perseverance earned him his first Double-A victory, with Vaughan collecting his fifth save in as many chances.

Steve Kleen went 4-for-4 with a double, two runs and an RBI for the RockHounds, with Jermaine Mitchell going 2-for-4 with a pair of RBI. Archie Gilbert continued to swing a hot bat, going 2-for-4 with a run and a ribbie.

While the 'Hounds committed one error, allowing a run to score (ironically, it came on a failed double play, making the run earned to Hornbeck), it was the only error the club committed in the last three games of the series.

The RockHounds won the series, 3-1, winning those last three games.

Rough Seventh Inning Costs Ports, 12-5

STOCKTON, Calif. - What started out to be a promising game for the Ports quickly turned into a headache for Stockton relievers on Thursday night. The Ports (9-12) and starter Shawn Haviland had a no-hitter up until the fifth inning, and Ports relievers stumbled in to trouble, allowing 11 runs on seven hits and eight walks in the last three innings, as the Ports fell, 12-5, to the Bakersfield Blaze (7-11) at Banner Island Ballpark.

The Ports clung to a slim 3-1 lead through six innings before the Blaze plated eight runs in the seventh inning. Stockton attempted to rally in the ninth, but couldn't close the gap. Stephen Parker collected his third home run of the year, a solo shot over the left field bullpens. He and Michael Spina both totaled two hits in the contest.

Ports pitchers, although combining for 12 runs, also combined for 17 strikeouts, a new single-game season high. Shawn Haviland fanned a season-high 9 batters, and allowed just one run (a solo home run by Chris Gradoville) on two hits and just two walks in 5.1 innings.

Ports pitchers also were noteworthy for making plate appearances in Thursday's game. Shawn Haviland, Jose Pina and Daniel Thomas each collected an at-bat in the contest. Center fielder David Thomas left the game following the top of the second. He made a diving catch to put out Blaze third baseman Tommy Mendonca in the second inning, but he landed awkwardly and was pulled from the game.

The Ports had no one on their bench at that point, as Tyler Ladendorf and Dusty Napoleon were both called up to Sacramento for this series prior to Thursday's Ports game, so the pitchers had to bat for themselves in the contest. The Ports designated hitter, Petey Paramore, moved to first base, while Kala Ka'aihue moved from first to left field and Shane Keough moved from left to center to cover for the loss of David Thomas on the field. The Ports expected infielder Josh Horton to arrive from Extended Spring Training today, but he did not arrive until the ninth inning.

In the fourth inning, Parker led off and collected his third home run of the season. Right fielder Jeremy Barfield singled to right and scored later in the inning as Kala Ka'aihue grounded out to put Stockton ahead, 2-0.

Gradoville made it 2-1 in the fifth with his solo home run. It was the first hit that Haviland allowed up to that point. The Ports added a run in the bottom of the fifth on an RBI single by second baseman Michael Spina.

Then the Blaze opened the floodgates and a steady stream of offense poured out in the seventh. With Jose Pina on the mound, Mendonca walked to start things off. Pina then fanned Gradoville and first baseman Jordan Bolden before issuing a walk to pinch-hitter Mitch Hilligoss. With runners on the corners and Jacob Kaase at the plate, Pina threw his third wild pitch of the inning, which allowed Mendonca to score and Hilligoss to move to second. Kaase singled and Hilligoss moved to third.

The Ports then called on righty Scott Hodsdon, who allowed an RBI single to David Paisano, to make it 3-3. Shortstop Davis Stoneburner singled and moved to third on a fielding error by Shane Keough. The play allowed Kaase and Paisano to score, making it 5-3 Bakersfield. Hodsdon gave up four consecutive hits, and the Blaze ended the inning with eight more runs and a lead of 9-3.

The Blaze were held scoreless in the eighth by Daniel Thomas, but with Dan McDaniel on the mound in the ninth, Bakersfield added three more runs. McDaniel loaded the bases in the top of the ninth with two walks and a single. He then struck out the next two batters. But McDaniel issued an RBI walk to Hilligoss and again to Kaase, followed by an RBI single by Paisano, before striking out Stoneburner.

Entering into the bottom of the ninth, the Ports were down 12-3. With one out, Parker singled to get things rolling. Then Barfield struck out. Spina singled to put runners on the corners for Paramore. Paramore doubled to bring home Parker. Spina scored on a wild pitch while Ka'aihue was at-bat. Then Horton came in as a pinch-hitter for Ports pitcher Lance Sewell. He popped out to third baseman Mendonca on the first pitch to end the game.

The Ports will play Game 2 of the four-game series on Friday at 7:05 p.m. at Banner Island Ballpark. RHP Murphy Smith (2-1, 8.04) will start for Stockton, while RHP Jacob Brigham (0-2, 1.72) will be on the hill for the Blaze.

Cougars Sweep Bandits, Win 4th Straight

GENEVA, III. - For the second day in a row the Kane County Cougars fell behind early but battled back to beat the Quad Cities River Bandits, this time erasing a 2-0 hole and winning, 4-2, Thursday afternoon in front of 5,069 at Elfstrom Stadium. The Cougars swept the three-game set, have won four in a row and are above .500 for the first time in 11 days.

Franklin Hernandez had the game's big swing, delivering a go-ahead two-run homer in the bottom of the sixth to turn a 2-1 deficit into a 3-2 lead. That put starter Rob Gilliam (1-1) in line for a win that he eventually received. Gilliam gave up two runs -- both in the first -- on seven hits, walked one and fanned six over six innings, his third quality start in five tries. Ryan Quigley tossed two scoreless innings and fanned four, and Jose Guzman pitched a perfect ninth for his third save.

Rashun Dixon drove in two runs to help the offense. He poked a sacrifice fly in the fourth to get the Cougars on the board and then plated pinch-runner Myrio Richard in the eighth with a grounder to account for the 4-2 final. Deryk Hooker (1-1) suffered the loss for Quad Cities (14-7).

Now the Cougars (10-10) hit the road for a seven game road trip to Iowa with four games against the Cedar Rapids Kernels and three against the Burlington Bees. Friday night's game against the Kernels starts at 6:35 CT and features Ian Krol (0-1, 4.80) against Fabio Martinez (1-1, 5.28). The game will be broadcast on WBIG 1280-AM and online at www.kccougars.com, with pregame coverage starting at 6:20 p.m.

Oakland A's Prospect Q&A: Rashun Dixon, OF

David Malamut, OaklandClubhouse.com

Apr 30, 2010

Kane County OF Rashun Dixon is a unique talent. A two-sport star in high school, Dixon turned down a football scholarship to Mississippi State to sign with the Oakland A's in 2008. Dixon then turned heads in the Arizona Rookie League by flashing a powerful bat and speed on the bases. Dixon struggled last year in Vancouver, but is off to a fast start with Kane County. David Malamut spoke to Dixon.

David Malamut: How was your spring training?

Rashun Dixon: Pretty good. Worked on some stuff. Worked on getting the ball deeper and seeing some more pitches, taking walks instead of getting base hits, so it was pretty good.

DM: You were recruited to play football. Why did you choose baseball instead?

RD: There was more opportunity to play baseball. Both of my brothers are playing football, so I figured I would let them have that, so I went for baseball.

DM: Longer career?

RD: Maybe. I wasn't really thinking about that. I grew up playing more baseball than football, so I ended up choosing baseball.

DM: What was draft day like?

RD: Actually it wasn't too bad. I was playing baseball when I got drafted. Somebody from the A's called me after my game, and that's how I found out.

DM: What's your approach at the plate?

RD: I'm letting the ball get deeper, seeing more pitches, laying off of balls in the dirt. Just trying to stay soft with everything and drive the ball.

DM: What are your goals for the season?

RD: Play as many games as I can. I was hurting last year. I missed about 25-30 games. I just want to try to play in every game I can play in.

DM: What do you think you need to work on offensively?

RD: Hitting breaking pitches, letting them get deeper and not giving up on them. Other than that just the outside part of the plate in general. Just letting the ball get deep, taking the ball the other way, not pulling off of pitches.

DM: Defensively?

RD: I feel like I'm pretty fine defensively, but I feel like I can work on my throws to the bases a little bit more. Sometimes they are inconsistent. I would just have to say throwing to the bases.

DM: If you had gone to college what would you have majored in?

RD: Probably business and entrepreneurship.

DM: Do you plan on going to college?

RD: I'm not sure yet. I've been thinking about it. I might go this off-season. I haven't given it too much thought. I'm trying to focus on baseball right now.

DM: What did you learn from playing in Arizona?

RD: The ball travels, on defense and at the plate. You drive the ball good and it's going to travel. Get some good backspin it's usually going to travel pretty good.

DM: You have played all three outfield positions. Which one do you like the best, and what is the difference in them?

RD: I like left field because I have played more games in left than I have played anywhere else. I played like 50 in Rookie ball in centerfield and like 80 in total in left. I would have to say left field is more comfortable. It might end up being in right field because that is where I've been playing. Probably the most difficult thing is the ball off of the bat. At each position it comes off a different way, so it takes getting your reads in BP to get to learn how the ball comes off.

DM: Does playing all of the other positions help you in right field?

RD: It does a little bit. Sometimes you get a lefty up. He likes to get inside the ball pretty good. Usually his ball, if you're in right field it would travel to the centerfield gap, and in left field it kind of helps if he stays inside the ball pretty good it would travel towards the line, so yeah it does help.

DM: What did you learn from playing in Vancouver?

RD: Trying to play every game that I can. I didn't get a lot of ABs last year. I was hurt. I missed a lot of games. I'm just trying to stay healthy and play as many games as I can to get some more experience.

DM: How was playing in Canada?

RD: It was actually pretty nice. We had a nice summer last year, got some good weather. I think we only had one bad day where we got rained out. Other than that I liked the fans, they were real nice and into the game, so it was pretty cool.

DM: How do you like the Midwest League?

RD: I like it so far. Not any of those long Northwest League bus rides, so it's working out pretty good so far.

DM: What is your off-season training like?

RD: I worked out with football players getting ready for the draft in Atlanta. It was pretty tough. I worked out from about 10 in the morning until about 1 in the afternoon. Did some yoga on Wednesdays and Saturdays. So it was pretty tough. I had some good trainers and some good guys to work out with. It was pretty nice.

DM: When did you start taking swings?

RD: Honestly I started taking swings the week I got back from Instructs. I hit the whole off-season because I knew that is what I had to work on. I knew that didn't do good last year, so I was just working on my swing and my approach, my plan at the plate, trying to get everything ready for spring training.

DM: What else have you played besides baseball and football?

RD: I played basketball in high school for one year, but I had to give it up because basketball was cutting into baseball season, and I knew I didn't have a chance to play in the NBA so I gave that up.

DM: What was being scouted like?

RD: It was not to fun at all. I had 13-14 scouts at a game sometimes, and people knew they were there watching me, so it just felt like all the eyes were on me. Some people didn't like it. Some people liked it, so they can get a look at themselves. It was kind of hectic.

DM: Who has been the biggest influence in your career?

RD: My family, three brothers and my mom and dad. They all played sports. Mom ran track, my dad pro ball for the Mets, and all three of my brothers played baseball too, so it was just competition all the time. They were my biggest influence.

DM: Did any of that help you going into to pro ball, knowing what to expect?

RD: My dad gave me some pointers. He told me about what would happen, waking up at six o'clock, getting ready for spring training or extended spring training. Just the long days, the food you had to eat, the bus rides, all of that. Yeah he gave me some pointers, what I needed to do, and what I didn't need to do.

DM: What's in your iPod?

RD: Everything, I have a little mix of everything: rap, rock, country, pop, blues, jazz and everything I got it.

DM: Coming out of high school, do you think you were ready for pro ball?

RD: I thought I was. I didn't really know because I didn't really get to play in the summer because i had elbow surgery before the start of my senior season, so I didn't really know but I felt like I was ready, because it was either that or go to college and play football, and it ended up being baseball.

DM: Surgery on your throwing arm?

RD: I had surgery on my right elbow. I had arthroscopic surgery, wasn't anything major.

DM: Besides baseball what else do you like to do?

RD: I like to sleep, I'm a big sleeper. I actually like to draw too. I took about 3-4 years of art in high school, so I'm a big drawer. Anything athletic, going to the gym working out. I actually went and worked out on our off-day yesterday (4/26). Anything that can keep me active without making me tired, that'll work too.