

## A's News Clips, Monday, March 7, 2011

### New Oakland A's pitching coach Ron Romanick has different style from predecessor Curt Young but hopes to get similar results

By Joe Stiglich\_Oakland Tribune

PHOENIX -- Ron Romanick has big shoes to fill in replacing Curt Young as the A's pitching coach.

But if his work is judged by the number of hours he puts in, Romanick already has his new gig licked.

By 5:45 a.m., he's usually in front of a computer at Phoenix Municipal Stadium, hashing out throwing schedules. Until he leaves around 6 p.m., Romanick seems in a constant state of motion, as if he just completed one task but knows several more await his attention.

"He doesn't sleep once the season starts," A's reliever Michael Wuertz said Sunday.

An important story line for the A's: Can Romanick, their bullpen coach for the past three years, keep Oakland's finely tuned pitching machine chugging along after the departure of Young, who left in October to become the Boston Red Sox's pitching coach?

Over the past three seasons, the A's have posted the American League's best ERA (3.95) and ranked second in shutouts (34) while giving up the fewest home runs (444).

That sets the bar high for Romanick, 50, a unique character whose interests expand beyond the baseball diamond.

After interviewing for the pitching coach position in October, Romanick flew back home to Arizona and made the drive south to Tombstone, where he joined other Wild West history buffs to explore the sites of Wyatt Earp's most famous shootouts.

Romanick's promotion earned praise from A's pitchers, many of whom worked with him when he was the roving minor league pitching instructor.

"What he brings to the table is a lot of information and a lot of new ways of looking at things," closer Andrew Bailey said.

Romanick, who pitched for the California Angels from 1984-86, is considered a progressive thinker when it comes to designing offseason throwing programs for pitchers.

He tries to build schedules that are tailored to individual pitchers and their needs, rather than have an entire staff follow one program.

In November, he traveled to Tampa, Fla., and spoke at an American Sports Medicine Institute event that brought together top orthopedists from around the country.

He said he stuck out among other speakers with sparkling academic credentials.

"I get my faculty badge, and it's cracking me up because my name's on the sheet, and it's just my name," Romanic said. "I've got no degree or whatever."

Romanick grew up a John Wayne fan, but his love for Westerns intensified while playing for former Angels owner and movie star Gene Autry, the "Singing Cowboy." After reading up on Wyatt Earp, Romanick wanted to visit Tombstone.

"All the guys that worked for (Autry) were extras from those movies -- "Rio Lobo," "Big Jake," "The Searchers," he said. "They'd come in the clubhouse all the time. Now that I'm older, I appreciate that."

This is Romanick's first crack as a full-time major league pitching coach -- he held an interim role with Seattle in 1993 and has been a pitching coach in the minors.

According to Wuertz, Romanick's approach differs from Young's.

"Ronnie really gets in depth with the stats part of it. He's very in tune with what pitch to throw in certain situations," Wuertz said. "Curt was very good with the mental side of the game. If things were going real good, Curt wouldn't really mess with you too much."

Bailey has worked with Romanick on mechanics but has never seen him walk to the mound to calm a pitcher's nerves.

"It'll be nice to see what he has to say and see how he handles himself in that situation," Bailey said.

## **Oakland A's notebook: Cliff Pennington plays first exhibition game**

By Joe Stiglich\_Oakland Tribune

PHOENIX -- Cliff Pennington played in his first exhibition Sunday, but the A's starting shortstop is still operating in limited fashion because of his surgically repaired left shoulder.

Pennington went 0 for 2 with a walk and played four innings during the A's 7-6 split-squad road loss to the San Diego Padres.

The switch hitter's shoulder still bothers him when he swings right-handed. The A's sent him on the long drive to Peoria to face the Padres -- rather than play in Phoenix against the Milwaukee Brewers -- because the Padres were starting right-handed pitcher Mat Latos, allowing Pennington to bat left-handed.

Pennington led off the game against Latos, who was pulled after two-thirds of an inning for lefty Colt Hynes. Pennington batted right-handed against Hynes but was ordered not to swing.

He tried bunting twice and then took a called third strike.

"I can't hurt it structurally," Pennington said of his shoulder. "But I'm still getting strength and feel back from that side."

Manager Bob Geren said Pennington will follow an every-other-day playing schedule for now.

Pennington was charged with an error on his only chance defensively, mishandling a slow roller.

Pennington and the A's remain confident he'll be ready for the regular season.

Josh Outman walked three and allowed four runs in 11/3 innings against San Diego. Overall, he's allowed 11 hits, six walks and six

earned runs in 42/3 innings.

His struggles could change the picture of the fifth starter battle, as Bobby Cramer and Tyson Ross (Bishop O'Dowd High, Cal) have looked good.

Ross tossed three shutout innings in the A's 5-4 win over the Milwaukee Brewers and hasn't allowed a run through 62/3 innings total. Cramer went three scoreless innings against San Diego and has a 1.29 ERA in three outings.

Brandon McCarthy is also in the fifth starter mix.

Designated hitter Hideki Matsui is 0 for 8 through four games.

Rashun Dixon's single in the eighth scored Michael Choice and Jemile Weeks to lift the A's over the Brewers. Josh Butler, a San Ramon Valley High grad, took the loss.

First baseman Daric Barton left the game against the Padres with what Geren described as a minor calf contusion.

Gio Gonzalez blanked the Brewers over three innings and has struck out 10 of the 17 he's faced and allowed no hits.

## Jemile Weeks comes up big against brother's team

John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer

**Jemile Weeks** got a rare opportunity to show big brother how it's done.

The A's second-base prospect went 2-for-2 and scored twice, including the winning run in the eighth inning of Sunday's 5-4 victory over the Brewers, who also had a second baseman named Weeks (**Rickie**), who broke into the majors in 2003.

"It's not something people get to do, play against their brother," Jemile said. "It's something I'm thankful for."

By the time Jemile, 4 1/2 years younger, was entering high school, Rickie had graduated. By the time Jemile was entering college, Rickie had turned pro. A similar story played out Sunday. By the time Jemile, 24, entered in the sixth inning, Rickie was getting pulled.

Jemile hopes the trend ends, saying, "I'm trying to get to the big leagues before he leaves the big leagues."

The younger brother, the 12th overall pick in the 2008 draft, has been slowed by injuries. He played at Double-A Midland last season, and the natural progression would be Triple-A this season. So it's a key time for Jemile, especially considering second baseman **Mark Ellis'** contract runs out after this season.

"It's the organization's call," Jemile said. "Me, I'm going out there with the attitude of a guy they look at as somebody who could be an everyday player in the big leagues. Just wanting to show them my tools, so they'll know."

Rather than return to the Brewers' facility in Maryvale, Ariz., Rickie stayed the entire game to watch Jemile, and it was worth the wait. With two outs in the eighth, Jemile doubled **Michael Choice** to third. Both scored on a single to right by A-ball outfielder **Rashun Dixon**, with the speedy Jemile barely beating the throw.

He said he worked on strengthening his legs in the offseason to help his all-around game.

**Pennington arrives:** Shortstop **Cliff Pennington**, coming off left shoulder surgery, made his Cactus League debut and went 0-for-2 with a walk and an error in a split-squad 7-6 loss to the Padres in Peoria.

The switch-hitter still is tentative swinging right-handed, so the A's want him swinging only left-handed for now. But in his second plate appearance, the pitcher (**Colt Hynes**) was a lefty, so Pennington batted righty - without swinging. He tried to bunt twice and watched strike three.

"I can't structurally hurt it, but I'm still getting strength and feel back from that side," said Pennington, who'll be in the lineup every other day. "It's a matter of settling in. It was exciting to get some adrenaline going."

**Briefly:** First baseman **Daric Barton** sustained a calf injury in a collision in Peoria and exited the game. The A's called it a contusion. It happened on a play in which Barton tried to catch third baseman **Kevin Kouzmanoff's** errant throw. ... In reliever news, **Michael Wuertz** threw a bullpen session, and **Andrew Bailey** and **Craig Breslow** will face hitters today, presumably the final test before appearing in a game.

**Cactus League recap**

**Scores:** A's 5, Brewers 4; Padres 7, A's 6

**Notable:** While Gio Gonzalez struck out five batters in three hitless innings against Milwaukee (his second straight hitless outing), Josh Outman struggled against the Padres (1 1/3 innings, four runs, five hits, two homers). In three appearances, Outman has yielded six runs and 11 hits while walking six in 4 2/3 innings. That's no way to win the final rotation spot. ... Tyson Ross followed Gonzalez with three scoreless innings. ... Anthony Aliotti, who hails from De La Salle High-Concord and St. Mary's, had an RBI single. ... The Phoenix Muni press box will be packed today because both Hideki Matsui and Ichiro Suzuki are expected to play. Matsui is still hitless (0-for-8).

**Quotable:** "I hope I don't peak too soon. I've got a lot of work to do. I've still got a lot of room for growth, mentally." - *Gonzalez, who has five hitless innings to date and was happy with his changeup on Sunday.*

**Today's game:** Mariners (Felix Hernandez) vs. A's (Guillermo Moscoso), 12:05 p.m.

## **Drumbeat: Cliff Pennington's big day**

John Shea reporting from Phoenix Muni Stadium . . . 3/6/2011 9:55AM

Two exhibitions today, in Phoenix vs. the Brewers and in Peoria vs. the Padres. Shortstop Cliff Pennington, coming off left shoulder surgery, is making his Cactus League debut, playing shortstop and batting first in Peoria.

It would seem to make sense for Pennington to play in Phoenix because that's where second baseman Mark Ellis is playing. And where Bob Geren is managing. But Geren said Pennington remains tentative swinging from the right side and wants him to bat left-handed his first few games.

The Padres are throwing a right-hander, Mat Latos. while the Brewers are throwing a lefty, Chris Narveson.

"He passed every test (trainers) wanted him to pass, and he's right on schedule for what they want," said Geren, who still maintains Pennington will be ready for the season opener.

Pennington won't take more than two or three at-bats, and he'll be in the lineup every other day, Geren said.

Today's other shortstop is Eric Sogard. Adam Rosales, who recently ditched his walking boot, hopes to get clearance on March 16 to begin baseball-related activity.

Here's the lineup for the home game: CF Crisp, 2B Ellis, DH Matsui, 1B Jackson, LF Carter, C Donaldson, 3B Timmons, RF Taylor, SS Sogard. Gonzalez pitching.

On the road: SS Pennington, 1B Barton, DH DeJesus, LF Willingham, 3B Kouzmanoff, C Suzuki, CF Miller, RF Carson, 2B Tolleson. Outman on the hill.

In reliever news, Michael Wuertz is throwing a bullpen session today, and Andrew Bailey and Craig Breslow will face hitters on Monday.

## **Favoring left side, Pennington returns to action**

## **Oakland shortstop still building up intensity from right side of plate**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- Cliff Pennington's first start of the spring was rather uneventful -- just how he hoped it would be.

"My body felt great," Pennington said. "The shoulder felt great. I felt perfect out there."

The A's switch-hitting shortstop made his debut Sunday in a split-squad contest against the Padres in Peoria, Ariz., going 0-for-2 with a walk and a run scored in an eventual 7-6 loss. He also made a fielding error while attempting to charge a ball on a rather tough play.

Pennington, who had surgery on his left shoulder to repair a labrum tear in mid-October, was sent on the road to face right-hander Mat Latos from the left side of the plate because he's still building up intensity on the right side.

He walked in his first at-bat against Latos, who was lifted after just two-thirds of an inning after quickly giving up three runs. Thus, Pennington was forced to face lefty Colt Hynes from the right side in his next plate appearance and, after two unsuccessful attempts at a sacrifice bunt, he struck out looking. His final at-bat, taken again from the left side, resulted in a flyout.

Pennington will continue to play on an every-other-day basis, though opposing pitchers may often dictate his schedule while he continues to gain comfort batting right-handed.

"It's getting better," he said. "The right side, it's taking longer, but it's getting there. It's definitely a work in progress, and hopefully within the next week or two it'll be good to go with plenty of time before the season starts."

Aside from the limitations at the dish, Pennington's only other obstacle comes on the field, where he's been instructed not to dive for the time being. That's how he initially injured his shoulder back in July, and the oft-injured A's are taking a cautious approach with each of their players this year.

"Hitting left-handed and playing defense, I don't think about the shoulder at all," Pennington said. "The diving part, we're taking it easy for now. There's no need to chance anything at the moment."

Pennington's return is a big plus for the A's, who will be without utility infielder Adam Rosales (right foot) until May. In the meantime, Eric Sogard, Steve Tolleson, Josh Horton and Andy LaRoche will continue to get looks in the middle of the infield this spring -- especially at shortstop, given Pennington is coming off a five-month rehab process.

Manager Bob Geren said he has no qualms, though, about Pennington's status for Opening Day. He will look to build on a 2010 campaign that featured a .250 average and 29 stolen bases -- the most by an A's infielder in 21 years -- in 156 contests, which tied him for the league lead in games played by a shortstop.

"Today, I felt like I was getting ready for Opening Day," Pennington said. "I felt like I was part of the team again. We still have some work to do right-handed, but getting to play and just being on the field, to put the cleats on, that part was nice.

"I had the excitement going before I went out there, and there was the anticipation of getting back and playing again, so it was fun."

## **Ross follows Gio with three scoreless frames**

## **Eighth-inning rally propels A's to split-squad win over Brewers**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- An eighth-inning A's rally, capped by a two-run single off the bat of Minor Leaguer Rashun Dixon, paved the way for a 5-4 A's victory over the Brewers on Sunday at Phoenix Municipal Stadium.

Oakland entered the bottom of the eighth down, 4-2, but got things going off Milwaukee lefty Dan Merklinger with a leadoff single from Wes Timmons, who later scored on an RBI forceout from Michael Choice to narrow the Brewers' lead.

With right-hander Josh Butler in for relief, Jemile Weeks moved Choice to third with a double, and both scored on Dixon's hit to permanently hand Oakland the lead.

Milwaukee got RBI hits from Chris Dickerson and Ryan Gennet off A's reliever Jerry Blevins in the seventh and added on in the eighth via RBI base hits from Almonte and Carlos George against Grant Balfour.

Oakland's win rewarded six shutout innings from Gio Gonzalez and Tyson Ross. Gonzalez has tallied 10 strikeouts through five innings in two spring outings.

"I wanted to go out there and pound the strike zone as quickly as possible," Gonzalez said. "I'm finding a groove, building confidence."

Ross, meanwhile, scattered four hits with four strikeouts in his second spring outing.

Milwaukee starter Chris Narveson went two innings, surrendering just one hit with two walks.

**Up next for A's:** Right-hander Guillermo Moscoso gets the nod for the A's on Monday at Phoenix Municipal Stadium beginning at 12:05 p.m. PT, and fans with an oaklandathletics.com account can listen to a free live webcast. Moscoso, quietly making his case for a rotation spot, has surrendered five hits and three runs with four strikeouts in a combined four innings this spring. Seattle, meanwhile, is slated to counter with Cy Young winner Felix Hernandez, who is making his Cactus League debut.

**Up next for Brewers:** The Brewers will be on MLB.TV, and on TV back home for the first time this spring on Monday, when Yovani Gallardo makes his second Cactus League start against the Reds in Goodyear, Ariz. FOX Sports Wisconsin will broadcast the 2:05 p.m. CT game live, and MLB Network will replay it at 8:30. It's one of two Spring Training meetings between the National League Central rivals, who will open the season together in Cincinnati from March 31-April 3.

## **Cramer, Ross open eyes with stellar outings**

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- Sunday's split-squad action put three of Oakland's fifth-starter candidates on display. Two pitched exceptionally well, although one endured a rough outing.

Tyson Ross continued his successful string of spring appearances, pitching three shutout innings, allowing just four hits, with four strikeouts against the Brewers in a 5-4 victory in Phoenix. The 23-year-old righty, who missed much of the second half of last season with a strained right elbow, hasn't allowed a run in 6 2/3 innings this spring.

In Peoria, Ariz., where the other half of the team fell in a 7-6 final to the Padres, lefties Josh Outman and Bobby Cramer had mixed results.

Outman, making his third Cactus League appearance, offered up four runs on five hits -- two of them home runs -- with three walks and a strikeout in 1 1/3 innings. He tossed 52 pitches overall, and just 24 were strikes.

The A's lefty, looking to return to the rotation following 1 1/2 years of rehab from Tommy John surgery, noted after his previous outing against the Indians that he's still looking to improve on his fastball command while he increases arm strength.

Cramer, meanwhile, quietly worked three shutout frames, giving up just one hit and one walk. In seven innings of work this spring, the southpaw has just one run attached to his name.

"Cramer threw the ball well out there," said bench coach Joel Skinner, who was at the helm in Peoria, "It's important for all of our guys to do well while trying to get into game shape while we see what they can do. It was a good day for him."

Outman, Ross and Cramer, along with righty Brandon McCarthy, are each being watched closely, manager Bob Geren said Sunday morning. While the club's other four starters are simply being monitored to "make sure they're on track," the fifth-starter candidates' pitches are each being viewed differently.

"They're all doing very well," Geren said. "The tougher the decision, the better it is, because that means you have several good options. Hopefully, it stays a tough decision."

### **Gio's secret to spring success: Attack the zone**

PHOENIX -- Gio Gonzalez promises there's really no hidden secret to his early spring success.

"Attacking the zone," he said. "That's it."

It's enough. The A's lefty, for a second consecutive outing, fanned five while facing the Brewers in a dose of split-squad action on Sunday. Gonzalez also walked two, but he didn't allow a hit through his three innings of work, and he's now struck out 10 in a combined five shutout Cactus League innings.

"I just wanted to go out there and pound the strike zone as quickly as possible," Gonzalez said. "It's been about trying to find a groove, build confidence. Every outing, I'm trying to go out there and do my best and take advantage of the fact I have this time to work."

Unlike his previous outing, which went by in a blink of an eye when he struck out five (four looking) of his six batters faced, Gonzalez found time to play with his changeup, which he threw while ahead of counts in an effort to see how opposing hitters would respond.

Much like last year, Gonzalez has already turned to fellow lefty Dallas Braden for advice several times this spring. The overall message, he said, is rather simple.

"Instead of just going through a groove and putting it on cruise control," Gonzalez said, "we're here to put in work on stuff, like when I walk a guy and find my way out of those situations."

### **Worth noting**

Michael Wuertz (shoulder) threw a 30-pitch bullpen session on Sunday morning, and Geren said he, "looked OK." The righty is next slated to throw to hitters before entering game action. ... Coco Crisp went 2-for-3 with a triple on Sunday against the Brewers and is batting .467 (7-for-15) with seven RBIs in five games this spring. ... Non-roster invitees Jemile Weeks and Wes Timmons also had two hits while facing Milwaukee. Weeks, whose injury-plagued career has derailed his development in the Minors, is hitting .444 in nine at-bats.

## **Major Lee-ague: Split-squad action: Pregame notes**

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 3/6/2011 11:25am

Gio Gonzalez is taking the hill here at Phoenix Muni today, while Josh Outman will start the team's split-squad game in Peoria against the Padres. Here's who will be joining each of them:

### **HOME**

Crisp CF  
Ellis 2B  
Matsui DH  
Jackson 1B  
Carter LF  
Donaldson C  
Timmons 3B  
Taylor RF  
Sogard SS  
Gonzalez P

Also scheduled to pitch: Grant Balfour, Jerry Blevins, Willie Eyre, Brian Fuentes, Tyson Ross

### **AWAY**

Pennington SS  
Barton 1B  
DeJesus DH  
Willingham LF  
Kouzmanoff 3B

Suzuki C

Miller CF

Carson RF

Tolleson SS

Outman P

Also scheduled to pitch: Joe Bateman, Bobby Cramer, Danny Farquhar, Trystan Magnuson, Yadel Marti

Pennington's on the road because the Padres have a righty (Mat Latos) going, and Geren would rather have Pennington swing from the left side since he's not quite swinging with equal intensity from the right side yet because of his shoulder. He'll get at least two at-bats today -- maybe three -- and will likely continue to play every other day, depending on how he feels.

## **INDEPENDENT BASEBALL Yanks' Prior, A's Cramer and Riveras draw early attention**

Bob Wirz, Stamford Advocate, 3/5/2011

When it comes to what could be significant news in major league spring training camps, some of those in the spotlight include pitchers Mark Prior and Bobby Cramer, both off stints with the Orange County (Fullerton, CA) Flyers of the Golden League, as well as catchers Mike and Rene Rivera.

Prior is getting the attention from the New York Yankees one expects to give a onetime No. 2 selection in the entire free agent draft and the No. 3 ranking vote-getter for National League Cy Young Award honors when he won 18 games for the '03 Chicago Cubs even though he has not been in the majors since 2006. "He is competing (for the last spot in the bullpen) and we're going to watch him," Yankees Manager Joe Girardi told The New York Post recently. "I think the biggest thing with Mark is you just have to see how his body's holding up, physically how he feels." Prior has had all sorts of injuries the last four years before starting a comeback with 22 strikeouts in only 11 innings (0-0, 0.00) late last season in the Golden League.

Cramer could be one of the bright lights for Independent Baseball this season since he is widely acknowledged to be one of the candidates for the No. 5 slot in Oakland's rotation based on his 2-1, 3.04 trial in four starts late last season. The 31-year-old southpaw turned in two shutout innings to start the Athletics' 4-3 win over Cleveland Wednesday, a contest that saw the victory credited to Gabe DeHoyos, who spent the first two and a half years in his nine-year minor league career in the bullpen for Schaumburg, IL (Northern League). Cramer has allowed one run in his first four spring innings.

Mike Rivera, who has had his best major league success with Milwaukee, saw his chances of opening the season with the Brewers once again improve when regular catcher Jonathan Lucroy went down for about a month with a fractured pinkie finger. This leaves Rivera, who played for a time in the Atlantic League (Atlantic City, NJ), in position to battle holdover George Kottaras and Wil Nieves for the catching jobs until Lucroy returns, which likely will be in the first few days of the regular season.

Meanwhile, media speculation in the Minnesota camp is that Rene Rivera, who has only 53 major league games in his decade as a pro and was at Camden, NJ for the early part of last year's Atlantic League season (.280-7-19), is the most likely candidate should the Twins need a third catcher behind All-Star Joe Mauer and backup Drew Butera at any time this season.

From the American Association to Champion Quipster: The best line I have seen come out of a spring training camp was credited to onetime Fort Worth, TX (American Association) hurler Luke Hochevar, who could be the ace this season for the Kansas City Royals.

Speaking of 5-foot-7 left-hander Tim Collins, who has a 95-mile-per-hour fastball and sharp-breaking curve on his side as he attempts to break into the Royals' bullpen, the 6-foot-5 Hochevar was quoted by The Associated Press:



"I just want to pick him up and burp him."

This is an excerpt from the column Bob Wirz writes year round on Independent Baseball. Fans may subscribe at [www.WirzandAssociates.com](http://www.WirzandAssociates.com), enjoy his blogs, [www.AtlanticLeagueBaseball.com](http://www.AtlanticLeagueBaseball.com) and [www.IndyBaseballChatter.com](http://www.IndyBaseballChatter.com), or comment to [RWirz@aol.com](mailto:RWirz@aol.com). The author has 16 years of major league baseball public relations experience with Kansas City and as spokesman for two Commissioners and lives in Stratford.