

A's News Clips, Tuesday, March 15, 2011

SEND THE A'S TO SAN JOSE

By Murray Chass, 3/13/2011

On the field the San Francisco Giants are defending World Series champions; off the field they are offensive world champion ingrates.

The Athletics of Oakland desperately want to become the Athletics of San Jose, but the Giants have erected a giant roadblock on Interstate 880 and have refused to let Lew Wolff's long-suffering team pass.

The Giants are free to block the freeway because Major League rule 1 (a) says the San Francisco circuit includes Santa Clara County "with respect to all Major League Clubs." San Jose is in Santa Clara County.

The Giants wear that rule on their executive suits as if it were the most prominent lettering on their players' black and orange uniforms.

The Giants claim San Jose as if it were their birthright. The truth is, however, that while the San Francisco Giants, who were snatched from New York, were born in 1958, Santa Clara County slipped into their "circuit" only in 1990.

The team's current administration presumably knows this story, but its top two officials, managing partner and chief executive officer William Neukom and president and chief operating officer Laurence Baer, were not there when the Giants were given Santa Clara County as a gift from Walter Haas Jr.

Haas was the owner of the Oakland Athletics in 1990. Before June 14 of that year, Santa Clara County was open territory. Under major league rules, it wasn't San Francisco territory, and it wasn't Oakland territory.

It was territory shared by the two teams, just as territory was then and is now shared by the two New York teams, the two Chicago teams and the two southern California teams — Anaheim and Los Angeles (that's right; contrary to baseball's bizarre geographical designation Los Angeles doesn't have two teams).

The Giants of 1990 were having trouble, not unlike the Athletics of 2011. They found it intolerable and unworkable to stay at Candlestick Park in San Francisco, and they couldn't get voters to approve funds for a new park. Bob Lurie, the owner, wanted to move south — not to San Jose but to Santa Clara, two miles north of San Jose.

However, because Santa Clara County was shared territory, the Giants needed approval from the Athletics. Haas could have made that a difficult process for the Giants. He could have demanded some payment from the Giants; he could have held them up for future consideration.

He could have demanded a player, as his predecessor, Charlie Finley, did when he let his manager, Chuck Tanner, go to Pittsburgh in 1976 for Manny Sanguillen. Haas, however, did none of those. He simply said OK.

"He was a gentleman," said Fay Vincent, who was the baseball commissioner at the time. "He realized Lurie was struggling and wanted to help him."

Neukom, who has not been inclined to help Wolff, apparently doesn't buy the Haas story, but I can't be certain. When he answered the telephone in his office at AT&T Park Friday, he said he couldn't discuss the San Jose situation. "I'm sorry," he said. "The commissioner has asked us not to discuss it."

Just one question, I said. "Are you familiar with how San Jose became Giants territory?"

"There is very plain history," he said without saying what the history was, then added, "There's an urban myth running around out there. I wish I could comment, but I can't."

He didn't relate the urban myth, and I can only guess what he meant. The myth, I think Neukom thinks, is the story about Haas' willingness to let the Giants have Santa Clara.

But Vincent wouldn't make it up. The man is too honest, the most honest man I have ever encountered in baseball.

In addition, I asked a former baseball executive about the Haas story. "One hundred percent accurate," he said. The minutes from the 1990 meeting, which another baseball person has seen, also confirm the story.

Even better, Bud Selig, the current commissioner, who was the Milwaukee Brewers' owner then, acknowledged the story. "I know the story," he said when I mentioned it to him. "I was there."

Selig was at the owners' meeting in Cleveland June 14, 1990, when the Giants formally gained Santa Clara County for its territory.

"The owners unanimously voted to approve the Giants' proposed move out of Candlestick Park, which could occur by the start of the 1994 season," the Associated Press reported. It then quoted Commissioner Vincent:

"The San Francisco franchise now occupies, within our rules, the territory including both San Francisco and Santa Clara County and one other county (San Mateo)."

The article went on to say that Lurie had sought permission to move the team 45 miles south to Santa Clara, where a proposal to build a new stadium awaited.

The stadium, however, was not approved for construction, and the Giants remained in San Francisco. At the same time, Santa Clara County stayed in the Giants' "circuit," where it remains today.

"There was never any intention to give the Giants rights to the territory other than allowing them to move there," Sandy Alderson, who was the A's general manager in 1990, said in a telephone interview. "I think Walter's probable thinking was if they moved it would be better for us. But it was more altruistic on Walter's part to allow them to move there."

Neukom, the Giants' owner, might not believe the Haas story, but the evidence overwhelmingly supports it. Perhaps it serves Neukom's purpose to deny it because he can more easily justify his refusal to relinquish the Giants' unreasonable hold on San Jose.

If Neukom were as gracious to the A's as Haas was to the Giants, the matter could be settled and the A's could soon be playing in San Jose.

"We're waiting for the commissioner to decide what to," Mayor Chuck Reed of San Jose said when I asked him his city's position on the matter.

Waiting for a Selig decision on San Jose is like waiting for Godot. Nearly two years ago – March 30, 2009 – the commissioner appointed a three-man committee to study the situation, and it has had more than enough time to report to him.

Selig's response when I asked him what's taking so long? "I have a committee that has worked very hard and continues to and there's nothing new. We've been hard at work for a long time looking at all the alternatives."

"It's a very complex situation," he added. "I understand it's taken quite a while but there are many factors at stake. But we're going to study it thoroughly."

The committee, however, has had time to study it exhaustively. One can only guess that Selig doesn't want to have to make a decision that he is waiting for the Giants to do a Walter Haas.

But that apparently isn't going to happen. All the Giants say is San Jose is ours, and it's critical to our revenue and fan base. The study committee has had enough time to determine the validity of that claim.

What percentage of AT&T Park fans comes from the San Jose-Santa Clara area? What are the Giants' television and radio ratings in Santa Clara County? How many advertisers do they get from the area? How much signage at AT&T Park comes from businesses in that area? How many sponsorship deals do they have from area establishments, and what is their value?

San Jose is the third largest city in California after Los Angeles and San Diego and the 10th largest in the country. Located in the well-known Silicon Valley, it is home to the world's largest collection of technology companies, more than 6,600 employing more than 250,000 people.

It is one of only two cities in the top 12 in population – San Antonio is the other – that don't have a major league baseball team. It is also one of the few cities, if not the only viable city, where a major league team has a chance to be successful.

When the Giants flirted with a move 20 years ago, they eyed Santa Clara, not San Jose. But the two-decade delay has given San Jose time to develop as a prime destination.

Six months ago, 75 Silicon Valley business leaders wrote an open letter to the commissioner urging him to find Major League Baseball's way to San Jose. Among the signers of the letter were chief executive officers of Cisco, Yahoo, eBay, SunPower and Adobe Systems. The Athletics should have such an impressive lineup.

It remains to be seen, of course, if those c.e.o.s will get to root for their home team from their luxury suites at 32,000-seat, \$460-million, privately-built Cisco Field.

"I don't know; you'll have to ask Selig," Wolff said when asked why he thought a decision was so long forthcoming. "He wanted to get all the factual information. I don't know why it's taken so long. We're waiting. It's going on two years."

At 75, Wolff is a year younger than Selig, who was a classmate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "I'm in baseball because of Bud," the real estate developer said. "I am enjoying the baseball experience tremendously. When I joined Bud suggested that you put baseball first and your team a close second. I like the idea of a partnership. I like the fact that there is somebody who makes the final decision."

Except Bill Neukom isn't being a very good partner, and Selig is taking an excruciatingly long time to make a decision. It has been suggested that Selig doesn't want to make a decision because he doesn't want to invite a Giants' lawsuit, which others have raised as a possibility.

But Wolff said, "That doesn't sound like the Giants I know. We're not looking to have a legal battle. We're looking to do what's best for baseball."

On that basis, the decision should be simple. Sending the A's to San Jose would create a vibrant new Major League Baseball home and clean up a mess of a two-team territory.

But it has also been suggested that Selig may be reluctant to find in Wolff's favor because he could be accused of acting on the basis of their long-term friendship.

"I think that aspect of it is not a factor especially after two years," Wolff said. "If he was leaning toward me he would have done that a long time ago. I want him to review it on the merits. By this point you'd think it's an irrelevant point."

By this point, you'd think the commissioner would have worked something out. Most severely, he could have used his "best interests" powers and removed San Jose from the Giants' circuit and awarded it to the Athletics. That, however, isn't the way Selig likes to operate.

How about an economic solution then? As the San Jose mayor said, "It's always about the money. The Giants are trying to get money out of somebody to allow them to move."

Selig could propose a deal. From now until the A's would move to San Jose, the Giants could determine how much revenue they gain each year from Santa Clara County – ticket sales, advertising, sponsorship, etc.

The A's would indemnify the Giants – for a period to be determined – for that annual amount minus additional revenue the Giants would gain from the Athletics' absence from Oakland. The Giants would certainly sell tickets to some fans deserted by the A's.

Right now the San Francisco-Oakland area is the smallest two-team region in the majors and probably should have been stripped of one team long ago.

Some people in Oakland feel the A's haven't exhausted all of their possibilities in Oakland, but Wolff said, "We have. We see no other option in Oakland."

The city's officials had little to say. "We're talking to them," Sue Piper, the mayor's press secretary, said. "We continue to look at possibilities for a new stadium."

For two years before he bought the A's in 2005, Wolff worked for them as vice president for venue development. His sole role was seeking possible sites for a new park. He didn't find one that was acceptable to everyone.

As owner, he worked on a deal to move the team to nearby Fremont, which was in the Athletics' territory, but it fell through.

"I didn't have San Jose in mind because I tried everything in Oakland," Wolff said. "We tried Fremont in our district. We spent \$30 million on that.

Now, except for the fact that it's being delayed, this is a shovel-ready project."

And if San Jose doesn't materialize in the A's future?

"We will abide with the decision either way," Wolff said. If it's no go? "We'll reconvene among ourselves and discuss it," he said. "We won't sue."

Oakland Athletics closer Andrew Bailey is forced to leave game with injury to right elbow and forearm

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

GOODYEAR, Ariz. -- A's closer Andrew Bailey left Monday's game against the Cleveland Indians with an injury to his right elbow and forearm.

The severity is unknown, but Bailey is scheduled to fly to Birmingham, Ala., and be examined Tuesday by orthopedic specialist Dr. James Andrews.

Taking into account Bailey's history of elbow trouble, it's a potentially major blow for the A's and their two-time All-Star reliever.

With one out in the bottom of the seventh, Bailey threw a pitch to Ezequiel Carrera and then grabbed his elbow. The right-hander exited the game and immediately left Goodyear Ballpark with A's head trainer Nick Paparesta.

A team spokesperson announced Bailey was experiencing "elbow soreness," though A's manager Bob Geren described it after the game as tightness in the forearm.

Later in the day, Bailey said in a text message that he had pain in both his elbow and forearm.

"I don't really know what's going on," Bailey said. "All I know is I'm seeing Dr. Andrews and will have more information after that."

Bailey underwent elbow ligament replacement (or "Tommy John") surgery in 2004 while at Wagner College and made a full recovery, winning American League Rookie of the Year honors in 2009.

He was shut down last September when he had surgery, performed by Andrews, to clear out bone chips and spurs in the elbow. It was characterized as a minor procedure, and the A's were extra cautious in bringing Bailey along this spring.

He didn't make his exhibition debut until Thursday against Kansas City, throwing a 1-2-3 inning. Monday's outing was his second.

"All I know is being that I've had (Tommy John surgery) before, it didn't feel the same," Bailey said of Monday's injury. "But obviously, that's what I first thought when I felt it. I'm hoping it's not too serious."

Geren was asked how concerned he was.

"Any time you see somebody leave a game with tightness, it's concerning," Geren said. "But we're going to reserve judgment until he gets checked out."

Asked if Bailey showed any signs of physical problems leading up to Monday, Geren said his closer had "just normal soreness and stuff between outings."

But Bailey originally was scheduled to pitch Sunday, and Geren acknowledged that Bailey required an extra day of rest: "We gave him whatever time he needed and thought he was ready to go."

Geren said Bailey's fastball hit 94 mph Monday.

Brian Fuentes, a four-time All-Star closer whom the A's signed in the winter to be a setup man, is the logical choice to close if Bailey misses significant time.

The A's are thought to be challengers in the American League West, and their bullpen depth is a big reason for such optimism.

But their relief corps has been dinged up. Michael Wuertz had shoulder soreness, but he has recovered and is scheduled to pitch in his first game Tuesday.

Craig Breslow, slowed by a hamstring injury, was scheduled to throw off a mound Monday and could pitch in his first game Saturday.

Losing Bailey for any length of time would be a major hit, though it's fair to say the A's are better equipped to withstand losing their closer than other teams might be.

Starting pitcher Dallas Braden allowed six runs (four earned) and seven hits in four innings in the A's 9-8 loss to Cleveland. And though his defense faltered a bit behind him, Braden didn't have great command and hasn't been sharp through four spring starts.

His ERA is 10.13 in 102/3 innings.

Despite the numbers, Braden considered Monday a step forward. He said he's abandoning his curve -- an early experiment in camp -- and returning to a slider.

"The positive was his breaking ball," Geren said. "The negative was his location with the fastball."

Braden hit two batters and walked one.

Chris Carter, who started at first base, drilled two homers for the A's. The first, a solo shot, hit the scoreboard well beyond the left field wall in the sixth. He added a two-run, opposite-field homer to right-center in the eighth.

One Indians beat writer said Carter's first homer was the first he'd seen reach the scoreboard at Goodyear Ballpark, now in its third year.

"I'm not too familiar with this ballpark," Geren said, "but I can't imagine one going much farther."

Geren said Rich Harden aggravated his side muscle injury and will visit a doctor.

Chris Townsend will be back as host of the A's radio call-in show on KTRB (860-AM), the team announced.

Former A's pitcher Mark Mulder was among the candidates to replace Carney Lansford as a Comcast studio analyst for A's games. But Mulder is believed to be in line for an ESPN gig, and Comcast has yet to announce a hire.

Chin Music: A's closer Andrew Bailey leaves game with arm injury; status unknown

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 3/14/2011 4:51PM

You can read a story on A's closer Andrew Bailey, [who left Monday's game against Cleveland with an arm injury](#), at [contracostatimes.com](#) and [insidebayarea.com](#). Bailey left after grabbing his elbow in the seventh inning, and manager Bob Geren had few details after the game besides saying Bailey had tightness in his forearm. The A's originally announced it as elbow soreness.

More details will be added to the online story shortly. ...

Chin Music: Kevin Kouzmanoff's wardrobe malfunction and other A's tidbits

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 3/14/2011 11:04AM

Pretty entertaining scene today as the A's took the field to stretch. They're on the road against Cleveland, so the entire team was wearing their gray pants -- except third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff. He came out wearing his bright white home pants, sticking out like a sore thumb and hearing it from his teammates. Sometimes Kouzmanoff wanders around the clubhouse as if he's in his own little world, so I'm not too surprised. ... Speaking of Kouzmanoff, a standard he set during the 2010 regular season is carrying on this spring -- the guy spends more time signing autographs and chatting with fans than anyone else on the team.

On to the news ...

–Rich Harden experienced a setback with his injured lat muscle while throwing long toss Sunday, so he's going to get checked by a doctor, according to manager Bob Geren. It seems safe to say Harden will stay in Phoenix and work in extended spring training when the major league club heads north for the regular season.

–After Sunday's regular season-style lineup, the A's will start just four regulars against the Indians today. They occupy the first four spots in the order:

Crisp CF; Kouzmanoff 3B; Willingham LF; Matsui DH; Carter 1B; Powell C; Carson RF; Weeks 2B; Sogard SS; Braden LHP.

I wouldn't read too much into Kouzmanoff batting second. But I was intrigued by him hitting eighth Sunday. Geren said he'll continue experimenting with the bottom half of the order during exhibitions to see what he likes.

–Dallas Braden has not been concerned about his three lackluster starts so far, but the lefty needs to start putting together some quality outings.

–Gio Gonzalez will pitch in a simulated game Wednesday, when the A's are off. That keeps him on his regular five-day turn. Judging by the pitching schedules, Gonzalez is the logical candidate to get the ball for the April 1 opener against Seattle. As it stands, his turn would come March 31, but the A's may take the opportunity to give him the extra day's rest. But Geren – who's in midseason form with his "Don't Tip My Hand" philosophy – pointed out he has some cushion to adjust the rotation leading up to the opener. The A's don't play March 31, and they've got another day off April 4. But Gonzalez's sterling form so far makes him a strong contender for the opener.

–The daily bullpen updates: Michael Wuertz is still scheduled to make his exhibition debut Tuesday; Craig Breslow is throwing off the mound today, and Geren said Saturday is a possibility for the lefty's first game. "That's a solid 12 days before Opening Day," Geren said. "I'll take it." ... Closer Andrew Bailey will make his second appearance today.

–Reliever Danny Farquhar was reassigned to minor league camp this morning.

–A little radio news: The A's confirmed that Chris Townsend will be back hosting the call-in show before and after every regular season game on KTRB. His first broadcast is March 28, the first game of the Bay Bridge Series against the Giants.

A's Andrew Bailey exits with elbow injury

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Andrew Bailey was disappointed to end last season on the disabled list, and now it looks as if the A's two-time All-Star might open the season on the DL, making Brian Fuentes the potential closer come April 1.

Bailey appeared to hurt his twice-surgically repaired right elbow while throwing a pitch to Cleveland's Ezequiel Carrera in the seventh inning on Monday. Bailey sat on the mound as trainer Nick Paparesta examined him, then came off the field holding his elbow, which is never a good sign.

"All I know is that, being that I've had Tommy John surgery before, it didn't feel the same," Bailey said in a text message. "But obviously that's what I thought when I felt it."

Bailey said he will travel to Alabama today to consult Dr. James Andrews, who performed his September surgery. The team announced the injury as "elbow discomfort," and manager Bob Geren described it as forearm tightness. Bailey clarified that he felt both of those problems, which also is not a good sign.

A's general manager Billy Beane said he preferred not to comment until more information is available.

One of the reasons the A's spent extra money on relievers this past winter was that the bullpen was thinned by injuries toward the end of last season, including Bailey's elbow discomfort. He had elbow surgery in late September.

The A's were bringing him along slowly this spring, and he had made only one previous appearance, throwing 12 pitches and getting a 1-2-3 inning that included two strikeouts Thursday.

"He was doing everything we wanted him to do and moving right along," Geren said.

On Monday, Bailey retired one batter and allowed one hit and two runs, neither earned after a Michael Choice error in center. Bailey hit 94 mph on the radar gun.

Oakland signed two prominent free-agent relievers in the offseason, Fuentes, a lefty, and right-hander Grant Balfour. Fuentes would be the clear choice to close if Bailey misses time - Fuentes is a four-time All-Star and has by far the most experience in the role, with 187 career saves. Michael Wuertz, Craig Breslow and Brad Ziegler all have some time pitching in the ninth, too.

Wuertz will make his spring debut today after some shoulder tendinitis, and Breslow (left hamstring) has yet to pitch in a game. He threw a side session Monday and is scheduled to work in a minor-league simulated game Wednesday, with an eye toward getting into Saturday's game against the White Sox.

Bailey had Tommy John surgery in 2004 while in college. September's cleanup surgery addressed some remaining scar tissue and bone chips.

A's beat: Dallas Braden, not worried about high ERA, has decide to give up on curve. **B6**

Cactus League recap

Monday's score: Indians 9, A's 8

Notable: Chris Carter slammed a homer off the scoreboard in left in the sixth and added a two-run shot in the eighth. "I can't imagine one going much farther," manager Bob Geren said of the first. ... Coco Crisp hit a two-run triple in the third off Justin Masterson. ... The A's had several defensive miscues Monday, with two botched potential double plays and one dropped flyball.

Quotable: "No comment."

- A's starter Dallas Braden, who is usually extraordinarily expansive, when asked about Oakland's defensive snafus in the infield Monday

Today's game: A's (Brandon McCarthy) at Kansas City (Nate Adcock), 1:05 p.m.; Cubs (Andrew Cashner) at A's (Brett Anderson); 1:05 p.m.

Braden tosses the curve, goes back to slider

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Dallas Braden has a spring ERA of 10.13, but he wasn't terribly unhappy with Monday's outing against the Indians, despite allowing seven hits and six runs, four earned.

Braden has concentrated on his breaking ball this spring, and after trying out a curveball, he has ditched it and returned to his slider, citing an insufficient separation in speed between the curve and his changeup. He liked the way the slider worked Monday, calling it his best pitch. He also thought his arm had bounced back well from his previous start.

Manager **Bob Geren** confirmed before the game that another lefty starter, **Gio Gonzalez**, will not start Thursday, but will work in a minor-league simulated game Wednesday, the A's day off. **Trevor Cahill** is still scheduled to start on Friday, and Gonzalez remains the most logical choice for Opening Night starter based on the current rotation. He'd get an extra day off somewhere, possibly on the A's day off before the April 1 opener.

Geren emphasized that the team has a lot of flexibility and can adjust the starters as needed before Opening Night.

Harden setback: **Rich Harden** had been scheduled to throw off the mound today for the first time in a month, but instead, he has been shelved again after feeling more lat discomfort.

Harden's chances of making the roster out of camp have disappeared, and it's unclear what the team's plans are for him when he has recovered, if he'll be prepared to start or targeted for the bullpen.

Briefly: Right-hander **Danny Farquhar** was sent to minor-league camp. ... **Cliff Pennington** has been cleared to hit right-handed, and will do so today if a left-hander pitches in relief. He might hit off Gonzalez and **Craig Breslow** on Wednesday. ... The A's announced that **Chris Townsend** will return as the radio pre- and postgame host on KTRB (860 AM).

Drumbeat: Harden shut down again, Breslow news, and...Opening Day starter?

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Glendale, Ariz. 3/14/2011 11:25AM

I know, I know, you've read it all before and you're tired of it, but today's news is that Rich Harden, who'd been slated to throw off the mound tomorrow, instead has been shut down because of continued lat muscle discomfort. He's being sent to see Dr. Doug Freedberg.

So there goes any shot at all at an Opening Day roster spot, including in the bullpen. Nobody's officially saying that, but Harden hasn't pitched off the mound in a month and the A's break camp in less than two weeks. It will be interesting to see what the plan is with Harden when he returns to full health - I'd guess getting him stretched out, because fifth-starter front-runner Brandon McCarthy also has a long injury history. When the A's signed both the same week during the winter, many people felt it was a "maybe between the two of them, we'll have one healthy guy" kind of move. That's a little cynical, perhaps, but both are good options when they are sound.

The news is much better with Craig Breslow, who is throwing a side session today and then tentatively scheduled to pitch in a simulated game in minor-league camp on Wednesday, the team's day off. If all goes well, he could pitch in Saturday's game, and manager Bob Geren believes that's plenty of time for the set-up man to be ready for the regular season.

Gio Gonzalez also will get in work in that Wednesday minor-league game, and I still believe - my speculation only - that he's now the most likely Opening Day starter, as I mentioned in the paper two days ago. Trevor Cahill's next start isn't getting moved up, he's still scheduled for Friday, he said. The A's could shuffle things around to put him in line for Opening Day still, sure, but he'd have to either pitch on short rest once or get several extra days of rest somewhere or other.

With Gonzalez going on Wednesday, rather than his previously scheduled Thursday, he'd get an extra day of rest somewhere before Opening Night, if he is in fact the pitcher chosen for the assignment. The A's have a day off before Opening Night, and they have gotten several Opening Day starters an extra day that week in some previous seasons.

Geren emphasized that there remains a lot of flexibility - starters could go get work in minor-league camp, they could get days off, the schedule could change. But right now, the guy who'd make the most sense given the schedule would be Gonzalez. Unless I have really awful math, which is always a possibility. I counted it out several times on the schedule, but that's never stopped me from being wrong before.

Other notes: Eric Sogard is starting at shortstop, but there's a chance he'd play defense only and give way to Steve Tolleson if Sogard's sore left thumb isn't quite ready to hit today. I am convinced that Sogard is the frontrunner for the backup infield spot from the current pool of candidates; he's better at short than some of the other options, he can hit a little, and the A's like him a lot. They're still likely to be scouring the waiver wire for possibilities between now and April 1.

One scout just told me his club has some good backup infielders to deal (and they do), but the team would want a back-end-of-the-rotation starter in return. The A's aren't going to do that for a backup infielder.

The A's announced that Chris Townsend is returning as pre- and post-game host on 860 AM, which is not at all unexpected, but I'm glad to hear it. I found Townsend to be passionate and honest about the team last year, and that's something fans appreciate.

Here's the lineup behind Dallas Braden: Crisp cf, Kouzmanoff 3b, Willingham lf, Matsui dh, Carter 1b, Powell c, Carson rf, Weeks 2b, Sogard ss

Braden, who has a great knack for one-liners, is now on Twitter. He's @DallasBraden209.

The A's will be on the MLB Network's 30-in-30 tonight at 5.

Ben Mankiewicz, one of the hosts on the Turner Classic Movie channel (love TCM!), wrote a [terrific appreciation of Mitchell Page today for the Huffington Post](#). Great stuff, and I know many of you will relate to this piece.

Bailey's injury overshadows Carter's homers

By Jordan Bastian / MLB.com

GOODYEAR, Ariz. -- Chris Carter launched a pair of tape-measure blasts against the Indians at Goodyear Ballpark on Monday afternoon, displaying the type of power that has helped him develop into one of the top prospect in the A's organization.

The show that Carter put on in a 9-8 loss to Cleveland was overshadowed by the potential loss of Oakland closer Andrew Bailey. In the seventh inning, Bailey grabbed his right elbow following a pitch to Ezequiel Carrera, exiting the game with discomfort in the joint.

Over the past two seasons, Bailey has developed into a premier relief pitcher for the A's, fashioning a 1.70 ERA and piling up 51 saves during that time period. The 2009 American League Rookie of the Year and two-time All-Star had surgery in September to clean up his right elbow, which was previously operated on in 2005.

Carter's two home runs -- a solo shot off the scoreboard in left field in the sixth inning and deep to right field in the eighth -- both came against Indians right-hander Jeanmar Gomez. Over 2 2/3 innings, Gomez allowed three runs on three hits with two walks and one strikeout. He is competing for the fifth spot in Cleveland's rotation.

"Pretty impressive," Indians manager Manny Acta said of Carter. "This kid hit two of the hardest balls I've seen hit in Spring Training so far. That was the last thing I wanted to see in the last inning was him coming up again."

Indians starter Justin Masterson, who is guaranteed a spot in the rotation, was charged with five runs on seven hits over four innings. The right-hander finished with four strikeouts and no walks. Masterson allowed five extra-base hits, including a two-run triple to Coco Crisp in the third.

A's starter Dallas Braden yielded six runs (four earned) on seven hits over four innings, having his Cactus League ERA rise to 10.13 in the process. Former Oakland infielder and current Indians third baseman Jack Hannahan chipped in with a two-run double off Braden in the second inning. Travis Hafner and Shelley Duncan added run-scoring doubles in the third.

The Indians plated the winning run in the bottom of the eighth inning when Chad Huffman's sac fly against Neil Wagner scored Adam Everett -- who led off the inning with a single before taking third on Luis Valbuena's single.

Up next for the A's: The A's will take part in a dose of split-squad action on Tuesday, when Brett Anderson takes the mound at home against the Cubs, while fifth-starter candidate Brandon McCarthy gets the nod in Surprise, Ariz., for a meeting with the Royals. Also slated to take to the bump is right-hander Michael Wuertz, who is scheduled to make his Cactus League debut after missing a couple of weeks because of shoulder soreness. Both games begin at 1:05 p.m. PT.

Up next for the Indians: Right-hander Mitch Talbot -- guaranteed a spot in the Indians' starting rotation -- will aim to shake off some early Spring Training struggles when he takes the hill against the Brewers on Tuesday in a 4:05 p.m. ET tilt

at Goodyear Ballpark. Talbot has posted a 17.55 ERA through his first three spring outings for the Tribe. Chris Perez, Anthony Reyes, Jensen Lewis, Justin Germano and Vinnie Pestano are also slated to pitch for Cleveland.

Bailey to visit Dr. Andrews on Tuesday

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

GOODYEAR, Ariz. -- A's closer Andrew Bailey will make a visit to renowned orthopedic surgeon James Andrews in Alabama on Tuesday, after experiencing discomfort in his right elbow and forearm during Monday's meeting with the Indians.

Bailey winced in pain as he reached for his elbow following a pitch to Cleveland's Ezequiel Carrera with one out in the seventh inning, and he quickly departed the game with the club's head trainer by his side and his future -- widely unclear because of his injury-prone past -- in limbo.

The news comes just four days after Bailey made his spring debut, when he struck out two Royals and retired the side in order. He was brought along slowly this spring after undergoing cleanup surgery, administered by Andrews, on his previously repaired right elbow two weeks before the end of the 2010 campaign. He underwent Tommy John surgery while in college in 2005.

The 26-year-old righty said the pain was not similar to what he experienced in the past, though he admitted he doesn't know much at this point, and is just "hoping it's not too serious."

A's manager Bob Geren said Bailey recently felt normal soreness that creeps up during Spring Training, but that he believed he was ready to go. Bailey's velocity, Geren noted, "was good before that pitch [to Carrera]," as evidenced by a 94-mph reading on the radar gun.

"Anytime you see someone leave the game with tightness, it's concerning," Geren said, "but we'll reserve judgment until after he gets checked out."

Bailey's late-season elbow injury marked his second time being sidelined in 2010, as he missed nearly a month while stationed on the disabled list with a right intercostal strain beginning in late July. Still, Bailey managed to garner his second straight All-Star appearance, and compiled a 1.47 ERA, 25 saves and a 0.96 WHIP in 47 appearances.

The 2009 American League Rookie of the Year has put together a 1.70 ERA with 51 saves over the past two seasons, while emerging from Double-A obscurity to premier Major League relief pitcher.

In the event Bailey is not ready for the season, the A's are likely to turn to offseason pickup Brian Fuentes, who hasn't allowed a run in five outings this spring. The four-time All-Star lefty, who led the Majors with 48 saves for the Angels in 2009, limited opponents to a .181 batting average -- fifth-lowest among AL relievers -- in 2010, while finishing 4-1 with a 2.81 ERA and 24 saves for the Angels and Twins.

A's general manager Billy Beane spent much of the winter stocking up on depth, particularly in the bullpen, after watching his club make use of the disabled list 23 times last year.

Major League: Update on Bailey

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 3/14/2011 4:10PM

It's really hard to speculate on the extent of Andrew Bailey's injury right now. The A's announced he left the game with elbow discomfort, but Geren said after the game he "felt tightness in the forearm area." He'll be checked out as soon as possible, though Geren wasn't certain if he'd be examined by a doctor today or tomorrow. The A's skipper said Bailey had been experiencing normal soreness that creeps up during Spring Training, but that they believed he was ready to go today. Geren also noted that his velocity was good - said he even hit 94. But, "anytime you see someone leave the game with tightness, it's concerning." Hopefully more answers will come shortly.

A's Bailey seeing elbow specialist

ASSOCIATED PRESS

A's closer Andrew Bailey is scheduled to be evaluated today by renowned elbow specialist Dr. James Andrews in Birmingham, Ala.

Bailey, the 2009 AL Rookie of the Year and a two-time All-Star, left Monday's 9-8 spring-training loss to the Cleveland Indians at Goodyear, Ariz., with elbow discomfort in his pitching arm after facing three batters. He was shut down near the end of last season with an elbow injury.

He got an out, a batter reached on an error, then Bailey yielded an RBI double to Travis Hafner and was visited at the mound by manager Bob Geren and the A's training staff.

After a couple of moments of discussion, Bailey walked to the dugout.

The right-hander has been on a strict regimen this spring. This was his second outing. He struck out two in one inning in his first appearance.

The A's said they would provide more information on Bailey's status once it was available.

Bailey has 51 saves and a 1.70 ERA over his first two major league seasons.

Chris Carter had three RBIs on two home runs for Oakland, including a thundering shot off the scoreboard well beyond the left-field fence.

A's starter Dallas Braden allowed six runs — four earned — in four innings. The A's were charged with two errors and had other miscues such as failing to cover second base on a rundown.

Jack Hannahan and Shelley Duncan each hit a two-run double and Travis Hafner drove in two runs with two doubles for Cleveland.

Indians starter Justin Masterson gave up five runs over four innings. He struck out four without a walk.

Time to worry about baseball's injured and ineffective? Maybe

By [Jorge L. Ortiz](#), USA TODAY 3/15/2011

8:45 p.m. update: The A's said two-time All-Star closer Andrew Bailey will have a consultation tomorrow with orthopedic surgeon James Andrews because of elbow discomfort that forced him out of an exhibition game today. Bailey, who had Tommy John elbow surgery in 2004, underwent a cleanup procedure toward the end of last season.

SARASOTA, Fla. — After 2½ weeks of Grapefruit and Cactus league games, we're starting to get a read on the regular-season prospects for some individual players, both from the performance and health standpoints.

Some players are clearly worth worrying about because they're such big figures. The knee woes Chase Utley and Carlos Beltran are dealing with and Johan Santana's reported shoulder setback are certainly cause for concern. Other injuries or spring struggles aren't worth the bother. We try to shed some light on which is which.

WORRY:

- **Brian Roberts, back spasms:** The Orioles second baseman is due for an MRI today, and that's enough for the baseball-loving population in Baltimore to go, "Uh-oh." Roberts, the catalyst of the Orioles offense, was limited to 59 games last year because of a herniated disk. His replacement as a leadoff hitter? Probably J.J. Hardy, who has a career on-base percentage of .323. Uh-oh indeed.
- **Daisuke Matsuzaka, 11.42 ERA in three starts:** Matsuzaka had said he would approach his start last Thursday as if it were a regular-season game, after two horrid previous outings. He didn't fare any better, giving up five runs

in 3 2/3 innings and continuing his maddening trend of falling behind hitters. Matsuzaka, who is tinkering with his between-starts routine, is now the subject of trade rumors. Asked whether he was concerned about his lack of effectiveness, Matsuzaka said through an interpreter, "At this point I'm not too worried about it, but I feel it's not great."

- **Matt LaPorta, .147 average in 34 spring at-bats:** The punchless Indians desperately need for LaPorta, the key acquisition in the CC Sabathia trade, to live up to his impressive minor-league numbers. That didn't happen last season, when LaPorta was bouncing back from hip and foot surgeries, but he's healthy now. His OPS is a sickly .518. Still, it's early.

NOT WORRY:

- **Ryan Braun, strained rib cage:** The Milwaukee Brewers left fielder banged into an outfield wall in pregame drills Saturday, then left the game and sat out Sunday's, which was a previously scheduled day off. Braun said he feels great, his swing is in good shape and he doesn't need the at-bats. Braun has played in at least 150 games in each of the last three seasons, so his durability and ability to produce are well established.
- **Joe Mauer, zero Grapefruit League appearances:** The Minnesota Twins All-Star didn't catch his first bullpen session until Saturday, as he tries to ease back into the lineup following offseason surgery on his left knee. Mauer figures to see his first game action sometime this week and doesn't sound concerned about getting his swing ready for the season. Remember, he missed the first month of 2009 with a back injury, then went on to win the AL MVP award.
- **Jimmy Rollins, .231 average, .286 OBP:** Rollins is coming off back-to-back down seasons and he's now 32, a combination that should raise some eyebrows. But his spring performance shouldn't. Going into his 11th season, Rollins understands the purpose of spring training for a veteran. Plus, if he needed any more motivation to bounce back, he's a free agent after the season.

Stassi trying to make impression with A's in Arizona

HARRELL MILLER Napa Valley Register 3/15/2011

PHOENIX — Most of the players I've talked with in the last few years come to spring training with impressive college baseball credentials.

They've usually played three years on teams which many consider to be the baseball equivalent of Class A and Double-A.

Of course, they don't play as many games in college as they would have played in the minors, but they've collected transcripts full of credits which, given time and effort down the road, they'll turn into college degrees.

For a considerable number of players, this is the way to go.

However, it's not for everyone.

Occasionally, there is the "kid just out of high school" who attracts attention.

Suddenly, there is more than just a college scholarship on the table. There's a professional baseball contract with elements that make the scholarship pale a bit by comparison.

Such was the case for the youngest player in Oakland's spring camp.

Max Stassi will turn 20 this week.

Already the young catcher has 124 professional games and one and a half spring trainings under his belt.

Max graduated from Yuba City High School in 2009 with a baseball record unlike anything YCHS had ever seen before.

As a senior he was the Tri-County Conference Co-Player of the Year with a batting average of .538, which included 11 home runs and 38 RBIs.

Suddenly, everyone was interested in Max.

UCLA offered him a scholarship to play baseball for the Bruins, and the Athletics drafted him in the fourth round of the 2009 draft.

It took most of the summer for the A's to put together an offer. Meanwhile, Max went to UCLA to explore the scholarship they had offered him.

"I went to freshman orientation," he told me, "and realized that, at least for the time being, this wasn't for me.

"The only reason I was considering UCLA was to play baseball."

When the Oakland offer finally made it to the table on the last day that new players could be signed, Max knew that that was what he wanted.

"It made sense to sign and go ahead and get my career rolling," he said.

Of course it didn't hurt that the contract the Athletics offered him contained one of the biggest signing bonuses for a fourth-round draftee that they had ever made — \$1.5 million just to sign his name.

In addition the A's agreed to pay his college tuition when and if he wanted to go in that direction, and bring him to spring training in 2010.

He signed the contract and headed for Arizona where he appeared in one game in the Arizona Rookie League. He was immediately transferred to Oakland's Vancouver Canadians Class A short season team, where he played in 13 games before the end of the year.

Following 2010 spring training, Max spent the year in Illinois with Oakland's low Class A Kane County Cougars. He was there for the entire 140-game season.

He appeared in 110 games and was the catcher in 99 of them.

"I certainly got the Midwest experience," he said with a laugh, "really cold one day, really hot the next, and really cold the day after that.

"Actually, I had a good time in Illinois," he went on. "I stayed with a host family, but I had my own car which made it pretty nice."

On the field, things were a bit up and down. To be sure, they were up halfway through the season when he was named to the Midwest League All-Star Team.

However, they slipped a bit in August when he only hit .169. For the year, Max had 96 hits in 411 trips to the plate for a .229 batting average.

He's back in spring training this year as what is called a non-roster invitee.

His assumption is that he will spend a few more days with the big team before he and the other non-roster players move over to the team's Papago Complex, where minor league spring training is about to get underway.

Currently the A's have three catchers on their 40-man roster, with Max and another catcher among the non-roster invitees.

Consequently, he is doing his best to be realistic.

"Stockton would be fun," he answered, when I asked him about the year ahead.

"We'll see how it works out. I just go out and play hard every day. Enjoy my time, and know that one day it will be my turn."

No doubt Max will have more opportunity to "play hard" when things get underway at Papago. So far this spring he has only had one at-bat in two game appearances.

It is going to take a bit more than that to get to Oakland's high Class A Stockton Ports.

However, he is not without those who see his potential.

Baseball America, lists Max as No. 6 among the Athletics' top 10 prospects.

Obviously, the A's saw something they really liked in the kid from Yuba City.

As always in this business, time will tell.

Mitchell Page: What to Do When Your Boyhood Hero Dies

Ben Mankiewicz , Huffington Post, 3/14/2011

I'd met him only once, in passing. He didn't know my name or anything about me. He was a 59-year-old alcoholic who'd been battling those demons for years, probably decades.

But Mitchell Page was a huge part of my life, casting a shadow nearly as large as any friend or family member. He was a ballplayer, a left fielder and designated hitter for the Oakland A's from 1977-1983. And when I read he'd died this weekend, I felt a degree of sadness I suspect is reserved for just this situation - for boys who learn their favorite player, the object of their passion and love of a game, was gone.

I became a baseball fan because it connected me viscerally to my dad. But my father also loves James Joyce - and I can't read six words without getting a headache. So while my dad may have been the spark, Mitchell Page was my baseball sustenance. It was April 1977 and I was in my dad's home office in Washington, DC when he told me about a rookie slugger in Oakland who was tearing through American League pitching the first week of the season. He was strong, he was fast and he had a cool name. I was sold. With no team in Washington, my love affair with the A's and Page began that day. It has not abated.

I have friends whose favorite players are Chris Chambliss, Graig Nettles, Willie Randolph and Tom Seaver. But Page had something they lacked. He wasn't that good. I took great pride loving a ballplayer who played for a bad team and other than his tremendous rookie season, had a very ordinary career.

But that season was special. I don't need the Internet to check his stats. I know them like my phone number. A .307 average, 21 homers, 75 RBIs and 42 stolen bases - 25 in a row - a record at that point. His .405 on base percentage and .521 slugging percentage make it one of the great rookie seasons of the pre-steroid era. That Page lost the 1977 Rookie of the Year award to Baltimore's Eddie Murray is a miscarriage of baseball justice.

Mitchell Page was out of the majors after the 1984 season, but even though he was done playing, I wasn't done with him. He was on the cover of the *Sporting News* in June 1977. I ordered it on eBay. It's framed in my office. I have every baseball card from every pit stop he made in his career, from minor league teams in Charleston, Tacoma and Hawaii to a beauty of him playing Winter League ball for Magallenes in Venezuela.

And I've had two dogs in my life, both named in his honor. Otis (Page's middle name) and the beautiful creature currently snoring at my feet, Rookie, who's had nothing but great seasons.

When Page became a hitting coach, with St. Louis and then Washington, I was like a proud father. When he got the Cardinals job, I called all my friends to tell them. I was 35 at the time.

I'm not overstating it when I say he was one of the most respected and well-liked hitting coaches in the game, but he lost both those jobs to alcoholism. Clearly, he kept trying to get sober, but we all know how hard that can be.

When Mickey Mantle died, some really thoughtful people wrote wonderful essays about the metaphorical death of their childhood. But Mitchell Page wasn't Mickey Mantle. He had a spectacular debut, but never delivered a worthy encore performance.

Still, I was hoping something profound would come to me as I was writing. But it didn't. It's just a story that makes me sad and nostalgic. However, as I read stories about Page, I love hearing how well respected he was as a hitting coach, particularly working with younger players.

That feels right to me. Because when I was 10, right or wrong, there was nobody I respected more. And tonight, 33 years later, I'm flipping through his baseball cards, petting my dog and counting the days until opening day. And for those wonderful things, I can thank Mitchell Page.