

A's Daily News Clips; Sunday, March 20, 2011

A's notebook: Outfielder Ryan Sweeney goes deep almost on cue

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 3/19/2011

PHOENIX -- Shortly after Bob Geren told reporters about outfielder Ryan Sweeney's improving power, Sweeney made his manager look good.

Sweeney smoked a two-run home run to left-center field off Jake Peavy in the third inning Saturday, the offensive highlight of the A's 8-3 exhibition win over the Chicago White Sox.

Going deep to the opposite field was especially encouraging for Sweeney, who has just 13 homers in 1,251 major league at-bats.

"I'm just trying to be more aggressive in hitters' counts and drive the ball more," said Sweeney, who hammered a 3-1 pitch. "Usually I would hit that ball in the gap for a double. I drove that one. I haven't hit an opposite-field home run in awhile."

Sweeney, still recovering from right knee surgery when camp started, has played in just five exhibitions. He has yet to be cleared to play on consecutive days but said three to five more games should have him ready for the season, which begins April 1 at home against Seattle.

Sweeney started in center field with Coco Crisp nursing a mild left hamstring injury. Slated for a reserve role, Sweeney might see significant innings as Geren plans to rest Crisp occasionally during the season to keep him fresh.

Geren talked Saturday morning of how Sweeney has shown power in batting practice.

"The better his legs feel, he's probably going to use them more in his swing."

Sweeney said he's hit on something mechanical.

"I'm just trying to keep my hands quiet and my head still," he said. "I have a shorter stride with my front foot. Sometimes I get too out front. I'm just letting the ball get to me."

Crisp, injured while swinging the bat Friday, said he expects he'll be able to play Sunday.

David DeJesus is slated to start in right field. But when Crisp rests and Sweeney plays, Geren said, he's inclined to put DeJesus in center field and Sweeney in right to take advantage of Sweeney's strong throwing arm.

Right-hander Trevor Cahill pitched into the seventh inning and limited Chicago to four hits and one run. Cahill, who finished right around the 90-pitch mark, hadn't gone more than four innings in any of his previous four starts. He considered that a breakthrough, though he felt fatigued toward the end.

"It went a lot better than the other ones," he said of his start. "It gave me a little bit of confidence."

He struck out three and walked one.

Reliever Michael Wuertz's line looked rough in his second game -- two runs and two walks in one inning. But Wuertz, bothered by shoulder soreness earlier in camp, considered it progress. "I ramped up the intensity," he said. "My velocity is really not great in spring training, but I hit 88, 89 (mph). That's good for me."

Designated hitter Hideki Matsui went 1 for 3 with a walk and strikeout and is hitting .158 in 14 games. The A's play four straight games in National League parks next week, and Geren said he's been granted use of the DH against the Los Angeles Dodgers on Monday and Cincinnati on Tuesday. He's hopeful of the Chicago Cubs and Arizona agreeing to the DH the next two days, but if not, Geren said Matsui could see his first action in the outfield. Geren said previously that he didn't plan to have Matsui play defense in exhibitions.

The win moved the A's to 9-13 with nine Cactus League games left, including Sunday's split-squad matchups at home against the Diamondbacks and on the road against the Giants.

Saturday's game drew 8,091 fans, the A's third sellout in 13 games at Phoenix Municipal Stadium.

Reliever Craig Breslow faced five hitters in a minor league intrasquad game and said his hamstring felt fine. He could make his exhibition debut as soon as Tuesday.

Geren said reliever Joey Devine (biceps soreness) threw off the mound and came out of it OK.

Chin Music: Crisp expects to return Sunday; Sweeney goes deep

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 3/19/2011 2:19 pm

Here's your afternoon A's update since I didn't post anything baseball-related this morning:

–Coco Crisp says his left hamstring injury isn't serious, and he thinks he'll be back in the lineup tomorrow. Last season he missed time with an injury to his right hamstring, and he said he tried to play through that when he shouldn't have. "I'm just trying to stay on top of it." The left hamstring tightened on him last night as he swung during his second at-bat.

Ryan Sweeney started in center field today and hit leadoff in Crisp's place. A's manager Bob Geren said this morning that he's seen more power from Sweeney in batting practice. Then Sweeney drilled a two-run homer to left-center in the third inning off the White Sox's Jake Peavy — that's opposite-field pop that Sweeney doesn't display all that often. ...

Craig Breslow is throwing in a minor league intrasquad game this afternoon, and he'll do fielding drills afterward to test his sore hamstring. Breslow's arm strength is fine but his mobility is keeping him out of Cactus League action to this point ...

Chin Music: A's unveil their 2011 commercials

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 3/19/2011 12:10 pm\

Just saw a sneak preview of the A's commercials for 2011. You can watch two of them – along with outtakes, which are even funnier – at www.oaklandathletics.com/commercials.

You might have already seen the two commercials on the site, but among the highlights that will be unveiled soon:

–Kurt Suzuki throwing down to second base and sinking Gio Gonzalez in a dunk tank.

–Gonzalez getting advice on throwing his curve ball from an aborigine holding a boomerang.

–Trevor Cahill showing how his peripheral vision helps with his pickoff move (best one in my book).

–Cahill and Ryan Sweeney trading lines in a promotion for the July 16 doubleheader against the Angels.

**Hub Strategy was brought on to direct the commercials for a second straight season, and the A's kept the "Green Collar Baseball" theme from 2010.

"I've directed a lot of athletes, but these guys are off the charts" as far as cooperation, said DJ O'Neill, Hub's creative director. "They're just up for anything. This year we had Gio in a dunk tank and it's 38 degrees in the morning. He's in a robe walking around like Hugh Hefner."

O'Neill and A's vice president of sales and marketing Jim Leahey both mentioned Andrew Bailey and Cahill – definitely one of the quieter A's — as two who take to the camera especially well.

Oakland A's news, March 20

By Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer, 3/20/2011

Before Saturday's game, A's manager **Bob Geren** noted that outfielder **Ryan Sweeney** has shown more power in batting practice this spring, and he speculated that because his right patella is fixed, Sweeney can use his legs to greater advantage when swinging the bat.

Sweeney demonstrated what Geren was speaking about in the third inning of the A's 8-3 win over the White Sox, hitting a two-run homer to the opposite field. Sweeney said it is a combination of things: Healthy legs, a simpler swing and a more aggressive approach in hitter's counts. Saturday's homer came on a 3-1 count, and Sweeney said it was a pitch he'd usually double into the gap.

"I haven't hit an opposite-field homer in a while," he said with a laugh.

Sweeney still has not been cleared to play in consecutive games, so he won't play in today's split-squad games and might go to a minor-league game later in the week to get extra at-bats.

Breslow, Devine updates: Reliever **Craig Breslow** threw 20 pitches in a minor-league simulated game and did some fielding drills afterward, and his left hamstring responded well, so he'll likely to make his spring debut Tuesday.

Joey Devine threw a side session that went "really well," according to Geren, who said Devine will next pitch in a minor-league game or for the A's. That also might be Tuesday.

Rich Harden (lat stiffness) said he will resume throwing long toss today.

Briefly: Coco Crisp (left hamstring tightness) expects to be back in the lineup today. ... If the A's do not get the approval to use a designated hitter in four away games against NL opponents this week, it's possible that **Hideki Matsui** will play the outfield, according to Geren. ... The A's unveiled their TV ads, which are even better than last year's strong bunch. Two can be viewed on the team's website (oaklandathletics.com), along with some funny bloopers.

Cactus League recap

Saturday's score: A's 8, White Sox 3

Notable: Starter Trevor Cahill worked into the seventh, going 6 1/3 innings and allowing four hits and one run. He threw 90 pitches. ... A day after allowing 21 hits to the White Sox, A's pitchers gave up six. ... Backup catcher hopeful Josh Donaldson hit a three-run homer with two outs in the eighth.

Quotable: "This is the best I've felt throwing the ball in the spring in a long time."

- Reliever Michael Wuertz, who allowed two hits, two walks and two runs in one inning Saturday but felt terrific physically after some early-spring shoulder tendinitis.

Today's games: A's (Brandon McCarthy) vs. Giants (Madison Bumgarner), 1:05 p.m. Radio: 680; Diamondbacks (Barry Enright) vs. A's (Dallas Braden), 4:05 p.m. Radio: 860.

A's Kurt Suzuki moving down in order, up in stats

By John Shea, Chronicle Staff Writer, 3/20/2011

(03-19) 04:00 PDT Phoenix - --

Kurt Suzuki learned last season that he's not Johnny Bench.

"I'm not going to hit 30 home runs anyway," Suzuki said, "so why try?"

Oh, he tried. And tried. The more he tried, the more his batting average tumbled, down to a career-low .242 - 32 points lower than his 2009 average.

Because the A's lacked genuine 3-4-5 hitters last year, that's where Suzuki hit each of the 128 times his name was in the lineup, and he attempted to act the part. Instead of acting like himself.

"It's a mental thing," Suzuki said. "You feel like you have to hit home runs."

He hit 13.

"Last year was a learning experience for me," he said. "Wherever you hit in the order, you have to keep being yourself. I tried to do too much, put too much pressure on myself. Never a good thing. No matter where I hit, I want to hit line drives all over the field."

Suzuki can say goodbye to 3-4-5, thanks to Billy Beane's offseason accumulation of instant offense. He landed a Royal (David DeJesus), an Angel (Hideki Matsui) and a National (Josh Willingham), who could be the new 3-4-5 guys, with Coco Crisp and Daric Barton atop the lineup.

That would leave the No. 6 or 7 spot to Suzuki, give or take a Kevin Kouzmanoff, with Mark Ellis and Cliff Pennington at the bottom.

That's more like it.

"It'll help a lot," Ellis said. "There are certain guys who can handle the middle of the order and some guys who can't. That's not a knock against him at all. It's just that he'll thrive hitting sixth, seventh, somewhere around there. He's a guy who gets big hits. There will be guys on base, and he'll have a chance to drive in a run."

"He's a good hitter. He's not a home run hitter. He can stand between .280 and .300, hit 15 (homers) and drive in 80. It's not Albert Pujols, but it's a very good bat, especially playing his position."

That's the other part of the story. Among everyday players, Suzuki has the toughest and most important job and had been considered the American League's second-best overall catcher behind Joe Mauer. But 2010 was a step backward on multiple fronts.

Suzuki threw out just 13.2 percent (10 of 76) of runners trying to steal, the lowest mark in Oakland history. He also committed a career-high eight errors. But he continued to be commended for his work with pitchers, who posted a 3.27 ERA on his watch, the lowest for any AL catcher. The ERA for the three other A's catchers was 4.46.

"Personally, my thing is defense. It always will be," Suzuki said. "I love to hit. I love to get hits. But my priority and focus is defense, getting that pitcher through the game."

He has tried to amp up his throwing routine in spring training, giving himself a better chance to bag base stealers. Of course, much of it is based on pitchers giving him a chance by keeping runners close to the bag and delivering the pitch to the right spot.

Suzuki said he has built up arm strength and worked on his footwork and believes he has a quicker release, and Ellis agreed, saying, "There's more zip on the ball."

An intercostal strain shelved Suzuki from late April to mid-May, and it never completely went away through the summer. He won't say the injury cost him statistically but does say he no longer feels tightness in his side.

He's hitting .310 with six RBIs in 29 at-bats. He has two home runs, but who's counting? Let Willingham and Matsui count. They're the ones expected to hit 20-some homers. Suzuki in 2011 prefers to be more like he was in 2009 - .274, 15 homers, 88 RBIs - or better.

"Anywhere you are in the lineup, you try not to think about what you *have* to do or what people *think* you should do," Suzuki said. "Just be who you are."

The A's will take it.

The Drumbeat: Latest Opening Night starter speculation: Brett Anderson?

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Phoenix Muni, 3/19/2011 10:50 AM

With so many good possibilities to choose from, manager Bob Geren isn't in any rush to name an Opening Night starter, but that's not stopping me from checking the schedule every day to see who might slot in there. (We have a lot of down time waiting around for people to talk....what else am I going to do?)

For the past week and a half, the one starter who has lined up for April 1 was Gio Gonzalez, but Brett Anderson is getting an extra day of rest before his next start, which is on Monday - and that means he could be available on Opening Night, too. He'd even be in the ideal situation of getting one extra day off before the start, so he'd be working on five day's rest.

I actually think it's still probably Gonzalez, who'd line up for April 1 on normal rest. He's had a fantastic spring, he's the one guy in the rotation who didn't miss a start last year. But Anderson is a terrific talent, and I don't think anyone would second-guess either as a choice.

Coming into the spring, I'd assumed that it would be Trevor Cahill, who is coming off an All-Star season and 18 wins, but at this point, he'd need to get several extra days up to line up for the Opening Night start. It doesn't rule him out - I wouldn't rule anyone out except the fifth-starter (looking very much like Brandon McCarthy, who is pitching tomorrow at the Giants).

Geren doesn't place a lot of stock in the idea of a numbered rotation, so assuming the Opening Night starter is "Number 1" wouldn't be quite accurate, especially with such an across-the-board strong bunch. With days off and unforeseen changes, the rotation quickly changes its composition, and number one starters don't wind up working against the other teams' aces for more than a few turns through, anyway.

We just saw the A's TV ads for this season - ad agency Hub Strategy did an even better job than last year, and [the bloopers are hysterical](#). Check the A's website, the first two ads should be up by now (and I think they've aired on TV already, too). Excellent. Later in the season, look for the Trevor Cahill peripheral vision commercial, which just might be my favorite A's ad ever, surpassing Ben Grieve jumping on a bed with Stomper only to be told by night-cap wearing Art Howe to knock it off. Stomper makes an appearance in this one, too, as an FYI to the tweeter who seems to be obsessed with Stomper for some bizarre reason.

I do still think my all-time favorite baseball team ad, though, is the Bret Boone bat flip, which can be found on the Mariners' website. Just great. Check that, can't find it on the Mariners' site anymore, but [there's a truncated version on YouTube](#).

Alarming fact gleaned from today's commercial viewing: Ryan Sweeney, who still isn't cleared to play consecutive days even now after last summer's patella surgery, had to run for a Frisbee. He did it in one take, took five steps, and everyone probably held their breath - but filming usually requires multiple takes. That might have been hard to explain to the front office: Sorry, one of your players got hurt chasing a Frisbee for a TV ad.

Denying White Sox, Cahill in top form

A's righty surrenders first run in seventh inning; Sweeney homers

By Jane Lee, MLB.com, 03/19/2011

PHOENIX -- Righty Trevor Cahill's 6 1/3 strong innings, along with a two-run homer off the bat of Ryan Sweeney, guided the A's to an 8-3 victory over the visiting White Sox at Phoenix Municipal Stadium on Saturday.

The White Sox entered the contest fresh off Friday's 18-1 rout of the A's but were handcuffed this time by an exceptional performance from Cahill, who allowed just four hits while walking one and fanning three in his fifth spring start.

Sweeney's homer, a shot to left-center field off Chicago starter Jake Peavy, came in the third inning. The long ball -- Sweeney's first of the spring -- brought home Landon Powell, who reached base on a single. Sweeney collected two hits in the contest and is now batting .533 in five Cactus League games.

In the fourth, Hideki Matsui singled and, after moving to second on a hit by Conor Jackson, ultimately handed the A's their third run of the day courtesy of an RBI single from Kevin Kouzmanoff.

For the White Sox, Peavy went 5 2/3 innings, giving up three runs on seven hits and striking out three in his first start since a bout with the flu.

Chicago scored in the seventh, when Adam Dunn led off with a double and came home on a groundout from A.J. Pierzynski.

Josh Donaldson's first Cactus League homer -- a three-run shot with two outs in the bottom of the eighth -- made it an 8-1 game.

Up next for the A's: Split-squad action will send righty Brandon McCarthy to Scottsdale, Ariz., for a meeting with the cross-bay rival Giants, while lefty Dallas Braden host the D-backs at Phoenix Municipal Stadium on Sunday. Both contests are scheduled to begin at 1:05 p.m. PT. Thanks to a 3.29 ERA and nine strikeouts in 13 2/3 innings this spring, McCarthy enters the outing in good standing in Oakland's fifth-starter competition. Braden, meanwhile, has struggled -- allowing 12 earned runs in 10 2/3 innings -- but has been pleased with the progress he's made with his breaking ball.

Up next for the White Sox: The two host teams at Camelback Ranch will play their second-to-last 2011 Cactus League contest on Sunday, with the White Sox hosting the Dodgers via a 3:05 p.m. CT first pitch. Gavin Floyd returns to facing Major League hitting after throwing a simulated game against White Sox Minor League hitters during Tuesday's off-day. John Ely, who was sent by the White Sox to the Dodgers as part of the Juan Pierre trade, will start for the Dodgers.

'Green Collar Baseball' campaign returns

From Gonzalez to Suzuki, several A's players take part in ads

By Jane Lee, MLB.com, 03/19/2011

PHOENIX -- The A's popular "Green Collar Baseball" marketing campaign is back for a second season, with several players lending their commercial acting talents to ensure it avoids a sophomore slump.

The A's, along with advertising agency Hub Strategy, introduced this year's version of the award-winning campaign on Saturday. Jim Leahey, the A's vice president of sales and marketing, was joined by Hub's creative director and founder, DJ O'Neil, at Phoenix Municipal Stadium to put in motion a concept that again highlights the enthusiasm and aggressiveness surrounding a rather young Oakland team.

"It's been about the idea that the A's are a young team and they make up for their youth with an extra measure of hustle and creativity, effort and fun," O'Neil said. "It's baseball, so it should be fun. It was really pretty successful last year, and everyone seemed to like it, so we thought, 'Let's extend the campaign this year.'"

The humorous campaign will be integrated into television, radio, print, outdoor and digital advertisements and feature players such as Andrew Bailey, Kurt Suzuki, Coco Crisp, Gio Gonzalez, Trevor Cahill and Ryan Sweeney -- all of whom, according to O'Neil, were "up for anything."

"I've been lucky enough to direct a lot of athletes over the years," O'Neil said. "I've worked with a bunch of nice ones, but these guys are off the charts -- just super-nice, down to earth, totally incredibly playful and just laughing and having a good time.

"Acting's hard to do, and a lot of times, you just stick an athlete in a commercial sort of gratuitously. If you watch, these guys are acting, and they're also comedic acting, which is not easy to do."

A total of seven commercials will gradually make their way to both the A's website and local television screens. Fans can stay tuned to see Gonzalez in a dunk tank -- "It was 30 degrees that day, and Gio was walking around like Hugh Hefner

in a robe," O'Neil noted -- as well as Bailey aiding in the production of Fireworks Night and Cahill creatively using his peripheral vision to demonstrate how he's able to hold the running game in check.

Two ads are already receiving airtime -- one entitled "Eat, Sleep, Breathe" that demonstrates how Crisp, Suzuki, Gonzalez and Sweeney constantly have baseball on their mind; the other deemed "The Closer" that has Bailey closing more than just games.

"They're fun scenarios and fun guys to work with," O'Neil said.

A's expect Crisp back on Sunday

Outfielder feeling 'much better' despite sitting out Saturday

By Jane Lee, MLB.com, 03/19/2011

PHOENIX -- Outfielder Coco Crisp is scheduled to return to the A's lineup on Sunday after experiencing tightness in his left hamstring while swinging a bat in Friday's game against the White Sox.

Crisp, who played in 75 games during an injury-plagued 2010 campaign, was held out of Saturday's 8-3 win over the White Sox but walked into the clubhouse in the morning feeling "much better."

Crisp is hitless in his last five at-bats after reaching base safely in each of his first 11 games. Through Saturday, he ranked fourth in batting (.410) and slugging (.769) in the Cactus League and was also tied for 10th in hits with 16.

Ryan Sweeney got the start in center field on Saturday, with Josh Willingham and Conor Jackson playing the corners.

Sweeney's swing impressing Geren

PHOENIX -- Just hours after manager Bob Geren insisted on seeing an extra dose of power from Ryan Sweeney in the batting cage, the A's outfielder promptly made good on his manager's request and launched a two-run homer off Chicago's Jake Peavy in Saturday's 8-3 A's victory.

Power has never been much of a focal point for Sweeney, who has tallied just 13 home runs in 1,251 Major League at-bats. But since undergoing right knee surgery last July, followed by several months of rehab, Sweeney is feeling a prominent difference in his plate approach.

"I think the combination of that, along with a couple of things I've been working on with my swing, have helped," Sweeney said. "I'm just trying to stay loose, be more aggressive in hitters' counts and drive the ball a bit more. Usually, I would probably hit that ball [off Peavy] in the gap on a 3-1 pitch, but I drove that one far."

Sweeney not only started in center field but also enjoyed a rare leadoff opportunity, as Geren is trying to get Sweeney several at-bats since the rehabilitation of the 26-year-old's right knee delayed his spring debut until March 9. The A's outfielder, who has yet to be cleared to play in back-to-back contests this spring, has tallied four multihit games in five Cactus League contests, including Saturday's 2-for-4 effort.

"His timing is right on," Geren said. "His pitch selection has really been perfect. When your legs feel good, it affects your swing, because it all starts from the ground up. The better your legs feel, the more you're going to put into your swing."

Geren said there was a "possibility" that he'd utilize Sweeney in the leadoff spot during the regular season when Crisp is in need of a day off. David DeJesus, who can also play center, is likely to be another option. The focus now, though, is

handing Sweeney "as many at-bats as possible." In an effort to do so, Geren is considering playing Sweeney in a Minor League game next week, which would allow the outfielder to have seven or eight plate appearances.

Sweeney, Geren said, should be ready to play back-to-back days by Opening Day. He's currently pegged as a fourth or fifth outfielder, alongside Conor Jackson, after hitting .294 in a shortened 2010 season as the club's everyday right fielder.

"My swing feels good right now," Sweeney said. "I think it's just about being comfortable and seeing pitches. If I play in three or four or five more games, depending on what they want me to do, I think I'll be all right.

"I'm really trying to keep my hands quiet and my head still. I have a shortened stride with my front foot, and I'm trying to keep things simple. ... Every day, it gets better and better."

Breslow 'feeling great' after session

PHOENIX -- Craig Breslow reported no problems following his 20-pitch outing against Minor Leaguers on Saturday, meaning the A's lefty could make his long-awaited Cactus League debut as early as Tuesday.

"I felt good," Breslow said. "I came out of it feeling great."

Breslow has been brought along slowly this spring following a 2010 campaign that saw him tally 74 2/3 innings. He's also been nursing a strained left hamstring for more than a week, but the lefty believes he'll be geared to go by Opening Day.

The 30-year-old Breslow said he allowed just one hit and thought he was "commanding the ball pretty good." Following the game, he took part in fielding practice to test his hamstring and came away feeling good.

If 100 percent by Opening Day, Breslow figures to join fellow lefty Brian Fuentes and right-handers Michael Wuertz, Brad Ziegler and Grant Balfour to form one of the game's most respected bullpens, even with the possibility that closer Andrew Bailey (forearm) starts the season on the shelf.

Stats belie Wuertz's optimism

PHOENIX -- An upbeat Michael Wuertz shrugged off a forgettable stat line in Saturday's 8-3 A's win, instead focusing on the fact that he came out of the outing "the best I've felt in a long time."

Wuertz gave up two runs on two hits and two walks in just one inning against the White Sox, but the lengthy frame ultimately represented a significant step for the right-hander, who was making just his second spring appearance following a month-long bout with shoulder soreness.

"The results, at this point, I'm not too worried about, but I feel good," Wuertz said. "That's the biggest thing for me. Today, I ramped up the intensity a lot. Obviously, that's a good thing. I felt good warming up in the bullpen, and I felt good when I was out there. It's just making a couple of tweaks here and there."

Wuertz, 32, noted that his velocity reached 88-89 mph on the radar gun a handful of times, signaling improvement in his arm strength. The abundance of baserunners, he said, was likely the result of overexertion and trying too hard -- things he believes will take care of themselves with time.

The veteran right-hander, who was sidelined by a shoulder injury for all of April last year, battled upon his return to the mound in 2010, but he bounced back midseason, posting a 3.16 ERA and a 1.21 WHIP from the start of July through the end of the season.

"Last year was a struggle, and I feel like this is the best I've felt in Spring Training in a long time," Wurtz said. "Overall, I was happy."

Sharper changeup reverses Cahill's fate

PHOENIX -- Thanks to an improved changeup, righty Trevor Cahill inched closer to being season-ready on Saturday by showcasing what manager Bob Geren called "an outstanding" 6 1/3-inning performance in the A's 8-3 win over the White Sox.

Aside from the noted difference in his changeup, Cahill was blunt when explaining the difference between Saturday's showing and his other four starts.

"They weren't getting hits," Cahill said with a smile.

The White Sox managed just four off the 2010 All-Star right-hander, who had surrendered 16 hits in a combined 10 2/3 frames over his previous four starts. It also marked the first time he lasted longer than four innings. Cahill admitted that he was tired after being lifted but also noted that the lengthy start offered him "a little bit of relief so that there's not pressure to stretch out" in his final two spring outings.

"He was sharp," Geren said. "He's built up around 90 pitches. It was just a great outing all the way around."

Worth noting

Right-hander Joey Devine, who has been sidelined with biceps tightness, threw a successful bullpen session on Saturday and will likely return to game action "in a couple of days," Geren said. ... Josh Willingham, who entered Saturday's contest in a 3-for-25 slump, went 2-for-4 against the White Sox.

Are Giants afraid of the big bad Wolff?

Robert Rubino, Santa Rosa Press Democrat, 3/19/2011

Who's afraid of the big bad Lew Wolff? Apparently, the Giants are.

A's owner Lew Wolff wants to move the team to San Jose because the Oakland Coliseum is outdated (and baseball-unfriendly, thanks to the return of Al Davis and the NFL's Raiders from Los Angeles in 1995). He says there are no viable options for a new ballpark in Oakland, and his plans for a new home in Fremont never got to first base, to coin a phrase. Actually, those plans might have gotten to first base but definitely didn't make it to second. Got thrown out trying to stretch a single into a double.

Meanwhile, San Jose politicians have made encouraging responses to Wolff's queries and so now the South Bay is the location over which the A's owner lusts.

Enter baseball commissioner Bud Selig, an old fraternity brother of Wolff's (did somebody say "good 'ol boys' network"?), who has gathered the relevant information and has been mulling whether to give Wolff and the A's a green light for San Jose.

Thing is, he's been mulling for quite a while now, over a year.

Why all the mulling? Maybe because he doesn't want the San Francisco Giants to sue MLB.

The Giants have asserted something called "territorial rights." Translated, the term "territorial rights" means the Giants don't welcome competition. They feel they draw a substantial number of their season-ticket holders and sponsorships from the South Bay, including greater San Jose and its environs, particularly Silicon Valley, and frankly they'd resent the A's elbowing their way into those revenue sources.

Admittedly I'm an innocent when it comes to high finance, but "territorial rights" sounds like something Poland had and Hitler violated, not something a baseball team has, exclusive of another baseball team. The Giants' attitude, apparently, has nothing to do with the basic tenet of capitalism — competition — and everything to do with viewing the A's as an invading army that must be stopped. Appeasement is not an option. "Territorial rights" sounds downright anti-capitalist, therefore anti-American, doesn't it?

Admittedly the notion I'm about to propose is as quaint as single-admission doubleheaders, but here goes: If the Giants had any competitive cajones, they'd welcome the A's to San Jose. They'd man up and say "bring it on," and let the chips fall where they may.

The Giants are the defending World Series champions. They play in a jewel of a ballpark. They draw 3 million paying customers every season. What is it, exactly, that they fear if the A's move to San Jose? Their ballpark will still be a jewel. They'll still have the team that won the 2010 World Series. They'll still have the Mays-McCovey-Marichal legacy.

Are the Giants actually afraid some of their fans might switch their primary allegiance to the San Jose A's? Doesn't say much about their faith in their faithful, does it? And so what if, for whatever reason, some Giants fans in the South Bay became San Jose A's fans? That would mean having to compete harder to win back those fans or work harder to attract new fans. And that's unacceptable, why?

Here's another naive idea. Northern California baseball fans are lucky — blessed, even — to live in an area in which they can see every big-league team, every big-league player. This us vs. them, Giants vs. A's, San Francisco vs. Oakland nonsense is juvenile. Or laughably pseudo-militaristic.

A final utopian thought. If the A's don't get the go-ahead for San Jose, the Giants could offer to rent their own home, AT&T Park. Why not?

The Bay Area can't support two big-league baseball teams? Pardon my locker room jargon, but that's a bunch of horsehooley. Since the late 1980s, whenever both the Giants and A's have fielded exciting, contending teams, both have drawn well. Bring it on. Compete. Live and let live. Why can't we all get along?

Major League Baseball Roundup: Fuentes closer to closing

Merced Sun-Star news services

GLENDALE, Ariz. -- Roles will shift in the Oakland Athletics' bullpen if closer Andrew Bailey misses the start of the season with a forearm strain.

But Merced's Brian Fuentes, the man likely to inherit ninth-inning duties in Bailey's absence, isn't looking that far ahead yet.

"Nothing changes," said Fuentes, a four-time All-Star closer who signed in the winter to set up for Bailey. "I get up when my name is called. Would I like to (close)? Of course. I know I can do it."

Bailey hasn't ruled himself out for opening day. But with 13 days left until the Athletics' opener and no date for him to resume throwing, chances appear slim.

Dodgers 6, Giants 3

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. -- Rubby De La Rosa, the Dodgers' minor league player of the year last season, threw four hitless innings in his second spring start to help Los Angeles beat San Francisco. Giants starter Jeff Suppan, competing for the long relief role, allowed two runs and seven hits over four innings with two strikeouts.

White Sox 18, Athletics 1

GLENDALE, Ariz. -- Carlos Quentin had four hits, including a homer, and drove in four runs to power Chicago past Oakland. A's starter Bobby Cramer gave up eight runs and nine hits over three innings.

Sizemore passes test

Grady Sizemore passed another important test on his recovery from knee surgery by sliding. The three-time AL All-Star said he felt good after going feet first into a sliding bag. He repeated the drill four times.

Short hops

Reliever Scot Shields retired after a 10-year career with the Angels. ... The Mets released second baseman Luis Castillo despite still owing him \$6 million. ... Mets outfielder Carlos Beltran received a cortisone shot in his left knee, which has been inflamed because of tendinitis.

MLB clubs vow donations for Japan's relief efforts

Mainichi News, NEW YORK (Kyodo)

Several Major League Baseball clubs announced plans this week to aid Japan's relief efforts in the wake of the devastating earthquake that struck the country's northeastern region last week.

Seven clubs thus far -- the Seattle Mariners, Oakland Athletics, Boston Red Sox, Los Angeles Dodgers, San Francisco Giants, New York Yankees and San Diego Padres -- have launched fundraising initiatives to help disaster victims.

The announcements come after Major League Baseball commissioner Bud Selig extended his sympathy last week and a number of players made personal donations.

Shortly after Seattle Mariners outfielder Ichiro Suzuki donated 100 million yen to the Japanese Red Cross Society, his club also followed suit.

The club said Friday they will dedicate the first six home games toward Japan's relief efforts through donations and silent auctions. The Mariners will also match contributions from the front office staff and fans, with a minimum donation of \$100,000.

Howard Lincoln, the club's chairman and chief executive officer, extended his condolences to the earthquake and tsunami victims in a statement.

"The Mariners have had great support from the Japanese business community and fans all across Japan. Our thoughts and best wishes are with them as they begin the long road to recovery," said Lincoln.

The Mariners majority owner, Nintendo of America Inc., will match employee contributions. Nintendo's Japan-based parent company will also donate 300 million yen.

The Oakland Athletics launched a new website Thursday dedicated to Japan which allows fans to donate to the Red Cross. On the field, the club plans to donate \$1 from each ticket sale when they face the Seattle Mariners on April 3 as part of Japanese Heritage Day at Oakland Coliseum. Some memorabilia proceeds from Ichiro Suzuki and Athletics designated hitter Hideki Matsui will also go toward relief.

The San Diego Padres plan to match donations received May 20 as part of their own Japanese Heritage Night when the club hosts the Mariners.

Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Hiroki Kuroda donated 5 million yen this week and his club will hold an event on Saturday before a spring training game against the Milwaukee Brewers in Glendale, Arizona. Coaches and players including Kuroda, minor leaguers Kazuki Nishijima, Kazuya Takano and Robert Boothe will sign autographs for fans who make contributions toward Japan's recovery.

The San Francisco Giants, noting their historical ties to Japan, have announced several fundraising plans including a \$12,500 donation toward citizen relief efforts. The club will solicit donations on March 28 at home against the Oakland Athletics.

"We know that so many of us want to help as we witness the unbelievable and overwhelming devastation to life and property being experienced throughout Japan," said Larry Baer, Giants president and chief operating officer in a statement. "It is our intention to spread the word amongst our fans and raise awareness for the many ways they can assist the people of Japan."

The San Francisco Giants signed pitcher Masanori Murakami in 1964, the first Japanese-born player to play in the major leagues.

Last Friday, the New York Yankees donated \$100,000 for Japan's rescue and recovery efforts.