

New Oakland A's manager Bob Melvin talks a good game

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

Bob Melvin has shaken plenty of hands and learned lots of names since being hired as the A's interim manager last week.

During batting practice, he has wandered the diamond, chatting up players and dishing out advice.

It shouldn't take Melvin long to learn about everyone in an Oakland uniform. In two major league managerial stints, one with the Seattle Mariners and another with the Arizona Diamondbacks, he has developed a reputation for building a rapport with players and recognizing their strengths.

"He's probably the only manager I ever played for in my career that nobody had a bad thing to say about him," said former A's outfielder Eric Byrnes, who played four seasons under Melvin with the Diamondbacks. "He did a very good job of managing the personalities."

That's a timely quality for anyone taking residence in the A's manager's office.

Former manager Bob Geren, fired Thursday, was criticized for his lack of communication with players. Although A's general manager Billy Beane did not single that out as a reason for Geren's dismissal, Beane did identify Melvin's relationships with players as a selling point.

"That's important in today's game," Beane said. "Those are the 25 guys you have to live with every day. I think he represents sort of the modern-day type of manager."

Melvin, 49, was born in Palo Alto, played catcher at Cal and spent 10 seasons in the majors, including three with the Giants. Mostly a backup, he hit .233 with 35 career homers.

Melvin credits Phil Garner and Bob Brenly as managers he coached under who helped shape his own strategy.

But it was former Orioles manager Johnny Oates who first planted the managing seed in his brain. Melvin was playing for Baltimore in the early 1990s when he approached Oates during a game. The opposing team made a pitching change that didn't make sense to Melvin, and he said as much to Oates.

"He said to me, 'You know what? You're watching the game the right way. I think you have a future doing what I'm doing,' " Melvin said. "And that's the first time I ever thought about it."

Melvin is 493-508 in seven seasons managing in the majors. He replaced Lou Piniella in Seattle's dugout in 2003, going 93-69 in his first season but getting fired following a 63-99 mark in 2004.

Melvin managed Arizona from 2005-09, winning the N.L. West title and being named N.L. Manager of the Year in 2007. He was dismissed following a 12-17 start in 2009, amid friction between him and then-Diamondbacks G.M. Josh Byrnes.

Byrnes said Melvin was greatly missed by Diamondbacks players.

"He's a go-getter with an edge to him," said Byrnes. "I don't think that's something Bay Area fans are going to notice at first, but he's got an edge and spark that's going to be good for that organization."

Brenly believes Melvin's managing philosophy was influenced by playing under Giants manager Roger Craig from 1986-88. Brenly also was a catcher on that squad.

"Roger was a pitcher's manager, and he viewed the game on how a pitcher could affect the game," Brenly said. "The pitching game, controlling the running game, the 90-foot battle -- how to move guys up 90 feet and how to prevent it."

Pitching is the strength of the A's team Melvin inherits, though the staff is showing cracks due to injuries and inconsistency. The team also lacks offensive firepower. The A's defense has made 51 errors, second-most in the American League.

Beane sidestepped a question about Melvin's chances to be hired as the full-time manager.

Melvin, on the other hand, answered a question about Beane's reputation as a hands-on G.M.

"He said you will have autonomy, and you will be evaluating, and it will be a partnership," said Melvin, who is hoping to be with Oakland beyond this season. "That was music to my ears. And you know what? I have to see for myself. I'm not going to go on what everybody else says."

A's update: Rest, not surgery, prescribed for Brett Anderson

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's announced Monday that left-hander Brett Anderson will not require surgery on his left elbow, instead undergoing six weeks of rehabilitation.

Anderson had his left elbow examined by orthopedist Dr. James Andrews in Pensacola, Fla., and received a platelet-rich plasma injection to help relieve the soreness that landed him on the disabled list.

Anderson (3-6, 4.00 ERA) will return to be re-evaluated by Andrews in three weeks. While the A's will still be without one of their top starting pitchers for a prolonged period, the diagnosis that Anderson didn't have structural damage in his ulnar collateral ligament is good news for the organization.

Elbow ligament reconstruction (Tommy John surgery) would have sidelined Anderson for the rest of this season and well into 2012.

But this is the second consecutive season that Anderson is having elbow trouble -- he spent two long stints on the DL last season without undergoing surgery -- and that in itself surely is a concern for the A's, who signed Anderson to a four-year, \$12.5 million contract last season.

Brett Anderson to have plasma therapy

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer

Oakland will be without starter **Brett Anderson** well into the second half, but on Monday, that was positive, because Anderson is not having surgery on his left elbow.

Instead, Anderson had an injection of platelet-rich plasma, and he will rehab the elbow for six weeks.

"Until Brett is feeling good and on the mound, we really don't exhale," A's general manager **Billy Beane** said. "It is good news that he's not having surgery, but until he is out there taking his normal turn every fifth day, it's still a concern."

There had been concern when Anderson returned to the Bay Area to see a team orthopedist last week that he would require Tommy John surgery to replace an elbow ligament.

The A's did not announce a specific diagnosis for Anderson, but typically, such therapy is used to treat tendinitis. Anderson had two stays on the disabled list last year for elbow inflammation.

Other A's players to have PRP injections include outfielder **Ryan Sweeney**, who had injections for his sore knees last year but still required right patella surgery later in the summer.

Reliever **Joey Devine** had two rounds of injections last year while recovering from Tommy John surgery, and he felt the first didn't do much. The second was more effective, he said, but he thought that might have been because it was mixed with cortisone.

Minor-league first baseman **Sean Doolittle**, once considered one of Oakland's top prospects, had several rounds of injections for a patella tear in 2009, but he ultimately needed two knee surgeries.

The A's have five starting pitchers on the DL. Beane confirmed that **Rich Harden**, out all season with a muscle strain under his right arm, will begin a rehab assignment as a starting pitcher this week if his throwing session goes well today.

Carter healthy: After missing more than a month with a thumb injury and then going 8-for-24 with three homers in a six-game rehab stint with Class A Stockton, **Chris Carter** was reinstated to Triple-A Sacramento's roster Monday.

Cahill looks for W: Trevor Cahill, tonight's starter, has not won since May 9 at Texas. In two starts in June, Cahill has allowed 16 hits, including two homers, and 11 runs. In six wins this season, Cahill has given up five runs

Drumbeat: No surgery for A's Brett Anderson, who gets plasma injection

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser 6/13/2011 4:09pm

It's a sigh of relief for the A's today - left-hander Brett Anderson, the team's No. 2 starter, received an injection of platelet-rich plasma today from Dr. James Andrews in Pensacola, Fla., and he will now rehab his left elbow for six weeks.

Anderson will be checked again in three weeks to see how he is progressing, but typically, if a first and second opinion don't indicate structural damage sufficient for elbow-replacement surgery, then the problem is typically treated as elbow inflammation or tendinitis. Anderson appears prone to this kind of issue; he was on the DL twice last year with elbow inflammation.

The A's have had several players treated with platelet-rich plasma injections in the past, with varied results. Outfielder Ryan Sweeney had PRP injections for his sore knees last year, but still needed patella surgery on one of his knees. Joey Devine, recovering from Tommy John surgery last year, had two rounds of PRP injections, and he told me today that he felt the second one was helpful, but that one was mixed with cortisone and Devine thought perhaps it was the cortisone that was most effective. Other A's treated with the injections in recent years include pitchers Vin Mazzaro and Jay Marshall, for shoulder tendinitis.

The concern with Anderson was that he would need Tommy John surgery, which would have cost him the rest of this season and likely all of next season. Six weeks of rehab and a return sometime in the second half, even if late in the second half, is hugely preferable as far as the A's are concerned.

Melvin sets a new tone; so does Beane

Gwen Knapp, San Francisco Chronicle

Bob Melvin took charge of the Billy Beane question before it even became a question.

"I kind of get the sense of where you're going with that," Melvin said after the issue of Beane's reputation as an overbearing general manager had been tentatively broached. "I couldn't even comment on that. I judge from my own experiences, and in my experience at this point he's been anything but.

"Going in, we talked about that. He was very clear that he was going to have autonomy and I was going to have autonomy."

The language was predictable. The demeanor was not.

Melvin didn't turn defensive or dismissive. He seemed prepared and calm. Above all, he seemed like a match for Beane.

On Monday morning, after less than 24 hours on home soil as the A's new manager, Melvin was at Round Hill Country Club in Alamo for the team's Community Fund Golf Classic. He didn't tee off. He came to say hello to sponsors and assorted participants, including A's oldtimers such as Dave Stewart and Bert Campaneris.

Melvin still had to meet his wife, Kelley, after she flew from New York, start pondering where to set up home, visit his new office at the Coliseum, catch up with his family on the Peninsula and get ready for tonight's series opener against the Royals.

It will be Melvin's fifth game as the interim manager, although that designation doesn't begin to describe his role with the franchise. Beane made a bigger commitment in hiring Melvin than with any of the three other managers who have worked for him.

Beane imported from another organization for the first time. He hired someone with more previous managerial experience than any of the predecessors, plus a Manager of the Year award. He brought in a 49-year-old who grew up in Menlo Park and played for both Cal and the Giants.

A local native with excellent credentials does not take over a team as temp work. Right now, the A's should belong to Melvin as much as they have belonged to any manager since Tony La Russa decamped for St. Louis 16 years ago.

Beane won't be wilting away.

That's not in his nature; nor is it necessarily what the A's need. When paired with a strong manager, he produced playoff teams on a meager budget.

The farm system has stopped yielding bumper crops of stars, and ownership seems far more concerned with future stadium

sites than current performance. But the decision to fire Bob Geren, Beane's longtime friend, and replace him with Melvin signaled a possible culture change in the Beane Era.

Last week, as he announced the change, the GM conceded something important: "Every person on a major-league staff is absolutely critical, and it starts with the manager setting the tone and helping get through difficult periods and (his) leadership qualities."

"It starts with the manager."

Beane rather definitively had stated the opposite in the past — maybe not as definitively as the point came across in print, but still, he had set a tone about managers not setting the tone.

Melvin has backed up the point with early signs of firm leadership. He gave Hideki Matsui the show of confidence that Geren had withheld. Over the weekend, Melvin called for infield practice, a virtual lost activity in baseball, without turning it into a crisis response after three errors in the preceding game. Melvin said he had told the players in advance. For day games after night games, which involve batting-cage time rather than full batting practice, he doesn't like putting players on the field with cold gloves.

On Monday, Melvin discussed how he communicated with players. He could have avoided the issue for political reasons, out of concern that his views might emphasize the widely publicized disconnect between Geren and the players. But a good communicator doesn't retreat from such questions.

"You have to be proactive because guys don't want to be surprised," he said. "They might not like what they're going to hear if their role has changed, but they certainly respect you for it, for having that tough conversation."

The rapport between players and managers has changed over the past 25 years, he said, and he saw Roger Craig, his manager with the Giants, as one of the early adapters. As a backup catcher, Melvin said, he appreciated being put in a position to thrive.

"For a long time, it was backup guys get in there on Sunday against Roger Clemens and then sit for another week and don't feel very good about themselves," he said. "I think it's important to get the bench players or role players in there when they can succeed so they feel like they're part of it. You know, 25 guys going in the same direction is more powerful than 15."

With the A's, the way the two guys at the top pull together, or simply pulling in opposition with proper respect and finesse, might be even more important.

Anderson receives treatment, avoids surgery

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

A's left-hander Brett Anderson received a platelet rich plasma injection in his pitching elbow on Monday and is now expected to take part in six weeks of rehab, making for relatively good news that puts to rest the feared possibility that the club's No. 2 starter would have to undergo season-ending surgery.

Anderson, 23, underwent the injection at the recommendation of noted orthopedic surgeon Dr. James Andrews, to whom he paid a visit in Pensacola, Fla., on Monday for a second opinion. According to a team statement, the A's southpaw will be reevaluated in three weeks.

Given Andrews' suggestion, it's likely Anderson is experiencing either elbow tendinitis or inflammation. He suffered the latter problem twice last season and was subsequently forced to endure a pair of trips to the disabled list that limited him to just 19 starts.

A handful of A's players have experienced successful results from PRP in the past, including outfielder Ryan Sweeney (knee) and right-hander Joey Devine (elbow).

Anderson, who was placed on the 15-day DL on Tuesday, struggled in his last two starts, surrendering a combined 14 earned runs against the Yankees and Red Sox, along with four home runs and five walks, in just 10 1/3 innings. Following a loss in Boston on June 5, he noted his slider -- normally his best pitch -- has not been as sharp as normal and he has not thrown with his usual velocity. He is 3-6 with a 4.00 ERA in 13 starts this year.

The A's are hopeful Anderson's rehab doesn't extend much longer than the six-week mark, because they have already lost three other starters to injury. That number doesn't even include Rich Harden, who has yet to pitch in a game. Lefty Dallas Braden is out for the year after undergoing shoulder surgery, and right-handers Brandon McCarthy (shoulder) and Tyson Ross (oblique) are expected to be sidelined for at least another month.

A's, Special Olympics hit the links

By Tom Green / MLB.com

ALAMO, Calif. -- Craig Breslow, Andrew Bailey and Brian Fuentes have been providing relief for the A's all season, but it was the annual A's Community Golf Fund Classic that provided the relief for the trio of bullpen arms, as well as several other players on Monday.

After playing 30 games in 31 days and dropping 12 of their last 13, including a losing streak that reached 10 games at one point during the team's recent road trip and prompted a managerial change, Monday's off-day fundraiser at Round Hill Country Club couldn't have come at a better time for the A's.

"It was a long road trip, obviously a bit of a tumultuous one," Breslow said. "The timing of the off-day is pretty opportunistic. It gives us a chance to kind of get away from the game for a minute, get away from the clubhouse and just come out here, spend some time with our teammates, some time with our coaches, but most importantly to raise some money."

After the A's skid reached 10 games and left the team in the American League West cellar at 10 games below .500, Bob Geren was replaced by interim manager Bob Melvin. Starting pitcher Gio Gonzalez said the change has brought a renewed sense of confidence to the team while at its lowest point of the season.

Although the A's have dropped two of three before opening a six-game homestand on Tuesday, the players believe the change in voice and the timing of Monday's fundraiser are just what they need to right the ship this season.

"I think it's definitely needed," Bailey said. "It's nice to get out here and support the Special Olympics on an off-day and especially to get out here and play some golf. I think the change, the energy Bob Melvin brings and being able to go out there and just kind of let loose for a little bit -- same thing in the clubhouse the last couple of days -- just kind of have fun, get back to the basics of playing baseball and have fun in the clubhouse."

But before turning their focus back to baseball, several members of the organization -- from players to coaches and front office employees -- took to the links to have some fun and raise money for the A's community fund, which supports charitable organizations in improving the quality of life for people throughout the Bay Area. The club also partnered with the Special Olympics of Northern California to raise money for that organization through a putting competition featuring Breslow, Bailey and Fuentes.

The three relievers each partnered with an area Special Olympian in a four-hole putting course littered with obstacles, including baseball bats, helmets and plants. The teammates alternated strokes and aimed for the lowest score to win the competition.

Others in attendance purchased raffle tickets and placed their bets on which A's reliever would be part of the winning team. Half of the money raised was to go to the Special Olympics of Northern California, with the other half going to the raffle winner.

All three relievers talked a big game prior to the competition, but Breslow and his partner, Paul Andrews, who prepared for the event by watching the film "Happy Gilmore," won the event with a four-hole score of 11. Fuentes' team finished four strokes back in second and Bailey's third. Despite Breslow and Andrews comfortably winning the inaugural putting contest, Bailey and his partner, Brian Nakahara, vowed to avenge the loss at next year's event.

"I'm a little disappointed I let my teammate Brian down," Bailey said. "I'll go play some miniature golf next time. I was a little unprepared. ... Third place is OK, but we'll go out there and win it next year."

In all, \$950 was raised for the putting competition after the raffle winner donated his share of the winnings back to the Special Olympics of Northern California.

"That was amazing," said Matt Cohen, the organization's vice president of sports. "It just shows what a good organization the A's are, to be able to raise funds and have people who support the A's who give back to the community."

"That was amazing. Raising \$950 for our program goes a long way for our athletes to train, compete and travel around Northern California. It was a win-win for our organization and the A's."

MINOR LEAGUE NEWS

Taylor's home runs lift Sacramento

By Zeke Fine / Sacramento River Cats

Michael Taylor broke a 2-2 tie with a solo home run in the sixth inning and Sacramento topped host Salt Lake 4-2 on Monday night. The win gives the River Cats a record of 41-24, adding to their lead over the rest of the Pacific Coast League. Carlos Hernandez started for the River Cats and held off the Bees for as long as he could. In five innings, Hernandez allowed two runs (one earned), giving up six hits and three walks while collecting five strikeouts, picking up the win for the River Cats. The unearned run came after Hernandez made an errant throw on a pickoff attempt at first base, enabling the runner to get to third. Eric Junge took the loss for the Bees, allowing three earned runs on eight hits and four walks with five strikeouts over five innings of work.

Returning to the lineup for the River Cats was first baseman Chris Carter, who had been on the disabled list since injuring his thumb April 20. He did not take much time getting acclimated, going 1-for-3 at the plate with two walks. His hit came in a key situation, driving in the insurance run in the seventh inning, giving the River Cats a two-run lead.

Also new to the River Cats lineup was Andy Laroche, who was designated for assignment by the A's on June 5. After clearing waivers, Laroche started his River Cats tenure going 1-for-3 as the designated hitter with two walks and an RBI single in the first inning to drive in the River Cats' first run. He and Carter combined to get on base six times, adding punch to the Sacramento lineup.

The recent additions were topped only by Taylor, who went 2-4 with two solo home runs. The home runs were Taylor's fourth and fifth of the season. Eric Sogard and Jai Miller also chipped in, contributing two hits each.

Though more familiar with the closer role, relief pitcher Willie Eyre turned in yeoman's work as the long reliever. Eyre threw 3.0 scoreless innings while allowing only two hits. He was relieved by Trystan Magnuson, who finished the game with a scoreless inning, picking up his fourth save of the season. The River Cats continue the series against Salt Lake on Tuesday at 6:05 p.m.

Bianucci, RoughRiders slam Midland 13-6

By Brian Boesch / Frisco RoughRiders

Behind a seven-run fourth inning and a season-high 20 base hits, the RoughRiders cruised past the Midland RockHounds 13-6 Monday night from Citibank Ballpark.

Already enjoying a 4-1 advantage when the fourth began, Frisco (34-28) sent 11 men to the plate in a frame that set a new season high for runs in a single inning. After a **Tommy Mendonca** RBI single, **Mike Bianucci** clubbed a grand slam to left field.

It was the RoughRiders' first grand slam of 2011 and Bianucci's team-leading 14th home run. Bianucci finished the game a triple away from the cycle.

Jose Ruiz immediately followed Bianucci with a solo shot of his own, and **Engel Beltre** finished off the fourth with an RBI double.

The 'Riders scored twice in the first, third and fifth. Mendonca went 4-for-6 with four RBIs and three runs scored, while Ruiz went 2-for-3 with three RBIs.

In all, eight of the nine Frisco starters added at least one hit, and seven 'Riders had multi-hit efforts.

Frisco starter **Jake Brigham** (3-5) worked six innings and allowed six runs, but only three of them were earned. The right-hander surrendered six hits and struck out six RockHounds.

Corey Young stranded three over a scoreless pair of innings, and **Justin Miller** tossed a scoreless ninth.

Midland (25-37) scored in three different innings. **Matt Sulentic** went deep for the third time this season on a two-run bomb in the sixth.

The RoughRiders and RockHounds resume this four-game series Tuesday night at 6:30. Former Cy Young Award winner **Brandon Webb** will make his second rehab start for Frisco, and he will oppose **Jason Bergmann**. Pre-game coverage along the RoughRiders Baseball Network begins at 6.

QUICK HITS: The RoughRiders posted their second-highest run total Monday...Frisco scored 18 runs in a win at Northwest Arkansas June 3...That total was also the highest for a Frisco offense against Midland since June 16, 2009, when the 'Riders won 15-6.

Four RockHounds make all-star game

Jordan Mason, Midland Reporter-Telegram

Midland RockHounds center fielder Jermaine Mitchell, first baseman Michael Spina, shortstop Grant Green and pitcher Ethan Hollingsworth are headed to San Antonio after being named to the Texas League South Division All-Star team Monday.

Mitchell and Spina were voted as starters for the game to be played June 29, and RockHounds manager Steve Scarsone said Green will start as well with Corpus Christi shortstop Wladimir Sutil now playing in Triple-A.

Mitchell has been having one of the better seasons in minor league baseball, entering Monday, batting a league-high .367 and leading the league in runs, hits and triples.

Spina entered Monday tied with Mitchell for a team-high 10 home runs and was tops on the team in RBI with 45, good for 4th in the Texas League.

Green, the Oakland A's No. 1 prospect, has been having a solid season at the plate and in the field while Hollingsworth has posted a 3.78 ERA in nine starts for the RockHounds this season.

The teams were voted on by league managers, writers, broadcasters and media relations staff.

Strong Pitching Helps Ports Top Mavs

06/14/2011 1:00 AM ET

The Stockton Ports faced the High Desert Mavericks for the first time this season and kicked off the homestand at Banner Island Ballpark with a 3-1 victory. A fantastic outing by Ports starter Rob Gilliam, including a season-best 12 strike outs, held the Mavericks to three hits and a single run.

Gilliam would open the game up by retiring High Desert's first three batters, and High Desert's starter Chris Sorce would return the favor in the bottom half. The Ports would give the Mavericks' outfield a workout, as seven of their first nine outs were fly outs, five of which were plays made by High Desert centerfielder Denny Almonte.

The Mavericks would record the first hit of the game, a base hit by designated hitter Matt Cerione in the second. Cerione would steal second, but his efforts would be cut off, as Gilliam would strike out three in that inning.

An opportunity for the Ports to take the lead arose in the third, and Stockton would take it. With two outs, shortstop Dusty Coleman drew a walk, then successfully stole second base. Left fielder Myrio Richard, who statistically hits well with runners in scoring position, managed the base hit that would bring Coleman in to give the Ports a 1-0 lead.

A walk would put Stockton at an advantage again in the fourth. This time, centerfielder Michael Choice would draw the walk, then advance on a ground out by first baseman Anthony Aliotti. A wild pitch to catcher Ryan Ortiz allowed Choice to take third, and he would score easily on Ortiz's sacrifice fly.

In the sixth, yet another walk would start something for the Ports. It would be Choice on base again, managing to steal second before Aliotti would bring him in on a double to centerfield.

Gilliam's outstanding pitching would hold the Mavericks scoreless for six innings. Their lone run came in the seventh after second baseman Jake Schlander was hit by a pitch. Schlander stole second as third baseman Vinne Catricala struck out, and a sacrifice fly by first baseman Dennis Raben would bring him in.

Stephen Kahn would come in to pitch for the Mavericks in the seventh, Sorce having gone six innings, giving up three runs on four hits. Kahn gave up a two-out single to Richard, who proceeded to steal second and third base. Second baseman Michael Gilmartin walked, but a ground out by Choice would end the inning.

After a walk, a fly out, and one last strike out, Gilliam exited the game with having gone 7.2 innings and Andrew Carignan took the mound for the Ports. Carignan walked Mavericks pinch hitter Nick Franklin before getting left fielder Daniel Carroll to ground out for the final out of the inning.

The Ports could not increase their lead in the eighth, but Carignan would successfully hold High Desert in the top of the ninth. Gilliam was credited with the much deserved win, and Carignan with the save. The Ports look to win two straight tomorrow night as Jake Brown takes the mound for the Ports.