

A's News Clips, Thursday, October 20, 2011

A's eyeing familiar face Young as pitching coach

Staple in Oakland organization could return after Boston stint

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Though A's hurlers were forced to say goodbye to a popular face when pitching coach Ron Romanick was not retained, they may soon be welcoming back a familiar one to fill that role.

Curt Young, who chose to part ways with Oakland following the 2010 season in favor of a tour with the Red Sox, is expected to be reeled back to the Bay Area by the end of the month.

He represents the A's top target at the moment, according to a baseball source, and is a friend of manager Bob Melvin.

Though Young has one year remaining on his deal with Boston, there was already heavy speculation he would be dismissed once the Red Sox cut ties with manager Terry Francona.

In 2010, he guided a youthful A's pitching staff to a Major League-leading 3.47 ERA, the lowest by an American League team since 1990, when Boston put together a 3.32 mark.

Boston's pitchers failed to live up to expectations during Young's first year, though, particularly in a September that resulted in a well-documented meltdown and missed playoff berth.

Young's ties with Oakland run deep, as he was selected by the A's in the fourth round of the 1982 Draft and had spent 27 years in the organization -- 12 as a player, eight as a Minor League coach, and seven as a pitching coach -- before his departure last year.

Dogs' Choice unable to best Harper

After break, A's No. 2 prospect homers in his third straight game

By Robert Emrich / Special to MLB.com

Michael Choice homered in his third straight game Tuesday, but it wasn't enough to top Bryce Harper.

The Harper-led Scottsdale Scorpions rallied to beat Choice's Phoenix Desert Dogs, 11-10, in 10 innings in the Arizona Fall League.

Playing in his first game in 10 days due to a personal matter, Choice got off to a quick start, slugging a two-run homer in the first inning to give the Dogs a 2-0 lead. Oakland's first-round pick in 2010 was surprised by his blast.

"I was just coming back from taking a week off. I was looking for a pitch up in the zone and I just put wood on it," said Choice. "It was pretty cool, coming into the game I was just trying to get my timing back. Getting a homer in my first at-bat back shocked me more than anybody."

Choice is tied with Mesa teammates Robbie Grossman (Pirates) and Junior Lake (Cubs) and Surprise's Mike Olt (Rangers) for the AFL home run lead with four.

Despite Choice's best efforts, Harper (Nationals) gave the fans at Phoenix Municipal Stadium a show in his best AFL game of the season season. The former top pick had three hits, including his first homer, three RBIs and fell a triple shy of the cycle. The **No. 2 prospect in baseball** also drew a pair of walks and scored twice.

"He's a good hitter, getting to watch a young kid at this level is pretty cool," Choice said of Harper. "It's pretty fun to watch regardless whether you are on his team or not."

Choice, who also smacked an RBI double, had a strong season in the California League, batting .284 with 30 homers and 82 RBIs for Class A Advanced Stockton, earning postseason All-Star honors. His bat was exceptionally hot in the season's second half, as he hit .332 with 14 homers in 53 games. That surge is something that Choice, **the Athletics' No. 2 prospect**, is trying to maintain.

"Basically trying to keep the same approach I had towards the end of the regular season and just sticking with it," the Texas native said. "Just hitting my pitch and changing my approach for what I think the pitcher is going to do."

The Scorpions scored once in the ninth to tie the game and again in the 10th to take the lead. Nationals prospect Derek Norris hit an infield single with two outs in the ninth. A pair of errors by Phoenix second baseman Corban Joseph (Yankees) in the 10th allowed Joe Panik (Giants) to cross the plate with the go-ahead run.

Red Sox prospect Will Middlebrooks homered and drove in three runs while Darin Ruf (Phillies) collected three RBIs for Scottsdale.

Stephen Harrold (Giants) improved to 2-0, allowing one hit over two scoreless innings of relief.

Pirates farmhand Preston Claiborne (0-1) was tagged with the loss, allowing an unearned run in the 10th.

Hultzen throws four no-hit frames in AFL

M's first-round pick denied first win, but Peoria prevails in Phoenix

By Andrew Pentis / Special to MLB.com

Three starts into his pro career, Danny Hultzen remains winless. If he keeps pitching like he did Wednesday in the Arizona Fall League, that streak should end sooner rather than later.

The No. 2 selection in June's First-Year Player Draft completed four no-hit innings in the Peoria Javelinas' 6-3 victory over the host Phoenix Desert Dogs.

Hultzen retired the first 11 batters he faced before issuing an eight-pitch walk to A's **No. 2 prospect** Michael Choice in the fourth frame. Experimenting with his penultimate batter showed how little a bid at perfection was on the pitcher's mind.

"I threw him a bunch of fastballs and wanted to try something different," Hultzen said, "and I left a change-up up in the zone."

The 21-year-old lefty recorded 10 of his 12 outs on balls in the air. He didn't strike out a batter and threw 52 pitches overall.

"I felt good out there, got very lucky; there were some wild outs that were hit right at the fielders," Hultzen said.

With the opportunity to compete for a job in Seattle next spring after receiving a Major League contract that calls for a \$6.35 million bonus, Hultzen has impressed so far this fall. Over the first three outings of his career, he is 1-0 with a 2.00 ERA. He has allowed nine hits and three walks over nine innings of work.

Yet his record still reads 0-0.

"I'm not too concerned; it'd be nice to have the first one," said Hultzen, who exited Wednesday's game holding a 3-1 lead.

The Javelinas scored single runs in the first, second and fourth innings in support of Hultzen. The Mets' Jefry Marte led off the fourth with his third AFL home run, a left-field shot against the Yankees' David Phelps. Marte, New York's **No. 10 prospect**, smacked his first homer in the eighth inning of Saturday's win.

"That was awesome," Hultzen said of Marte's blast Wednesday. "Right off his bat, we knew it was either going over the wall or it was going to knock something over."

Phoenix finally got on the scoreboard thanks leadoff man to Anthony Gose (Blue Jays) in the seventh. Gose drew a bases-loaded walk facing Hultzen's first reliever, Taylor Whitenton (Mets), in the fifth and struck a two-run single against Jeff Ibarra (Padres). That locked the score, 3-3.

Peoria posted a three-run top of the ninth on RBI singles by Chih-Hsien Chiang (Mariners) and Zelous Wheeler (Brewers). Milwaukee's **No. 4 prospect**, Scooter Gennett, and Oscar Taveras (Cardinals) each recorded three-hit games.

Phelps, the Yanks' **No. 8 prospect**, couldn't escape the fourth. He allowed all three runs on seven hits over 3 1/3 frames.

Peoria (7-7) and Phoenix (4-10) sit in second and third place respectively in the AFL West Division.