

A's News Clips, Friday, November 11, 2011

A's make adjustments to Minor League staff

Steverson, Sparks among those moving to new positions

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Plenty of change was quickly seen in the A's coaching staff following the end of the season, and more of the same is reflected throughout the organization's farm system.

The A's announced several modifications to their Minor League staff assignments for the 2012 season on Thursday, most notably Todd Steverson's move to roving Minor League hitting instructor. The former A's first-base coach replaces Greg Sparks, who slides into Steverson's old job as hitting coach for Triple-A Sacramento.

A handful of pitching coaches were also shuffled, with John Wasdin going to Class A Burlington and Ariel Prieto moving to Class A Vermont, while Jimmy Escalante was named pitching coach of the A's affiliate in the Arizona Rookie League.

Meanwhile, all six managers of Oakland's affiliates are set to return in the same capacity next season. It will mark Triple-A manager Darren Bush's second season at the helm in Sacramento, where he'll again be joined by pitching coach Scott Emerson. Bush guided the River Cats to an 88-56 record and a playoff appearance this year.

Steve Scarsone will return to manage at Double-A Midland for the second consecutive season, with a staff that consists of pitching coach Don Schulze and hitting coach Tim Garland.

Webster Garrison will manage his second season with Class A-Advanced Stockton, after the Ports enjoyed an appearance in the California League playoffs this year. He's aided by pitching coach Craig Lefferts and hitting coach Brian McArn.

Aaron Nieckula will also enter his second season at the helm in Burlington, along with Wasdin and hitting coach Haas Pratt, after managing the Bees to a playoff appearance in what was the A's first season with the affiliate.

In Vermont, the Monsters will again be led by Rick Magnante, whose staff consists of Prieto and hitting coach Casey Myers. Rounding out the group of managers is Marcus Jensen, who will enter his fourth season at the reins of the A's Arizona Rookie League affiliate. Along with Escalante, he'll be joined by hitting coach Juan Dilone.

Green's grand slam highlights tough loss

A's first-rounder goes deep again, but Dogs rally falls short

By Danny Wild / MLB.com

Don't throw Grant Green the same pitch twice. Especially not the "new" Grant Green.

Green crushed a grand slam in the fifth inning Thursday, part of a seven-run comeback that fell just short as the Phoenix Desert Dogs suffered a 10-8 loss to the Mesa Solar Sox in the Arizona Fall League.

For [MLB.com's top A's prospect](#), who's worked on overhauling his swing this fall, it was another game to file away in his goal of becoming a better power hitter.

"In the at-bat before, he beat me with a fastball in," Green said of his battle with Mesa's Nathan Baker (Pirates) in the fourth. "I knew he'd try to go there again. He ended up throwing another fastball straight in, and I finally got the bat head out and pulled it."

Green's fourth homer made it a 7-5 game. Phoenix fell into a 7-0 hole by the third after starter Murphy Smith (Athletics) was charged with all seven runs on 10 hits and a pair of walks over 2 1/3 innings.

After rallying to tie the game in the eighth, 8-8, Mesa pulled away in the bottom of that frame on a two-run homer by Brian Dozier (Twins). Xavier Avery (Orioles), the Solar Sox's leadoff hitter, went 4-for-5 and fell a homer shy of the cycle for Mesa.

"Any loss is tough, especially since we we're down 7-0 going into the fourth. So coming back from that, it ended up it didn't go our way today," said Green, who was the No. 13 overall pick in the '09 Draft. "Their guy hit a bomb in the eighth, but it was tough. We'll come back tomorrow and do it again."

Green spoke earlier this fall about his work with Phoenix manager Todd Steverson, who is also the hitting coach at Triple-A Sacramento, an A's affiliate. Steverson saw Green's swing earlier in the year and approached both the outfielder and Oakland's player development brass about some tweaks.

So far, even Green admits the adjustments have paid off.

"We completely changed my swing," said Green, a USC product who earned a first-round selection in 2009 and hit .291 at Double-A Midland this year with his "old" swing.

"He told me from day one, 'We're going to work on a new swing, get a little more load, a leg kick and generate some more power,'" Green said. "It's worked, I've definitely improved. And I'm doing it against better pitching as well."

Green, who went 2-for-5 and hit second Thursday, is batting .308 with four homers and 17 RBIs in 22 games for Phoenix after slugging nine homers in 127 Texas League games.

"Right now," he said, "it's easy to see that it's working. I just need to stick with it. The more and more I work, the more power I'll show."

Still, it took agreement across the board with the A's to entrust Steverson with the swing of the organization's top hitting prospect. Green said he was approached about it after this Minor League season ended, a campaign in which he had 33 doubles, 62 RBIs, went to the Futures Game and earned Texas League All-Star honors twice.

"He saw my swing in Sacramento and he saw a lot of holes with it," said Green, who hit .318 in 2010 and .316 in '09, both at Class A Advanced Stockton. "He talked to our roving hitting guy at the time, and he talked to upper management people and asked if he could work with me."

Green said his stance has been changed along with his timing to the ball. He's hit in eight of his last 10 games, plating 10 runs in that span.

"He thought I was too narrow with my stance, so we widened it. He thought I was static with my load. He said we're trying to generate power. ... It's easy to see that it's working so far."

So should Oakland fans expect to see the top pick in the Bay Area this summer? Or perhaps even this spring? Green hopes he gets a chance to show off his new mechanics when the time comes.

"Hopefully I get a big league invite and do that again," he said. "But it's the same thing as the last two years, impress the coaches, get as much tutelage as possible, pick the brains of the vets, see what they do and just increase my game that much more. If the power there, awesome."

Webb starts to make headway in AFL

Lefty Reds prospect strikes out five over 3 2/3 scoreless innings

By David Heck / Special to MLB.com

Travis Webb was used mostly as a reliever in 2011, making all but five of his 37 appearances out of the bullpen. A month into his Arizona Fall League experience, he finally seems to be adjusting to starting again.

The Reds farmhand allowed three hits over 3 2/3 shutout innings Wednesday, earning the win as the Phoenix Desert Dogs blanked the Scottsdale Scorpions, 5-0.

The outing marks Webb's longest in the Arizona Fall League this year and the first in which he held his opponent scoreless. The 27-year-old left-hander lowered his ERA from 6.75 to 5.17 with the effort.

Selected in the eighth round of the 2006 Draft, Webb posted a 4.41 ERA in 69 1/3 innings at Double-A this season. He struck out 89 and walked 36.

Four relievers combined to keep the Scorpions off the scoreboard for the final 5 1/3 innings, surrendering just four hits. Toronto's Evan Crawford fanned three over two frames.

Blue Jays prospect Kevin Ahrens started the scoring in the first inning by smacking a two-out bases-loaded double that plated Brodie Greene (Reds). Scottsdale outfielder Tyson Gillies (Phillies) and starter Sammy Solis (Nationals) both made throwing errors on the play, allowing Rob Segedin (Yankees) and Ahrens to cross home as well.

The Desert Dogs tacked on two more in the fourth on a throwing error by Derek Norris (Nationals) and an RBI single by **No. 2 Blue Jays prospect** Anthony Gose to finish off the scoring for the evening. Neither team was able to string together multiple hits in the subsequent 5 1/3 innings.

Gose, Ahrens and Greene all ended the game with two hits, as did Toronto catcher Yan Gomes. Ahrens was the only one on the team to record an extra-base hit.

The Phillies' Darin Ruf led the Scottsdale offense by going 2-for-2 with a walk, while Giants first-rounder Joe Panik also collected a pair of hits. Bryce Harper, **MLB.com's No. 2 prospect**, went 1-for-4 with a double to extend his hitting streak to 15 games. The Nationals outfielder is batting .308 with six homers and 24 RBIs in 20 AFL contests.