

A's News Clips, Sunday, February 19, 2012

Oakland A's hoping Bartolo Colon provides boost to rotation

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

The A's are looking for stability in the rotation, and they're hoping it comes from a 38-year-old with a bowling-ball physique and a history of arm trouble.

Clearly the odds don't favor Bartolo Colon making a big impact at the front of the rotation. But who would have thought Colon would even be pitching in the major leagues at this point?

The 2005 A.L. Cy Young Award winner appeared in just 48 games from 2006-10 because of injuries, including elbow and shoulder problems. But he had a comeback last season with the New York Yankees, going 8-10 with a 4.00 ERA in 29 appearances (26 starts).

The A's were in serious need of rotation help after trading Trevor Cahill, Gio Gonzalez, Guillermo Moscoso and Josh Outman in the offseason, and they signed Colon to a one-year, \$2 million deal.

"I didn't know if I was (ever) going to come back and pitch again (after the injuries)," Colon said through a translator Saturday after reporting to camp with the A's pitchers and catchers.

His comeback was aided by a controversial stem-cell surgery that drew more attention last season than anything he did with the Yankees.

The procedure, performed in the Dominican Republic in April 2010, reportedly used fat and bone-marrow stem cells from Colon and injected them into his elbow and shoulder in order to repair ligament damage and a torn rotator cuff.

The doctor who oversaw the procedure, Joseph R. Purita, reportedly has used human growth hormone in such treatments. Human growth hormone is banned in the major leagues, leading to suspicion over whether Colon received illegal assistance.

Purita has denied using HGH on Colon, telling the New York Times: "This is not hocus-pocus. This is the future of sports medicine."

Major League Baseball began an investigation into the matter but has not taken action against Colon, who described the procedure as "incredible" for reviving his career.

How much does he have left in the tank? A's manager Bob Melvin has indicated he will slot Colon -- listed at 5-foot-11, 267 pounds -- behind No. 1 starter Brandon McCarthy.

"His Cy Young year was my rookie year in '05, and that's when he was full Bartolo," McCarthy said. "What was impressive last year was he kind of looked like that."

Surely the A's noticed that Colon is 5-1 with a 2.14 ERA in seven career games (six starts) at [O.co](#) Coliseum.

More stats to ponder: Colon went 5-2 with a 2.96 ERA over his first 10 starts last season but 3-7 with a 4.81 ERA over his final 16.

After spending much of the day in meetings with front-office officials, Melvin said there's "a definite possibility" the A's will add more players before the first full-squad workout Saturday.

Those additions might include outfielder Yoenis Cespedes, who has agreed to a four-year contract that has yet to be completed, and possibly free-agent designated hitter Manny Ramirez. The A's also are trying to trade for Texas Rangers reliever Koji Uehara, and they have been linked to free-agent reliever Mike Gonzalez.

If a deal with Ramirez doesn't come together, it's possible the A's could look at Magglio Ordonez, Hideki Matsui, Johnny Damon or Vladimir Guerrero as D.H. options.

Assistant general manager David Forst declined to comment.

□ Left-hander Dallas Braden is scheduled to throw off the mound for the fifth time Monday since his shoulder surgery. A best-case scenario would have Braden pitching April 16, the first day the A's need a fifth starter. But Melvin placed his estimate at "mid-April to early May" for Braden's return.

Another injured starter, Brett Anderson, is progressing well from elbow surgery and is slated to throw off the mound for the first time Monday. There is a reason Anderson looked slimmer under his "Big Lebowski" shirt -- he has lost 25-30 pounds and weighs 225.

"I'll probably get to first a little quicker, maybe not fall as much," he said.

□ Pitchers and catchers will hold their first workout Sunday morning at Papago Park Baseball Complex.

[Inside the A's: Big turnout on Day 1 of Camp Melvin](#)

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune, 2/18/2012, 4:31pm

I realize it's a little late in the day, but here's your first blog post of A's spring training 2012. ...

—Today was reporting day for pitchers and catchers, but I was surprised how many position players were on hand too. Jemile Weeks, Cliff Pennington, Daric Barton, Michael Taylor, Michael Choice, to name a few. Granted, some were scheduled for physicals, but some were on the field getting some running in too. It's the first spring under manager Bob Melvin, so in a way, it's another chance to make a first impression. Maybe it shouldn't be surprising to see players getting a head start on things.

—The A's have a lot of work to cram in before they head to Tokyo on March 22 to open the regular season. They need to identify at least two starting pitchers (three if Dallas Braden misses his first turn), a closer, a designated hitter and a starting first baseman. Oh, they also need to figure out their outfield. For that reason, Melvin and his staff will be evaluating Cactus League stats/results a lot more than they normally would to make some decisions. "We're going to have some guys that are integral parts of our team that we're gonna have to evaluate here (during spring training)," Melvin said. Don't expect a quick decision on a closer. Melvin said he's in no rush to pick one, so keep an eye on how Grant Balfour, Fautino De Los Santos, Joey Devine and Brian Fuentes fare as exhibition play unfolds.

—Melvin wants spring workouts to be sharp, focused, and, if all goes well, on the brief side. He doesn't see the need to keep players on the field for hours and hours if things are being done right. "I know from a player's standpoint," Melvin said, "the last thing you want to do is watch your staff be unorganized, and stand around and wait ... We're gonna use all the fields at Papago (Park Baseball Complex). We'll try to get a lot of work in for a minimal amount of time."

Today was a weird day with no official workout. You'll be getting more posts earlier in the day from here on out, and hopefully some video footage too!

Bartolo Colon brings revitalized career to A's

[Susan Slusser](#), San Francisco Chronicle

Phoenix -- Bartolo Colon won the American League Cy Young Award in 2005, and less than five years later, it appeared his career was over after elbow ligament and rotator cuff problems.

In April 2010, however, Colon underwent a novel treatment in the Dominican Republic in which fat and bone-marrow stem cells were taken from him and then injected into his shoulder and elbow.

Colon, thought to be done, signed a minor-league deal with the Yankees last year, opened the season in the bullpen, and then joined the rotation the third week of April after an injury to Phil Hughes. He went 8-10 with a 4.00 ERA and was particularly effective in the first half, with a 3.20 ERA and 79 strikeouts in 15 games, 12 starts.

The controversial procedure worked.

"Incredible," Colon said through an interpreter on Saturday at Phoenix Municipal Stadium.

He acknowledged that he was nervous before the stem-cell injections, not knowing what to expect, and as for the results: "It is a surprise," he said. "I didn't realize I was going to come back and pitch so well."

When the [A's](#) signed the 38-year-old to a one-year, \$2 million deal last month, they looked strictly at those results, rather than concerning themselves too much with the procedure. The long-term possibilities are unknown because there are so few examples. (Former journeyman pitcher C.J. Nitkowski, who turns 39 next month and last pitched in the majors in 2005, had stem-cell injections last summer and then played winter ball in the Dominican.)

"Our analysis was really based on performance," A's assistant general manager David Forst said. "It's obvious with one case, we don't know if it will hold up long-term, but certainly if that's what allowed him to have the season he did last year, you'd have to call it a success."

Dallas Braden, who had arthroscopic surgery last summer to repair a torn left shoulder capsule, looked enviously at Colon, several lockers away.

"Are you kidding me? The guy came out with a bionic arm," Braden said with a grin. "I'd take one of those."

Colon will stand out on a young pitching staff. He's 10 years older than Braden and Brandon McCarthy, the next oldest starters on the staff. And listed at 5-foot-11 and 267 pounds, Colon is round rather than lean.

His pitching doesn't reflect his age and his size, however,

"I've faced him a bunch, and he has a two-seamer that, I don't want to say it's unhittable, but it's close," catcher Kurt Suzuki said. "And he was still pumping it up there 96 mph in the seventh inning last year."

A two-time All-Star, Colon has the third-most major-league wins (161) among Dominican pitchers after Juan Marichal (243) and Pedro Martinez (219), and he has been particularly successful pitching in Oakland, where he is 5-1 with a 2.14 ERA.

A's Brett Anderson recovering from elbow surgery

[Susan Slusser](#), San Francisco Chronicle

Phoenix -- Brett Anderson downplayed it Saturday, but he takes a big step in his recovery from Tommy John surgery on Monday, when he will throw his first bullpen session since the July 14 procedure.

Initial estimates pointed to a late July return for Anderson if he progressed as hoped, but the [A's](#) do not want the left-hander to rush his rehab, so they are now looking at August for Anderson to resume his spot in the rotation.

Anderson has lost roughly 25 pounds since the surgery, saying that at one point he had lost almost too much and felt "frail." He plans to stay at about 225 pounds, believing it will benefit his stamina and could make him more agile.

"I'll probably get to first base quicker, maybe not fall down as much," Anderson said.

Also Monday, **Dallas Braden** will throw his fourth bullpen since his May 17 shoulder surgery. The A's can go with four starters until April 16, and Braden is expected back around that time, though manager **Bob Melvin** said "mid-April to early May" on Saturday.

Moves ahead: Melvin said it's "a definite possibility" that the team will have roster additions, both pitchers and position players, before the first full team workout Saturday.

Outfielder **Yoenis Cespedes**, whose four-year deal will be official when he gets a visa and takes a physical, is one of those, and Texas reliever **Koji Uehara** likely will be another. As first reported by The Chronicle on Wednesday, the team also is likely to sign designated hitter **Manny Ramirez**.

Briefly: Minor-league catcher **Max Stassi** missed much of last season after surgery to shave down the acromion bone to relieve an impingement in his right shoulder, but he is not limited in any way this spring. ... **Sean Doolittle**, once a top first-base prospect for the A's, is in camp as a pitcher and early reports are good. ... Outfielder **Jonny Gomes** was assigned his preferred number, 31, and **Brandon Allen** was switched to No. 14. ... Cespedes has requested No. 51, but it might be tough to pry away from Braden, who wore it when he threw a perfect game. "We'll start at six figures," Braden joked of his asking price. ... Until games begin, the team will work out at the Papago Park minor-league complex.

As baseball season nears, playoffs up in the air

[Gwen Knapp, Chronicle Columnist](#)

Pitchers and catchers report to spring training this weekend without the profound uncertainty that preceded the NBA and NFL seasons, but they don't have a final answer about a fundamental part of the game. How many teams will be in the playoffs?

Bud Selig says 10, with an asterisk. He still doesn't have final approval to expand from the current field of eight, and he's facing a March 1 deadline set by the Basic Agreement with the Players Association.

The 2012 schedule has already been drawn up, and it leaves little room for Selig's one-game lightning round in each league. If the deal could be done smoothly, it would have been complete by now.

The idea itself has dubious value. Several players, including [the Giants'](#) Tim Lincecum and Buster Posey, have gone on the record in opposition. Rushing the format into effect would be a mistake, with the potential to undermine the quality of the postseason.

"I don't think I've ever seen an issue that the clubs want more than to have the extra wild card this year," Selig told reporters at the White Sox fan festival last month. If the commissioner put his head between his knees and breathed heavily into a paper bag after the comment, no one noticed.

He has reminded people that his campaign to expand from four to eight playoff teams with a wild card, now believed to be a critical component in baseball's renaissance after the 1994 strike, was widely portrayed as an attack on the sanctity of the game.

"If I had defiled motherhood I don't think I could have gotten ripped any more than I did," the commissioner said a while ago.

Let's give Selig his due. Most of the innovations in his tenure have made the game more interesting or, at worst, caused no harm. The eight-team playoffs did not push MLB closer to the NBA, with its deeply devalued regular season. They made the game more thrilling.

Adding a single playoff game between the highest finishing non-division winners would probably, as the commissioner argues, enhance the value of winning in the regular season. Part of Selig's selling point is that the lightning round would send a wild-card team through a gantlet before it took on a division champ. Playing an extra, high-pressure game, and using up one of its premier starting pitchers, would force a wild card to elevate to an even higher level to top a division winner in a best-of-five series.

But that ignores the reality that sitting around often hurts a team that ran away from its division. The Phillies became the 27th team in the past 31 years to win 100 games in the regular season and watch another club win the World Series (only four have won 100 and the Commissioner's Trophy). They looked flat in their first-round loss to the Cardinals. They hadn't been forced to compete in weeks.

The new expansion plan could chew up even more of the calendar. In addition to the quick wild-card battle, it calls for one-day playoffs between tied division leaders, even if both teams have earned playoff spots. Previously, tie-breaking stats sorted out the division title and the wild card. Throw in three-way ties for the last playoff spots, rainout makeups and snow days ... well, you can see where we're headed. A New York World Series parade would have to include a Bullwinkle balloon and Santa's sleigh.

The final day of the 2011 regular season, when Boston, Tampa Bay, Atlanta and St. Louis all played for their baseball lives, has been held up as an example of why two more wild-card teams would further enliven the game. But if the extra round had existed last year, that evening would have lost a lot of its appeal. Tampa Bay and Boston would have known they'd face each other in the wild-card playoff round regardless of what had happened in their finales.

One of the most gratifying moments of that night was seeing Baltimore's jubilation over coming back to beat the Red Sox at nearly 1 in the morning. The Orioles appeared even more thrilled than Tampa Bay and St. Louis, the two teams who leapt into the wild-card berths. After years of swimming in quicksand, the Orioles became momentarily relevant. They demonstrated the kind of pride that sustains sports leagues from top to bottom.

A wild-card playoff would dilute the effect of spoilers. It might diminish the World Series as well, creating audience fatigue. Overall ratings for the Series were stronger before the expansion to eight-team playoffs.

Selig makes it sound as if only old-school traditionalists, with fond memories of only a World Series as the postseason, oppose his idea. But Lincecum and Posey were only 10 and 8 years old when the original wild cards debuted. They grew up with three rounds in the postseason. They believe that four would be too much, for both players and fans.

They may be wrong, but Selig can prove that best by following the credo that has sustained baseball's also-rans through history: Wait till next year.

Kevin Towers: D-Backs not taking Giants lightly

[John Shea, Chronicle Columnist](#)

While downing the mighty Phillies in the 2010 NLCS, [the Giants](#) repeatedly said, "To be the best, you've got to beat the best."

That's when they were marching toward a World Series title.

Now they're simply hoping to reclaim a division crown, and their you've-got-to-beat-the-best rally cry applies to the Diamondbacks, the defending NL West champs.

And what better way to bypass the first-place team than by emulation?

The Diamondbacks were more athletic than the Giants, especially with team speed on the bases and on defense, and the Giants added outfielders **Angel Pagan** and **Melky Cabrera** in an effort to narrow the gap.

The Diamondbacks not only outscored the Giants 731-570, they ranked second in the league in steals (133) while the Giants ranked 13th (85). Athleticism would be more of a Giants trait, too, if they used more of **Nate Schierholtz**, **Brandon Crawford** and **Brandon Belt**.

"They're always going to be good because of their pitching," Diamondbacks general manager **Kevin Towers** said of the Giants in a phone interview. "Those four starters (**Tim Lincecum**, **Matt Cain**, **Ryan Vogelsong** and **Madison Bumgarner**) are going to be just as good as any in our league, or better.

"They enjoyed incredible highs and some lows, and the lows probably happened when (**Buster**) **Posey** went down. I understand what they're doing. They're getting a little more athletic. Better speed, better range. I know Boch (manager **Bruce Bochy**) likes athletes and speed, guys he could put in the lineup every day.

"We're not taking them lightly."

Towers won't go as far as agreeing with Pagan that the Giants are the team to beat. Not when the NL West championship flag will be hanging at Chase Field.

"I've got respect for *everybody* in the West," Towers said. "To me, I consider them all contenders. When it's over, we'll find out who the team was to beat. I'm not into making predictions in February."

Towers sees the Diamondbacks, who won 94 games in 2011, as being far deeper in 2012.

He signed **Jason Kubel** to provide pop from the left side and join an outfield mix including **Justin Upton**, **Chris Young** and **Gerardo Parra**. Towers also traded for Oakland's **Trevor Cahill** to join a rotation including **Ian Kennedy**, **Daniel Hudson** and **Joe Saunders**, all of whom made 33 starts, and added **Takashi Saito** and **Craig Breslow** to the bullpen.

"The West is won with arms," Towers said.

It helps to have first baseman **Paul Goldschmidt** (first career homer was a momentous shot off Lincecum), catcher **Miguel Montero** and a healthy **Stephen Drew**, the shortstop who continues to rehab a broken ankle.

"We have more depth and probably a little more confidence," Towers said. "Guys know they can win because they did. We've got to stay humble because every team in the West got better."

Kennedy & Carter: **Gary Carter** joined the Giants in 1990, a year after they played in the World Series. He and lefty-swinging **Terry Kennedy** shared catching duties, and Kennedy said of Carter in a phone interview, "He was so, so good, a pleasure to watch. I didn't really watch a lot of other catchers when I was playing, but I watched him. He was incredible."

Carter, who died at 57 on Thursday, hit .254 in 92 games that season (including a 5-for-5 game in Chicago), and Kennedy hit .277 in 107 games. Both were near the end of their careers.

Carter smiled all the time and always showed his love for the game on and off the field. He wasn't phony - he was the same when the cameras went off. Approaching the game with the passion of a kid, he appropriately was nicknamed the Kid.

"Gary was real," said Kennedy, now manager of the Padres' Triple-A team in Tucson. "I'm sure other people loved the game as much as he did, but he wore his heart on his sleeve. I see nothing wrong with that. The way Gary did it is the way everyone should do it. We're so lucky to be players, you might as well enjoy it. I wish I would've been a little more like that."

In retrospect: **Hisashi Iwakuma** blew it by not signing last winter with the [A's](#), whose offer topped \$15 million over four years - and that's after the A's committed a \$19.1 million posting fee to Iwakuma's team in Japan, the Rakuten Golden Eagles.

The pitcher turned it down, thinking he'd get a bigger contract once he became a free agent a year later.

Not so. Iwakuma had a shoulder injury in 2011 and didn't get the offers he had expected from big-league teams, so he signed with Seattle for \$1.5 million after dropping agent **Don Nomura**, whose advice was iffy, for **Paul Cobbe**.

Iwakuma has a season to prove himself for another crack at free agency and a big contract next winter.

Around the majors: **Jarrod Parker**, acquired by the A's in the Cahill trade, could emerge as a No. 1 starter, said Towers, adding, "We knew we were giving up a big arm." As for outfielder **Collin Cowgill**, Towers said, "He's a

scrappy player. Little in size but has skills. A plus arm, great makeup. On a winning team, he's probably a fourth-type outfielder." **Ryan Cook?** "Throws high 90s at times, but struggled at the big-league level getting ahead in counts." ... The Marlins do weird things. They were supposed to have No. 5 retired but assigned it to outfielder **Logan Morrison**, who wanted the number to honor his late father, who had idolized **George Brett** (No. 5). Goofy stuff but not as goofy as why the Marlins retired No. 5 in the first place - for team President **Carl Barger** before the expansion franchise's first game. Barger had died four months earlier, and he was known as a fan of **Joe DiMaggio**, who wore the number. No surprise that Barger's family is seething, especially because the Marlins failed to notify them. ... **Omar Vizquel's** resurfacing with the Blue Jays delays his Hall of Fame candidacy another year. He turns 45 in April. ... Only seven of 142 players who filed for salary arbitration went to a hearing, and just two players - **Anibal Sanchez** and **Emilio Bonifacio**, both Marlins - won their cases: for \$8 million and \$2.2 million, respectively.

[Drumbeat: Bartolo Colon says he's healthy, happy to join A's, and more](#)

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Phoenix Municipal Stadium 2/18/2012, 11:49am

Bartolo Colon spoke to the local media for the first time since signing a one-year deal with the A's, with AP's Janie McCauley serving as translator, and the Dominican right-hander said he's happy that the A's gave him an opportunity to play another year.

I asked about the remarkable stem-cell procedure that saved his career last year after shoulder and elbow injuries appeared to have ended it, and he said, "Incredible."

He said he was nervous about the procedure beforehand, and he said he had no idea he'd be able to come back and pitch as well as he did with the Yankees. He said it was a surprise.

Colon is 38, and he's the A's first really veteran starting pitcher since Ben Sheets was with the club in 2010. Colon said he's ready to be a leader for the young team – and he added that he believes the club will be good.

Colon looks as if he'll be the A's No. 2 starter behind Brandon McCarthy and pitching the second game of the series in Japan at the end of March.

Other tidbits from pitchers and catchers reporting day:

**Brett Anderson will throw his first bullpen session since last summer's Tommy John surgery on Monday. He remains ahead of schedule in his recovery; the A's hope he returns to the rotation in August.

**Dallas Braden will throw his fourth bullpen since shoulder surgery on Monday. He'll be a little behind the others during the spring, but then the A's are pointing him at April 16 for his first start. They only need to use four starters until then because of the Japan trip and other days off once the season starts. He feels great, he said.

**Catcher Max Stassi said that he's fully recovered from minor shoulder surgery and will not be limited at all during the spring. He's lost 13 pounds, the result of improving his diet, but he wasn't all that big to begin with. He weighs in at 191 pounds and he said his stamina should be better throughout the season.

**Onetime top first-base prospect Sean Doolittle is now a pitcher, and the reports I've heard on him are good: for one thing, he throws in the mid-90s. It's strange to see his name on the list with the pitchers' throwing and defensive workout rotations, and he finds it odd, too. He says working out with the pitchers will take some getting used to, but he'd not going to mind the short days the pitchers who aren't throwing on a given day get during the spring. Doolittle was considered a very good first baseman and the A's had high hopes for him, but two injuries to the same knee and then a severe wrist injury set him back so far that he decided to convert to pitching. He's got previous experience: His 21 victories at Virginia are the most in school history.

A's pitchers, catchers report on eve of workouts

35 players expected to be in uniform on Sunday

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- A's pitchers and catchers reported to camp on Saturday, and are set to begin workouts on Sunday. But it appears the club will continue making more noise off the field than on it in the coming week.

While holding court with reporters on Saturday afternoon, manager Bob Melvin acknowledged there's a "definite possibility" the team will add more players before full camp opens Feb. 25.

Outfielder Yoenis Cespedes, signed to a four-year, \$36 million deal this week, is presumably part of that mix once he gains a worker's visa and undergoes a physical. But he could also be joined by Manny Ramirez, who remains a strong possibility for the A's. Oakland is also trying to acquire Rangers reliever Koji Uehara via trade, and the A's have been linked with free agent Mike Gonzalez.

"There are probably some questions I have to shy away from, based on the fact that I'm not certain we're done on what the roster is going to look like," Melvin said. "But I think we've shown this offseason that we're not afraid to make some moves."

Meanwhile, Melvin has plenty of other things to focus on come Sunday, when 35 pitchers and catchers are expected to be in uniform for their first mandatory workout. Of that group, 11 represent non-roster invitees.

All were on hand for physicals at Phoenix Municipal Stadium on Saturday, and several position players also made appearances -- including infielders Cliff Pennington, Daric Barton, Chris Carter and Scott Sizemore, and outfielders Michael Taylor, Grant Green and Michael Choice.

Even more, according to Melvin, were going through workouts at the club's Minor League facilities.

"They're excited to get out ... start playing baseball and competing for jobs," Melvin said. "Everyone knows we've got a younger group here, a different mix than we did last year, and everybody sees the opportunity to go out there and show what they have to offer."

Over the next seven weeks, Melvin will have plenty of decisions to make, including but not limited to: filling out a rotation that currently has two spots up for grabs; creating an outfield from a surplus of candidates; choosing a first baseman; and naming a closer.

Cactus League play begins with a 12:05 p.m. PT contest against the Mariners at Phoenix Municipal Stadium on March 2, with action concluding in Arizona on March 21 against the Royals -- one day before the club flies to Japan to open the regular season against Seattle.

The A's are allowed to bring along 30 players on that trip and, once back in the States, to engage in a handful of exhibition games in the Bay Area. They will get to have even more on board before facing the deadline to set their 25-man roster. That gives the club plenty of time to answer the many questions that loom before April.

And Melvin, for one, doesn't plan on wasting much of it during his first spring as the club's skipper.

"Certainly you'd like to do things in Spring Training that kind of dictate and define your style," Melvin said. "We're going to try to get a lot of work in in minimal time, so that there's not a lot of standing around. For the work day, it's going to be about work -- and not standing around and waiting."

Manny works out for A's, could sign soon

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- Oakland's interest in veteran free agent Manny Ramirez is still very much alive, and it appears the club could sign the embattled slugger within the next week.

Baseball sources confirmed to MLB.com that A's officials recently traveled to Florida to observe Ramirez's workouts. If the two sides reach an agreement, Ramirez would earn slightly more than the league minimum of \$480,000, according to the Associated Press.

Ramirez would be utilized by the A's as a designated hitter, but not before serving a 50-game suspension stemming from his second violation of MLB's Joint Drug Prevention and Treatment Program, meaning he wouldn't be paid or allowed to participate in a game until as early as May 30.

However, Fox Sports' Ken Rosenthal recently reported that he can play in not only Spring Training games, but extended Spring Training games, giving the A's more time to evaluate him. In addition, he would be able to work out with either Major or Minor League teams, so long as he leaves before the gates open for fans. He can also participate in a 10-game Minor League rehab assignment as his suspension nears its end.

Nevertheless, the addition of Ramirez -- whose tarnished reputation has factored into the little interest he's receiving from other teams -- would undoubtedly make for the most peculiar move made by general manager Billy Beane during an eventful offseason. Still, it's a low-risk one, and the A's could use the power threat.

Oakland enters camp without a proven bat in the middle of the order and is coming off a season in which it ranked 12th in the American League in runs. Much is expected of Yoenis Cespedes, whose four-year, \$36 million deal with the A's should become official soon, but it's worth remembering that the Cuban defector has never faced Major League pitching.

Then there's Seth Smith, Coco Crisp and Jonny Gomes, who, though capable of bringing in runs, don't combine for the power residing in the lineups of division counterparts Texas and Los Angeles.

Ramirez, who turns 40 in May, doesn't represent a quick fix, but he carries with him an impressive resume. Through 19 seasons, the 12-time All-Star is a career .312 hitter with 555 home runs -- good for 14th on the all-time list -- and 1,831 RBIs.

He most recently went 1-for-17 in five games last season for Tampa Bay before retiring rather than serving a 100-game suspension after a second violation that was ultimately cut in half.

Initially a first-round pick by the Indians in 1991, Ramirez spent the first eight years of his Major League career with Cleveland before signing a free-agent deal with Boston, where he played for seven-plus seasons. He also spent time with the Dodgers and White Sox before his short stint with the Rays.

The A's have also been linked to Magglio Ordonez, and it's possible he becomes their next target if they don't reel in Ramirez. Hideki Matsui also remains an option, but more of a long shot. However, Oakland is first expected to acquire a reliever and is one of several teams interested in a trade for Texas' Koji Uehara, along with free agent Mike Gonzalez.

Anderson's first big test comes on Monday

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- A's hurler Brett Anderson, seven months removed from Tommy John surgery, could make big strides in his rehab on Monday, when he's slated to throw off the mound for the first time since his procedure.

"It's a big day," Anderson said from Phoenix Municipal Stadium on Saturday.

His first bullpen will likely include 25 pitches, and the results of that session will dictate when he can participate in another session. Anderson hopes it's not too long before he's regularly throwing bullpens every few days.

Such a plan would keep the 24-year-old on target for an August return. But he's seemingly ahead of schedule, so the A's aren't ruling out an earlier timeframe. They're just not rushing it.

"He's progressed beautifully, and a lot of it has to do with how he's conditioned himself," manager Bob Melvin said. "When you're a younger player, you think you're invincible -- and then something like this pops up, and you realize there are maybe some ways to further your career. And sometimes it takes an event like that to give you that kind of awareness."

The 6-foot-5 Anderson showed up to camp 25 to 30 pounds lighter -- putting him at a current weight of 225 pounds -- than he was before his surgery. Knowing full well that his agility isn't exactly that of someone graceful, the A's lefty believes his new frame will lead to "getting to first a little quicker, and maybe not falling as much."

"He seems more energetic now, more confident in my conversations with him, more vocal," Melvin said. "It can be a dark place when you rehab, especially for a length like that."

Melvin looking at Colon as stabilizing force

PHOENIX -- Right-hander Bartolo Colon was drafted by the Indians just two years after the A's youngest player in camp, 20-year-old catcher Max Stassi, was born.

And while it's easy to highlight the Colon's age, it represents one of the reasons manager Bob Melvin wants the 38-year-old hurler around.

"To be pitching at the level he is at this age, he's been doing something right," Melvin said. "A lot of our guys can learn some things from a guy who has been able to maintain and further his career at an age where most guys are not pitching."

Many people around the game, including Colon himself, didn't believe he would be playing at this age -- not after undergoing a rare stem-cell procedure two years ago that successfully rejuvenated his damaged right arm and saved his career.

Speaking to local media for the first time on Saturday since signing his one-year, \$2 million deal with the A's this winter, Colon called the results "incredible."

"It is a surprise for me," he said. "I didn't know I was going to come back and pitch."

The Dominican veteran, pitching for the Yankees last year, went 8-10 with a 4.00 ERA in 29 appearances (26 starts) in his 14th big league season, after missing all of 2010. Now, the 2005 American League Cy Young Award winner is grateful for another opportunity to do more of the same -- this time with the A's.

"I'm happy to join Oakland," Colon said. "My health is good. No problems. I'm ready to play for the A's."

Colon is currently pegged as the club's No. 2 starter, behind fellow righty Brandon McCarthy, meaning he's in line to pitch the second game of the opening series in Japan at the end of March.

"You always need a veteran guy to lean on a bit -- and he's been around, been in different organizations -- so we felt like he was a good fit to kind of take some pressure off some of the younger guys," Melvin said. "He continues at his age to be a power pitcher. He's a cagey veteran, he knows what he has to do each and every year to make some adjustments to keep on top of his game like he has."

Worth noting

- Rehabbing lefty Dallas Braden threw his fourth bullpen on Thursday and is scheduled for another on Monday. The A's pitcher believes he is ahead of schedule, following his May 17 shoulder surgery, and is still aiming to make a return to the rotation by mid-April.

But Melvin wants to be cautious with the southpaw, and noted that early May could potentially represent more of a realistic timetable.

"He probably doesn't want to hear me say that, but I don't want to get locked into a certain date and then not get there," Melvin said. "Nothing has happened in the meantime that would suggest he's behind. But you have to give yourself a little bit of leeway."

- Stassi, who underwent minor shoulder surgery in May, entered camp on Saturday with no restrictions, and said he's been at full strength since November. The A's catching prospect is enjoying his third big league camp -- and third spring rooming with outfielder Grant Green.

Major League: [Day 1: Pitchers and catchers report](#)

Jerry Blevins and Tyson Ross provided the most exciting action on the field here at Phoenix Muni today — not with a baseball but with an aerobic pro ring. You can call it a fancy frisbee. Nevertheless, it was a rather quiet day, with players simply trickling in and out of the clubhouse for physical exams. The real action begins tomorrow, when pitchers and catchers have their first workouts.

A few tidbits from the day:

-Bob Melvin said it's a "definite possibility" the club adds to its roster before full camp opens next Saturday. You can presumably count Yoenis Cespedes in that mix, once he acquires a worker's visa. And Manny Ramirez is still very much an option, as are relievers Koji Uehara and Mike Gonzalez.

-Lefty Dallas Braden is slated to throw his fifth bullpen on Monday and is still eying a mid-April return to the rotation. Melvin, though, believes the beginning of May is potentially a more realistic option.

-Brett Anderson, down to 225 pounds, is set to throw off the mound for the first time Monday. Like Braden, he's ahead of schedule and is looking to rejoin the mix in August.

-I caught up with Joey Devine for a few minutes, and he's entering camp completely healthy. He'll be part of the competition for the closer's job, which Melvin says "won't be ironed out for awhile." Brian Fuentes, Grant Balfour and Fautino De Los Santos are also candidates.

And a note for all Spring Training visitors: The A's will be holding all of their workouts (before games begin) at Papago Park Sports Complex rather than Phoenix Muni. The two sites are just five minutes from each other.

A's spring training: Colon glad for chance

ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHOENIX — Bartolo Colon had no idea how he would bounce back from a stem-cell procedure that saved his career.

Two years ago, fat and bone marrow stem cells were collected from Colon and injected into his troublesome right elbow and shoulder in an innovative and unproven technique. Colon had no idea how it would turn out, but he responded and spent 2011 with the Yankees.

"I was a little bit nervous," he said in Spanish. "I didn't know what the result would be."

Now, Colon is getting a new start back in the AL West with the Oakland Athletics, whose pitchers and catchers reported to spring training Saturday.

The fact he is pitching another season with a fresh arm? "Incredible," he says.

Colon received a handshake and hug from new teammate and outfielder Jonny Gomes, the former Casa Grande High star, after completing his physical. The pitcher proclaimed himself healthy and appreciative of another shot at age 38.

"He continues at his age to be a power pitcher," manager Bob Melvin said following a four-hour meeting of the A's brass. "He's a cagey veteran, he knows what he has to do each and every year to make some adjustments to keep on top of his game like he has. ... We felt he was the right fit here based on the guys we had a chance to get."

The 2005 AL Cy Young Award winner went 8-10 with a 4.00 ERA in 29 appearances and 26 starts in his 14th big-league season after missing all of 2010.

"My health is good," he said. "No problems. I'm ready to play for Oakland."

Colon signed a \$2 million, one-year contract last month to join a rotation that lost two top pitchers this offseason. All-Star left-hander Gio Gonzalez was traded to the Washington Nationals, and Trevor Cahill was dealt to the Arizona Diamondbacks. Closer Andrew Bailey is also gone, sent to Boston in late December.

Colon said he will embrace being a veteran presence for the young A's, whose roster still could change over the next week. The A's are considering signing designated hitter

Manny Ramirez, who would have to sit out the first 50 games for his second violation of baseball's drug policy.

"Definitely possibilities," Melvin said. "I'm not certain that we're done on what our roster's going to look like. I think we've shown this offseason that we're not afraid to make some moves."

GOMES EAGER TO GET GOING

Gomes, who lives in Arizona during the offseason, showed up early to get going — and make a few more introductions for those he didn't meet at FanFest in Oakland last month.

"This is the time of year you want to get out of the batting cage and get out of the weight room and put some cleats on," Gomes said. "You know your feet are going to hurt and your calves are going to cramp."

Everybody knows there's plenty to get done in an abbreviated spring. Oakland opens the season with two games in Japan next month against the Mariners, who started at spring training a week ago. The A's opted to wait.

Melvin said he would typically try to get position players 60 to 65 at-bats during Cactus League play before the season starts, but "we're not going to try to cram that into 21 games."

The emphasis will be to get as much work done each day while minimizing players' time standing around between drills.

"Oh, we're rusty," reliever Jerry Blevins halfway joked while signing autographs for a couple of diehard fans in the bleachers after playing Frisbee at Phoenix Municipal Stadium with 6-foot-6 starting candidate Tyson Ross.

BRADEN ENCOURAGED

Dallas Braden is upbeat entering the spring. Braden, who threw a perfect game on May 9, 2010, against Tampa Bay, is encouraged by his progress following surgery May 17 to repair a torn capsule in his left shoulder.

While Braden is ahead of schedule in his recovery, his best guess is that he will be ready to return in mid-April or shortly thereafter. Melvin said it could be early May for Braden, who will be treated cautiously.

Braden threw his fourth bullpen session of the winter Thursday and is slated for another on Monday. He praised the training staff for being "lights out."

"Just being able to throw a baseball pain-free has been tremendous," Braden said. "The last two years I had been throwing in pain, not with pain but in pain. That's tough to do. I take my bullpens very seriously. To be getting back to a position where I can learn again from my work, that's Christmas for me. Everything points to positive."

NO. 51 FOR SALE?

Braden has some other business to attend to this spring. He wears No. 51, and that has been the jersey number for new outfielder Yoenis Cespedes, the Cuban defector who this past week agreed to terms on a \$36 million, four-year contract.

"For \$35.5 million he can have No.51," Braden said with a chuckle. "I'm going to put that on his locker. I don't know if we go much lower than that. Do you really want No. 51?"

Perhaps Colon will be up for a swap for his No. 52. He has surprised even himself considering he's still pitching after all the years of injury problems.

"I didn't know I was going to come back and pitch," he said.

Melvin is confident in Colon, saying, "If he's pitching at the level he is at this age, he's doing something right" Melvin said of Colon.