

Oakland A's lose Scott Sizemore for season with torn ACL

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

PHOENIX -- A's third baseman Scott Sizemore was diagnosed with a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee that will sideline him for the entire season, the team announced Monday.

It's a significant blow for a team that has been among the most injury-plagued in the majors in recent seasons. Sizemore hurt his knee during an infield drill Saturday in the team's first full-squad workout of 2012. He had an MRI on Monday morning, and the results were examined by Phoenix-based specialist Dr. Douglas Freedberg later in the day. "I really feel badly for Scott," A's manager Bob Melvin said in a team statement. "He's worked extremely hard and was ready for a breakout season this year. We were counting on him to provide some much-needed power from the right side of the plate."

Sizemore was the unquestioned starter at a position where the A's have little depth, and there's less time than normal to identify his replacement, as the A's begin their regular season March 28 against the Seattle Mariners in Tokyo. Judging from Melvin's comments earlier in the day, catcher Josh Donaldson will get a crack at third. Donaldson played some third last season for Triple-A Sacramento, and he had been taking grounders there this spring even before Sizemore's injury. The A's now are shifting him to third full time.

Melvin also mentioned Adam Rosales and Eric Sogard as options at third, but those two will continue working all over the infield as utility men.

Melvin called Donaldson "an intriguing option" at third.

"Certainly his bat has got some power," he added. "He's a guy known to drive in a few runs. Everybody likes his actions. You can tell he's got a little different pep in his step right now. Guys sense an opportunity, and I like to see that."

The A's acquired Donaldson, 26, during the 2008 season from the Chicago Cubs as part of a four-player package for Rich Harden and Chad Gaudin. His only big league time so far came in 2010, when he got in 14 games at catcher and hit .156 with a homer and four RBIs.

Last season with Triple-A Sacramento, Donaldson hit .261 with 17 homers and 70 RBIs.

"I believe in my ability to play third," he said. "I'm hungry to play and hungry to win a job."

Among the free-agent third basemen available are former Athletic Miguel Tejada, Felipe Lopez and Wes Helms. The A's could explore a trade, but this early in the spring, many teams are likely trying to evaluate their own rosters before entertaining a deal.

A's general manager Billy Beane said in a text message that the team would consider its options over the next few days. Sizemore came over from Detroit in a trade for reliever David Purcey last May. He took over at third after Kevin Kouzmanoff was sent to the minors and eventually traded.

Sizemore hit .249 with 11 homers and 52 RBIs in 93 games with Oakland. He had primarily played second base with the Tigers.

Oakland A's notebook: Prospect Grant Green still a work in progress

By Joe Stiglich, Oakland Tribune

PHOENIX -- Grant Green adjusted to a position change midway through last season. Now the A's 2009 first-round pick is trying a new hitting approach.

Green, who switched from shortstop to center field last July, has been working with Triple-A Sacramento hitting coach Todd Steverson to unlock more power in his swing.

"We worked a lot in the (Arizona) Fall League, redoing my whole stance and swing pretty much completely," said Green, the A's sixth-ranked prospect according to Baseball America. "We widened out (my stance), gave me a little better load, a little bit of a leg kick. So when I do connect with the ball, rather than getting that warning-track power, we'll be able to leave the yard."

Green hit .318 with 20 homers and 87 RBIs in 2010 with Single-A Stockton, which plays in the hitter-friendly California League. Playing with Double-A Midland last season, Green hit a solid .291 but dropped to nine homers.

The A's aren't trying to make Green into a slugger, but they would like him to drive the ball more and not be a predominantly opposite-field hitter.

"Certain pitches need to be driven up the middle and pulled," Steverson said. "We just want to let him utilize his God-given ability a little better and not relegate himself to one-third of the field."

Green, the 13th overall selection in 2009, labeled himself "a work in progress" in center. Deep fly balls hit directly over his head provide the biggest challenge.

"I'm feeling better day by day," he said. "Being able to watch Coco (Crisp) and a couple other guys take routes has really helped."

Right-hander Brad Peacock's back stiffened up while he was warming up in the bullpen Monday, and he was scratched from throwing live batting practice. A's manager Bob Melvin said Peacock might be given Tuesday off with the possibility of throwing again Wednesday. Peacock, acquired from Washington in the Gio Gonzalez trade, is competing for a rotation spot.

Reliever Ryan Cook showed a good slider against hitters, including Manny Ramirez, and impressed Melvin again. "He's going to be fighting for a job on our team, I believe," Melvin said.

The A's will begin Thursday's intrasquad game at noon at Phoenix Municipal Stadium.

A's nightmare come true - Sizemore out for year

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Phoenix -- As the A's had feared since players heard a "pop" when **Scott Sizemore** injured his left knee Saturday, the only real everyday third baseman on their roster is lost for the season with a torn anterior cruciate ligament.

"I really feel badly for Scott," manager **Bob Melvin** said in a statement Monday evening. "He's worked extremely hard and was ready for a breakout season this year. We were counting on him to provide some much-needed power from the right side of the plate. Now his total focus has to be on a successful surgery and rehabilitation so he can return stronger than ever."

A catcher, **Josh Donaldson**, is the top early candidate to replace Sizemore. The A's liked the work Donaldson did at third base the final month of last season at Triple-A Sacramento and at winter ball in the Dominican Republic, and they believe he's improved enough defensively to handle the position at the big-league level. In addition, some think Donaldson will hit better when he's not catching.

One team official said that the Sizemore news "makes me want to vomit," but he said that he believes Donaldson might wind up being one of the better stories of the season. Donaldson was sharp in defensive drills Monday morning.

Nonroster third baseman **Wes Timmons** also will get a look, along with utility infielders **Adam Rosales** and **Eric Sogard**.

Stephen Parker will be borrowed occasionally from minor-league camp for spring games, and the A's might explore a trade for Angels infielder **Alberto Callaspo** or another available third baseman.

No surgery date is set for Sizemore.

Milone to start spring opener: Left-hander **Tommy Milone**, obtained in the **Gio Gonzalez** deal, will start the A's first spring game on Friday at Phoenix Muni against the Mariners. Milone drew raves from the hitters he faced Monday, including **Coco Crisp**, and his consistent display of command makes him a favorite for the fourth spot in the rotation.

Game 2 will feature right-handers **Tyson Ross** and **Jarrod Parker**, and in Game 3, **Brandon McCarthy** will start against the Cubs.

Bartolo Colon goes the following day, which is a pretty clear indication that McCarthy will start Opening Day in Japan, as has been the expectation for weeks. Melvin is likely to make that announcement in the next day or two.

News ahead? Commissioner **Bud Selig** begins his annual stops at Arizona ballparks this weekend. The A's had hoped to get a decision on a new ballpark before the regular season, which for Oakland begins March 28 in Japan, and Selig called the matter on "the front burner" during the owners' meetings in January.

There was no word on when Selig might visit Phoenix Muni or if his stop there might include any update about Oakland's stadium situation.

Briefly: The A's expect Cuban outfielder **Yoenis Cespedes**, now living in the Dominican Republic, to receive his visa soon; it has been more than two weeks since he applied. ... **Brad Peacock** did not throw live batting practice because of back stiffness. "I don't think it's anything serious," said Peacock. ... **Kurt Suzuki** said that **Manny Ramirez** talked to him about hitting for 10 minutes Monday morning and gave Suzuki tips about his bat path.

Drumbeat: A's third baseman Scott Sizemore out for season

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser in Phoenix 2/27/2012, 6:06pm

This is the news the A's had feared, especially after players heard a "pop" when Scott Sizemore injured his left knee the first hour of the team's first full workout on Saturday: Sizemore has a torn ACL and he will miss the entire season.

This is a blow to the A's, who were already light at the position as it was. The team was expecting a breakout year for Sizemore, who showed promise after converting from second to third last year. The only true third baseman in camp besides Sizemore is non-roster invitee Wes Timmons.

It's a catcher, Josh Donaldson, who is going to get the first real look at filling in for Sizemore. The team finds Donaldson intriguing after he played at third the final month of last season at Sacramento and then full time in winter ball in the Dominican.

One team official I spoke to this evening told me the Sizemore news "makes me want to vomit," but the flip side, he said, is that Donaldson might wind up being a great story. The team not only likes the fact that he took it upon himself to go to the Dominican to play third, but that he also has improved his defensive metrics there enough to be considered for a big-league spot. They believe, too, that he will hit better when out from behind the plate.

The A's also like the fact that Donaldson has boldly stated that he's in camp to win a job. "I'm hungry," he's said repeatedly.

If Donaldson, Timmons or one of the utility infielders, Adam Rosales and Eric Sogard, don't pan out, the top possibility outside the organization remains Angels infielder Alberto Callaspo, but not for a high-level prospect. So either his asking price comes down or the A's look elsewhere or at the fairly weak group of remaining free agents, led, as I wrote two days ago, by onetime MVP Miguel Tejada. Minor-league Stephen Parker could be a possibility down the line, and he'll certainly be borrowed from minor-league camp for some spring games.

I included video of Donaldson playing third base this morning at the bottom of this post.

Drumbeat: Evidence of Brett Anderson's weight loss; video of Donaldson at third

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at Papago Park 2/27/2012, 9:13am

It was Photo Day at Phoenix Muni this morning, always one of my favorite events of the spring because the real uniforms make it seem as if the season is fast approaching. It's also nice to see the new A's players in the home whites.

Today, the player who stood out the most for me was Brett Anderson, who has lost 25 pounds since last season while he rehabbed from Tommy John surgery. It really shows when he has on the real A's uniform.

As I was snapping this, one of the other players asked him how he'd lost so much weight, and Anderson replied, "I don't eat." He was joking: Anderson has been more careful about his diet, but the main thing he's done is increase his exercise. He's been diligent about getting in his workouts, and manager Bob Melvin said that the weight loss has resulted in better fielding, too.

I think we all remember how awkward Anderson could be defensively, especially on plays at first base, but manager Bob Melvin astonished us all last week when he told us Anderson had made some "athletic plays" during defensive drills. Anderson won't be back in the A's rotation until midseason or later, but it will be interesting to see how much better he is fielding balls and covering first base.

No news yet on Scott Sizemore; he's getting an MRI on his injured left knee right about now but the A's orthopedist is in surgery this morning so won't get a look at the results until later today. I doubt details will get to reporters until mid- to late afternoon, and it's possible we won't hear anything until tomorrow morning.

Melvin reiterated today that Josh Donaldson will remain at third base for now and that the other potential candidates for the spot, should Sizemore miss much time, will rotate around the infield; that bunch includes Adam Rosales, Eric Sogard and Wes Timmons. Timmons' primary position is third base, and as I wrote the other day, the A's see Rosales and Sogard's main value as utility men, so if Sizemore misses time, it appears as if Donaldson is the early front-runner (Melvin said the team is intrigued with his bat), with Timmons, a non-roster player, next in line. The team also will borrow Stephen Parker from the minor leagues when games start, as I mentioned in this morning's paper, and as I've reported the past two days, Alberto Callaspo is a potential trade target near the end of the spring – only if Sizemore has a significant injury, of course, and the A's are very much hoping that's not the case.

The A's roster is tilted so far toward outfielders, it's eye-popping. There are 19 outfielders, 10 infielders, and Timmons is the only non-roster infielder, which is why the pool of potential third basemen is so small – and one reason Donaldson, a catcher, very wisely went to the Dominican this winter to play third base fulltime.

I hear the A's like Donaldson's metrics at third base, by the way. They improved last year as he was playing the spot at Triple-A Sacramento, and they got better again in the Dominican. And Melvin said he likes the fact that Donaldson is going for it; he noted this morning that Donaldson has more pep in his step and looks poised to try to grab any opportunity possible.

Knee injury sidelines Sizemore for 2012

A's look to Donaldson as an 'intriguing' replacement at third

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- Prepared for the worst but hoping for the best, the A's were forced to face the undesirable of the two outcomes Monday evening, when they learned third baseman Scott Sizemore will miss the entire 2012 season with a torn ACL in his left knee.

Sizemore suffered the injury Saturday afternoon within two hours of the club's first full-squad workout, and on Monday morning he underwent an MRI administered by Dr. Douglas Freedberg that revealed the fateful news.

Due to swelling, the 27-year-old infielder will have to wait two weeks before being reevaluated to determine when he can undergo surgery. Meanwhile, the A's will turn to a catching prospect for help, with Josh Donaldson expected to get a long look at third base before the club decides whether to look outside the organization to fill the void.

Sizemore appeared primed for a breakout season with the A's, who acquired his services midseason last year via a trade with the Tigers. He immediately made the position switch from second base to third base to accommodate Oakland's need, and in the following months the A's watched him progress defensively and offensively.

At the plate, Sizemore hit .249 with 11 home runs and 52 RBIs in 93 games for the A's, and only Josh Willingham compiled a higher OPS than Sizemore's .778 mark.

"I really feel badly for Scott," manager Bob Melvin said in a release. "He's worked extremely hard, and was ready for a breakout season this year. We were counting on him to provide some much-needed power from the right side of the plate. Now, his total focus has to be on a successful surgery and rehabilitation, so he can return stronger than ever."

Melvin and Sizemore essentially arrived in Oakland at the same time. The third baseman was brought aboard to replace the demoted Kevin Kouzmanoff on June 6 last year, and Melvin's tenure with the A's began three days later, when Bob Geren was dismissed as manager. Coincidentally, Sizemore was responsible for Melvin's first win at the helm on June 11, when he provided the club's ninth-inning go-ahead run in Chicago to help put an end to a 10-game skid.

Finally, it seemed, the A's had found the answer to their long-term concerns at third base, which had turned into something of a revolving door since Eric Chavez's departure. In turn, Sizemore had found himself a fresh start following a disappointing time in Detroit, where he was once deemed the Tigers' second baseman of the future.

Monday's news only adds to a series of frustrating events in Sizemore's career. At the end of the 2009 season, he was handed the monumental task of replacing Detroit fan favorite Placido Polanco, only to watch the opportunity slip away when he broke his ankle in an Arizona Fall League game. The gritty Sizemore ultimately played through some pain the following spring and did well enough to land on the Opening Day roster as the Tigers' starting second baseman, as planned. But he struggled at the plate, hitting .205, before being sent down to Triple-A. Then, in 2011, he set out to prove himself once again in the months that preceded his move to Oakland.

Now, the A's plan to strip Donaldson of his catcher's gear in favor of full-time duty at third base this spring. Donaldson is no stranger to the position, having played it during most of his career at Auburn and every so often in the Minors. He also played at the hot corner exclusively in the Dominican this winter. The A's seem not to be so concerned with his defensive abilities, as much as they are about his potential to hit for the position.

Donaldson, 26, is a five-year Minor League veteran -- with a .268 average and .360 on-base percentage over that time. He most recently hit .261 with 17 home runs and 70 RBIs in 115 games for Triple-A Sacramento. Those numbers served Donaldson well as a catcher, but may not bode well as a third baseman. Moreover, he hit just .156 during a short Major League stint in 2010.

But Oakland is in no position to be picky, right now, as top third-base prospect Stephen Parker is still a year away from being Major League-ready. Donaldson will receive every chance to break camp as the everyday guy at third base.

"The Donaldson part is intriguing," Melvin said. "Certainly his bat has got some power, and he's been known to drive in a few runs."

"I'm looking for any opportunity, right now, to make this team and contribute," Donaldson said recently. "I believe in my abilities to play third, to be able to produce at the Major League level in the lineup. I just want to, hopefully, if I'm fortunate enough, prove myself to Bob and those guys that I deserve a shot. I'm hungry to play. I'm hungry to win a job."

Adam Rosales, Eric Sogard and Wes Timmons can also provide temporary help at the position. But they'll mostly be relied upon as utility players, given Oakland's lack of infield depth in camp.

Donaldson was seen getting work in at third base on Monday, and Melvin has already been encouraged by the results.

"So far, so good," Melvin said. "Everybody likes his actions. He worked double-time yesterday, and showed up early today. You can tell he's got a little different pep in his step, right now. Guys sense an opportunity, and I like to see that."

Ross impressive early in camp

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

PHOENIX -- Past all of the excitement and intrigue surrounding the fresh faces of Jarrod Parker, Brad Peacock and Tommy Milone is the 6-foot-6 shadow of right-hander Tyson Ross.

The A's 2008 second-round Draft pick endured a frustrating 2011 campaign, following an early-season oblique injury. But Ross again finds himself heavily in the mix for a rotation job this year. He's already impressed in the early stages of camp, largely because of sharp command and an improved changeup.

The 24-year-old hurler, who compiled a 2.75 ERA in nine games (six starts) with the A's last year, has always showcased unorthodox mechanics, and it's believed that they'll ultimately land him in a relief role. But Ross has been tailoring his work habits in a way he hopes will equate to success as a starter.

"I did a lot of video work in the offseason to hone in on my motion," Ross said. "Repeating my [motion] is always going to be a big thing for me -- especially because of how unique it is. I feel like I've learned a lot about myself and can identify what's going wrong when I'm not pitching well."

Such awareness should serve Ross well. The A's expected him to return to their rotation once healthy last year, but he pitched so poorly during his rehab outings that he was kept at Triple-A Sacramento until year's end. Command inconsistencies hurt Ross the most, and he compiled a 7.61 ERA with 22 walks in 36 2/3 innings in nine starts for the River Cats.

His numbers in the Arizona Fall League were also uninspiring, but Ross was satisfied with his work during that time -- especially with a changeup that was nearly nonexistent the previous year.

"I was able to work on the changeup in game situations, without really worrying about the results," Ross said, "and that was really good for me to trust it a little more, and hopefully add it in and allow me to go deeper in games."

The pitch has added depth to a repertoire that also includes a hard-sinking fastball and sharp breaking ball.

"He's looked very good," manager Bob Melvin said. "His ball can disappear with a lot of velocity."

With two spots up for grabs in the rotation, Melvin and Co. may very well choose to start the year with Ross and fellow righty Graham Godfrey in tow, while placing the likes of Parker and Peacock in Triple-A. Even so, Ross realizes staying in the rotation will be even harder than getting there.

"You have to take advantage of every opportunity here," Ross said. "It was a rough time last year, and definitely a learning experience. I was focusing too much on getting back, rather than on the process of healing myself. I was in the wrong mindset, a little bit, and it really hurt me in the long run. This year, I have a better idea of what I need to do to be in the big leagues."

Reddick brings 'wrestling gold' to photo day

PHOENIX -- Lights. Camera. Wrestling belt?

Yes, that's the way new A's outfielder Josh Reddick likes to do photo day.

The 25-year-old Reddick moved between photo stations early Monday morning with a World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) belt for really no other reason than just because he wanted to.

"I've always been a wrestling fan," Reddick said. "We did a couple of standard shots of me wearing it as a belt and then holding it over my shoulder. Nothing too fancy."

Reddick's passion for the WWE reached a new level last year while in Boston, thanks to former teammate and locker mate Dustin Pedroia's shared interest in it. Reddick even purchased "Nature Boy" Ric Flair's autographed flashy robe on eBay for Pedroia, who made it a mainstay above his locker.

"That got a lot of attention," Reddick said.

It didn't stop there. In September, Flair made a visit to Fenway Park and presented Pedroia with a 50-pound replica of his TNA Heavyweight Championship belt "that blew mine out of the water," Reddick said.

Reddick's belt is plastic, and it's found a home above his locker in the A's clubhouse at Phoenix Municipal Stadium. Soon, it will make the transfer to the Oakland Coliseum, where Reddick is expected to hold down everyday right-field duties.

For four years, Reddick has maintained a friendship with the WWE's camera crew, so he receives free tickets and backstage passes whenever a show is nearby. Just last November, a day before his wrist surgery, Reddick went to one in Boston and met idol Triple H, after the wrestler learned that Reddick's walkup song was inspired by his very own entrance song, "The Game," by Motorhead.

Reddick plans to keep that song in the mix this year, despite changing teams. So far, he likes the relaxed environment of Oakland's young clubhouse, where he was able to parade around with his belt on Monday without much fanfare.

"That wouldn't fly in Boston," he said, smiling.

Worth noting

- Peacock felt some back stiffness while warming up to throw live batting practice on Monday, so he's likely to rest at least another day before resuming action on the mound.

"We don't think it's anything serious, but where we are in camp here, we want to be careful," Melvin said.

- The A's announced that Thursday's intrasquad game will be held at noon MST at Phoenix Municipal Stadium.

Major Lee-ague: Sizemore to miss 2012 season

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 2/27/2012, 5:56pm

The A's were prepared for the worst and hoping for the best, but they were dealt the former Monday evening, when they learned third baseman Scott Sizemore will miss the entire 2012 season with a torn ACL in his left knee.

Sizemore suffered the injury Saturday afternoon during a series of infield drills and underwent an MRI on Monday morning under the watch of Dr. Douglas Freedberg that revealed the bad news.

Due to swelling, the 27-year-old A's infielder will have to wait two weeks before being reevaluated to determine when he will undergo surgery.

Sizemore was just getting comfortable with the A's, who acquired his services midseason last year via a trade with the Tigers. He immediately made the switch from second base to third base to fill the need for Oakland, who watched him progress both offensively and defensively in the months that followed. At the plate, Sizemore hit .249 with 11 home runs and 52 RBIs in 93 games for the A's, and only Josh Willingham compiled a higher OPS than Sizemore's .778 mark. The A's are expected to give prospect Josh Donaldson — now stripped of catching gear — a long look at third base in the meantime, but it's possible they could explore other options through trade or free-agency to fill the void. Adam Rosales, Eric Sogard and Wes Timmons can also provide temporary help at the position. "I really feel badly for Scott," manager Bob Melvin said in a release. "He's worked extremely hard and was ready for a breakout season this year. We were counting on him to provide some much-needed power from the right side of the plate. Now his total focus has to be on a successful surgery and rehabilitation so he can return stronger than ever. In his absence, we feel we have some viable options in Adam Rosales, Eric Sogard and Josh Donaldson. They can all bring something to the position."

Major League: A's await MRI results on Sizemore

Jane Lee, mlb.com, 2/27/2012, 9:25am

As the A's await MRI results on Scott Sizemore, who was scheduled to undergo tests on his left knee today around 9:30 a.m. MST, speculation continues on how the club will handle third base in his absence. In no way is anyone already ruling out Sizemore for an extended period of time, but even if the injury proves minor, he'd likely still miss a couple weeks at the very least, and the A's are under the gun here in Spring Training as they try to prepare for their regular-season games in Japan on March 28 and 29.

For now, Melvin plans to strictly play Josh Donaldson at third base, while Adam Rosales, Eric Sogard and Wes Timmons will see time all over the infield. Rosales and Sogard, he says, "are invaluable" to the team as utility guys and, though Timmons is a natural third baseman, he's going to have to be flexible based on need. It's obvious the A's have plenty of outfielders to work with this spring (13 are in camp!), but their depth in the infield isn't nearly as abundant.

Melvin likes the power potential Donaldson brings to third base and has already been impressed with his defensive work, which was helped along this winter when Donaldson assumed full-time third-base duties in the Dominican.

"So far so good," Melvin said. "Everybody likes his actions. He worked double-time yesterday and was out there early working today. You can tell he's got a little different pep in his step right now. Guys sense an opportunity, and I like to see that."

Loss of Sizemore highlights Athletics' lack of experience in infield

By Associated Press, Updated: Tuesday, February 28, 12:16 AM

PHOENIX — The Oakland Athletics could finish somewhere in the middle of the pack in fielding percentage this season and it would be a vast improvement over last year, when they were worst in the American League.

The A's plan to feature three starting infielders that were not on last year's opening-day roster, two of whom were with other organizations.

Scott Sizemore was expected to provide stability at third base but that changed when he sprained his left knee Saturday, exposing the lack of depth at the position. The problem is so glaring, A's manager Bob Melvin asked catcher Josh Donaldson, who last played third base at Auburn in 2007, to focus full time on the hot corner.

Melvin will have to use minor leaguers to fill in when preseason games start this weekend.

"We don't have enough infielders," Melvin said Monday. "I'm worried that if we give guys days off we'll have to pick up guys from mini-camp. In fact, I know we will."

Jemile Weeks gave the A's instant offense when he was called up, but his play at second base left plenty of room for improvement. The A's also hope Brandon Allen, at first, and Cliff Pennington, at shortstop, can make some strides defensively.

Eric Sogard and Adam Rosales, two proven major league infielders, will get work at third. Melvin thinks their value, though, is in their versatility.

"They are going to have to play all different positions," Melvin said. "Donaldson is the only one who will not be moved around. He'll remain strictly at third."

The A's used six third basemen last year, with Sizemore taking care of the bulk of the games. Kevin Kouzmanoff was last year's opening-day roster. He was eventually sent down to the minor leagues.

Donaldson, originally drafted in the first round by the Chicago Cubs, senses an opportunity to make the 25-man roster out of spring and has immersed himself in the position.

"He has been working double time," Melvin said. "I can see a different pep in his step. He's intriguing there because he has some power and has been known to drive in runs."

Weeks was promoted to the big leagues "sooner than expected," A's general manager Billy Beane said. He was an immediate hit, relieving some of the fan angst from losing the popular Mark Ellis in a trade to the Colorado Rockies.

Weeks committed 13 errors, the fourth most by a second baseman last year. Ellis, by contrast, made the fewest miscues and led the majors with his .995 fielding percentage at the position.

"Weeks' double play turns are so much better than we saw last year," Melvin said. "His mechanics are so much better. He came in confident because of what he did last year. He has made significant strides in his defense."

Daric Barton, recovering from right shoulder injury, is another possibility at first. He committed eight errors last year, tied for sixth most in the majors, in 65 games. Allen had a slightly better percentage (.991) and has better power potential.

Wes Timmons, a non-roster player, is also in the mix at third, though Melvin prefers he remain flexible.

The A's have 19 outfielders and 10 infielders in camp.

Braden makes strong progress from shoulder surgery

Braden makes strong progress from shoulder surgery

By JANIE McCAULEY, AP Baseball Writer

PHOENIX (AP) — Dallas Braden decided against being a world traveler this winter, realizing his rehabilitation from shoulder surgery took top priority.

Braden is working with the hope of returning to the Oakland Athletics' depleted rotation come mid-April or perhaps early May. He understands the urgency for a pitching staff that traded away All-Star starters Trevor Cahill and Gio Gonzalez this offseason, along with All-Star closer Andrew Bailey.

Everybody wants to know when his first start will be.

"So do I, so do I," Braden said. "For two years I'd been throwing in pain, not with pain but in pain. That's tough to do, and now just to be able to throw a baseball pain-free has been tremendous."

The 28-year-old Braden hopes to return to his 2010 form, when he pitched an improbable perfect game against Tampa Bay on May 9, the highlight of a year in which he went 11-14 with a 3.50 ERA in a career-best 192 2-3 innings.

Braden received a \$3.35 million, one-year contract in mid-December. He made three starts last season before being sidelined by a shoulder injury. He was 1-1 with a 3.00 ERA before going on the disabled list April 18. He had surgery to a repair a torn capsule in his left shoulder May 17.

"He's a guy that we're definitely looking to rely on," reliever Grant Balfour said Sunday. "He's been around a while now and he went through the surgery. They kept him for a reason: He's had success, and that's what they're looking for, to come back and put up those numbers he's put up in the past."

Fellow left-hander Brett Anderson also is working his way back from reconstructive elbow surgery last July. He has thrown two bullpen sessions this spring since having Tommy John surgery.

Both pitchers are on a schedule that includes throwing two bullpen sessions each week.

Manager Bob Melvin has noted neither looks as if he is working back from surgery.

"It's a credit to them and how hard they rehabbed," Melvin said Sunday. "Based on the fact Dallas has rehabbed as hard as he had, I think has really bridged the gap on how good he feels each and every time out. If you slack on that a little bit in the shoulder, it's a little bit different. He's a hard-working kid, we all know that, and he's dedicated to what he does. Seeing that the fruits of that right now is a credit to him and the training staff and those who are working with him."

Catcher Kurt Suzuki knows Braden will be prepared when his day back on the mound finally comes.

"He wants to go out there," Suzuki said. "He wanted to pitch even with a sore shoulder last year. He's a competitor, he wants to get on the field. That's definitely the kind of guys you want. Dallas is looking good, Anderson is looking good. That's a good sign."

Doctors told Braden no amount of rehab would heal his shoulder, so surgery became the best option. And he has kept himself ahead of schedule in his throwing program.

He did a lot of work before surgery to strengthen the area "so that when I came out of it I wasn't like a baby deer on training wheels."

"By the middle of October I had already completed a throwing program that had me out to 150 feet," he said.

Getting Braden and Anderson back will mean a lot.

Anderson was 3-6 with a 4.00 ERA in 13 starts last season before going on the 15-day disabled list on June 7 with elbow soreness. The 24-year-old pitcher originally had a platelet-rich plasma injection in his elbow and was going to see whether rehabilitation could help him.

In April 2010, Anderson received a \$12.5 million, four-year contract that includes team options for 2014 and 2015. The total value of the deal could reach \$31 million. He went 7-6 with a 2.80 ERA in 19 starts that year.

Now, each time Braden pitches he is able to think less about how he feels "and more and more about getting something out of it."

"How I feel is the only timetable we can go on. I've understood because I've been through this before. Putting a date on it right now for me isn't important, because I feel so good in terms of throwing that the day will just come, and it will come before I know it," Braden said. "To be getting back to a position where I can learn from my work, that's Christmas for me. The biggest thing for us right now is to make sure because we are heading in the right direction that we don't take a wrong turn."

Notes: 3B Scott Sizemore is scheduled for an MRI exam with a specialist Monday. He sprained his left knee during Saturday's first full-squad workout. ... RHP Brian Fuentes threw batting practice two days after having his regular session halted due to a tweaked hamstring. "He threw the ball really well," Melvin said. "He was on it, with good stuff. There's a potential open role at the end I know he'd like to have. For his first on-field endeavor it was good to see." ... OF Jonny Gomes called his shot on the final pitch of the day, thrown by Melvin. "Somebody's car might have been damaged for all I know," Melvin said with a chuckle. "He got to me the most. It was the bat flip that irked me."

A's notebook: Sizemore, allergies, the Oscars

Kate Longworth, csnbayarea.com

Scene Setter: There are a lot of red, swollen eyes this morning at Papago Park. No, this isn't a result of *Moneyball* being shut out at the Oscars, but rather the aftermath of one of the worst allergy days in Arizona. From Bob Melvin, to media

members and positions players, folks in the desert are combating running noses and itchy eyes, but it didn't stop the A's from smiling pretty.

Scott Sizemore reported to the hospital Monday morning for an MRI on his knee. Right now, the team has labeled it a 'left knee sprain' pending results. Sizemore went down Saturday, in the team's first full squad workout during fielding drills. He had to be helped off the field, as he could put no weight on the knee. I saw him later that day at the facility on crutches.

The Aftermath: With the A's projected third baseman shelved at the moment, Melvin has some thinking to do when it comes to the hot corner. Adam Rosales and Eric Sogard will still be used as utilities, while getting looks at thir4d base. And backup catcher Josh Donaldson will exclusively get time behind the plate and at 3rd.

I talked with Melvin early last week about Donaldson when I observed him taking grounders the first few days of camp, and Melvin explained how versatile Donaldson is, saying it makes him very valuable in this evaluation process.

O for 6: Not the results the A's had hoped for, as their historic win-streak played out on the big screen in front of a national audience. Up for six Academy Awards, Brad Pitt's *Moneyball* and portrayal of Billy Beane's underdog ways, struck out at the Oscars last night. Melvin admitted he was disappointed.

Perhaps even more upsetting was the fact that for the first time ever, Melvin watched the entire awards show all the way through, in hopes of seeing a cameo of his boss and good friend, but to no avail. Beane was spotted though, during the best actor introductions of the broadcast. Beane attended the ceremony with his wife and eldest daughter, and will return to the team in the next 24 hours

'Moneyball' era is over; time for A's to go to work

Ray Ratto, csnbayarea.com

And now, with hat over heart, we announce the end of the "Moneyball" era in Oakland Athletics history. And the return to mundane issues like, "Holy crud, we have no third baseman!"

The Academy Awards were the last legitimate reminder of the movie, and like so many other awards, 'Ball did not get played.

Thanks to the folks at IMDb, here is the entire award lineup for the "Moneyball" season:

WINS

American Film Institute (best movie).

Boston Society of Film Critics (best screenplay, best actor).

Broadcast Film Critics (best screenplay).

Chicago Film Critics (best screenplay).

Kansas City Film Critics (best screenplay).

Las Vegas Film Critics (best screenplay).

National Film Critics (best actor).

New York Film Critics (best actor, best screenplay).

San Diego Film Critics (best adapted screenplay).

Toronto Film Critics (best screenplay).

That's 12 wins in 57 nominations by our count, an average of .211, and we will now rest a moment while you line up the snide remarks you've been saving up for this moment.

And now you're done. We're all done. No more "That's Daric Barton's batting average" cracks, or "Billy's distracted, otherwise he'd have made the Pujols deal" canards, or "StadiumMovieMovieStadium That's All They Care about" claims. Now it would be "StadiumStadiumStadiumStadium," of course.

But the movie, it's done. It got some run, a few awards, most of them going to Aaron Sorkin, and now it's back to the more mundane matters of getting the A's to become more interesting to the general public.

And that means filling out an infield that suddenly has a gaping hole near the home team dugout.

Now we're not against cinema, or preening for that matter. We don't believe "Moneyball" has interfered with the operation of the team or has become the reason for its current state. I mean, Jonah Hill is diabolical and all, but . . .

. . . but the show doesn't have to go forever, and in fact doesn't. The A's are still first and foremost a baseball team, and their profitability and desirability are ultimately dependent upon it, rather than where it is or how pretty the plant is.

The Giants (and we hate to compare the two, but it is apt here so bear with us) built a new park, but it sustained itself and even extended its park honeymoon by winning, in 2000, 2002 and 2003, replacing that with the Barry Bonds-chasing-Henry-Aaron sideshow in 2004, 2006, and 2007, then back to winning in 2009 and 2010, and then basking in the afterglow of 2010 in 2011.

In short, the garlic fries weren't the reason, and neither were the bay vistas. Baseball parks demand a baseball entertainment, and there are only the two kinds.

Thus, job one is now finding the replacement for Sizemore, who is in many ways the A's Freddy Sanchez in that he went down while the club had no ready-to-insert replacement. They are excited, they say, about Josh Donaldson, but it is better to temper one's enthusiasm with the knowledge that they have been excited about Barton, and Travis Buck, and Chris Carter, and lots of other prospects over the years who have yet to break through.

And it will not be the province of the cynics to prattle on about the evils or benefits of "Moneyball" any further. That was last year's story. The A's are a baseball team again, with all the good and bad that implies.

And they'd better get good soon, because the next sideshow, the one that always looms without ever actually arriving, is the stadium. If they're not good, the stadium won't matter, no matter what they say, because a stadium's honeymoon is ultimately a lot more dependent upon the show on the ground.

2012 A's Season Preview

By Steve Langsam, Martinez News Gazette, 2/27/2012

• 2012 A's Season Preview

Going into the offseason the Oakland Athletics looked like they were going to retain their pitching and make some moves to bolster their offense.

That was the thought, but General Manager Billy Beane, did what he does best, make moves, and acquire lots of young talent, for the future.

The moves included trading an All-Star closer in Andrew Bailey, and moving two All-Star starters in Trevor Cahill and Gio Gonzalez. So the idea of retaining pitching was out the window, but Beane did get back some young talent, and a few bats in the process, but nothing that jumped off the paper.

In the absence of the All-Star pitching, Beane signed aging pitcher and former CY Young winner, Bartolo Colon. Colon had a decent season last year with the New York Yankees starting 26 games, and putting up an 8-10 record with a 4.00 ERA. But Colon only threw 164 innings, so that will be something the A's will need to identify early, if Colon can stay healthy to pitch a full season.

Then the A's surprised everyone in the baseball world, when they dropped over \$35 million on Cuban defector, Yoenis Cespedes, a center fielder, who has been nicknamed the Cuban Willie Mays. Just the nickname gives A's fans hope enough for a revitalized offense in 2012. But in a new-look AL West, the Athletics still look to be playing catch up with the Texas Rangers who have won the West the last two seasons, and the Anaheim Angels who added former Ranger C.J. Wilson and Albert "The Machine" Pujols.

Following the signing of Cespedes the A's signed aging slugger Manny Ramirez. Ramirez who still has to face a 50-game suspension for PED use could be another keystone piece to the puzzle if the A's attempt to reach post season play. Ramirez, who turns 40 years old, the day he should be activated after his suspension, will most likely be a designated hitter, in the wake of losing "Godzilla" aka Hideki Matsui.

The Athletics, like most years, will have a smaller pay roll than the other teams in their division, but there is still hope for a decent season, maybe even a playoff push if the pieces Beane put together fall into place like the puzzle he has been trying to build since 2006, the last time the Oakland franchise saw post season play.

But everything is still up in the air right now for the Oakland franchise. With spring training just beginning and lots of young talent competing for just a few positions, the A's, Beane, and manager Bob Melvin, will have lots to account for before the 2012 season begins.

Here is my projected lineup for the 2012 Oakland Athletics for opening day when the Athletics and Seattle Mariners battle in Japan.

- 1 - Coco Crisp – LF
- 2 - Jemile Week – 2B
- 3 - Yoenis Cespedes – CF
- 4 - Seth Smith – DH
- 5 - Johnny Gomes - RF
- 6 - Kurt Suzuki – C
- 7 - Scott Sizemore – 3B

- 8 - Daric Barton – 1B
- 9 - Cliff Pennington – SS

The pitching rotation I believe will be set up like this.

- 1 - Brandon McCarthy
- 2 - Dallas Braden
- 3 - Bartolo Colon
- 4 - Brad Peacock
- 5 - Jarrod Parker

With their bullpen full of hopeful starters like Tyson Ross, and Jerry Blevins, the return of Brett Anderson a month into the season gives the Athletics management some pieces to play with for the starting rotation.

Their closer situation is still up in the air though.

The top three people for the job in my opinion are: Fautino De Los Santos, Grant Balfour and Joey Devine.
The Athletics season starts on March 28 in Japan.

The Impact Of Sizemore's Injury

Melissa Lockard, OaklandClubhouse.com

Feb 27, 2012

By the end of the day on Monday, the Oakland A's should have a clear idea of whether incumbent third baseman Scott Sizemore will be forced to miss significant time due to a knee injury that he sustained in a fielding drill over the weekend. [UPDATE: the A's announced that Sizemore will miss the entire season] We take a look at the A's third base situation in light of the Sizemore's injury.

Losing Scott Sizemore for any long period of time would be a significant blow for the Oakland A's. Acquired from the Detroit Tigers in May, Sizemore was one of the A's top offensive performers as a rookie last season. In fact, among the A's regular hitters, only Josh Willingham posted a higher OPS than Sizemore's .778 mark in 93 games with Oakland.

Update: The A's announced on Monday evening that Sizemore will miss the entire year with a torn left ACL.

Sizemore was forced to make a position change when the A's traded for him last season. Primarily a second baseman with the Tigers, Sizemore slid over to third base to fill an organizational need. He supplanted veteran third baseman Kevin Kouzmanoff, who struggled both offensively and defensively with the A's last season.

That the A's asked Sizemore to move to third base is an illustration of the team's lack of depth at the position. Sizemore struggled defensively at third for much of last season, but he was showing improvements with the glove by the end of the year. Even if he isn't forced to miss significant regular season playing time with the knee injury, Sizemore will be missing out on development time at third from a defensive perspective if he is out for a few weeks during spring training. One of the A's biggest goals this spring was to improve defensively, especially in the infield. This injury presents an immediate obstacle for the team achieving that goal.

If the news on Sizemore's knee is dire, the A's may need to look outside of the organization for his replacement. However, if he is only expected to miss a few weeks of the regular season, Oakland may opt to go in-house to fill that void. We take a look at both scenarios below.

The In-House Options

From 1999 through 2006, there was never a need for the A's to worry about who was going to man the third base position. Eric Chavez appeared in at least 115 games for the A's during that eight-year stretch and he was one of the league's top third basemen to boot. Since Chavez's body began to betray him in 2007, however, the A's have experienced a Chicago Cubs-like revolving door at third. Oakland has run out several players at the position, including Jack Hannahan, Marco Scutaro, Kouzmanoff, Akinori Iwamura, Jake Fox, Jeff Baisley and Sizemore. None have taken control of the position the way that Chavez did.

Over the years, the A's have had a handful of decent third base prospects (Baisley, Mark Teahen, Brian Snyder, etc.) but none of them were given significant opportunities at the major league level with Oakland – if they reached the big leagues at all. Currently, the A's top prospect list is relatively thin on third basemen, with 2011 third-round pick B.A. Vollmuth, teenager Renato Nunez and 2009 fifth-round pick Stephen Parker leading the charge. Josh Donaldson, one of the A's top prospects at the catcher position for the past several years, has received increased playing time at third base and is also among the A's top prospects.

In fact, despite being the least experienced third baseman of the aforementioned quartet, Donaldson is the most likely to get a long look by the A's this spring at the position, should Sizemore's injury require a replacement. For many who have followed Donaldson's career since he joined the A's organization via a trade in 2008, it may seem odd to think of him at third base. However, playing the hot corner is nothing new for the Auburn alum.

When Donaldson began his collegiate career at Auburn, he was primarily a third baseman. Just last season he told

OaklandClubhouse.com correspondent Gabby Micek that he dreamed of being an infielder growing up and referred to third base as his "natural position." His conversion to catcher took place during the latter stages of his career at Auburn, in part because the team had a need at that position and in part because moving Donaldson to catcher positioned him better as a prospect for the MLB draft.

Donaldson was selected by the Chicago Cubs in the supplemental first round of the 2007 draft as a catcher and he remained at that position once he turned pro. In fact, he played exclusively behind the plate during his time with the Cubs. The A's acquired Donaldson in the Rich Harden trade midway through the 2008 campaign. He continued to be primarily a catcher with the A's, although he did appear in three games at third and two at first with the High-A Stockton Ports in 2008. In 2009, he made 15 appearances at third and four at first for Double-A Midland, and in 2010, he had eight appearances in at third and three at first (he also appeared in two big league games at first that season).

Up until the 2011 season, however, the A's limited Donaldson's time at third in order to give him more time to focus on developing as a catcher. Last season, that focus changed to some extent, in part because Donaldson showed significant improvements behind the plate, giving the A's confidence that he would be able to concentrate on more than one position. Donaldson made 27 appearances at third base for Triple-A Sacramento last season. He also played exclusively at third base over the winter during a short stint in the Dominican Winter League.

At the end of last season, A's Assistant General Manager David Forst spoke of Donaldson's versatility as a major asset. "I think ultimately Josh's versatility is going to help him out getting here and hopefully staying here [in the big leagues] at some point," Forst told OaklandClubhouse last September.

"That said, he has improved a lot behind the plate and I know that the pitchers down there feel good about him. He's thrown out runners as well this season as he ever has. We have made a point to make sure that he has played some third base and has played some first base and his ability to do that is going to be valuable in a big league role at some point."

The A's have had positive reviews of Donaldson's glove work at third base; however, he isn't likely to make anyone forget Chavez's work at the hot corner. In college, Donaldson was considered a bat-first prospect, even before he moved behind the plate. The biggest question surrounding Donaldson's candidacy to play third for the A's will not likely be the glove, however. It will likely be centered more on whether or not he can hit enough to justify playing him there everyday.

Over the past two seasons, Donaldson has played exclusively at Triple-A while in the minor leagues. He has demonstrated good power over those two seasons (.454 SLG), but his patience at the plate has suffered for that power. At the lower levels of the minor leagues, Donaldson posted OBPs of .379 or higher at every level but Low-A. His OBP with the River Cats has been only .341 and his OPS overall in 201 Triple-A games has been 795. Those numbers serve Donaldson fairly well as a catcher but they pale in comparison to the numbers of most top third base prospects around baseball. Donaldson also struggled with his plate patience during his short major league stint in 2010. If he can show a command of the 'zone similar to what he had with Midland or Stockton in 2009 and 2008, respectively, he will put himself in a better position to be the A's everyday third baseman in Sizemore's stead.

Outside of Donaldson, the A's options for an everyday third baseman are fairly limited in-house. Vollmuth and Nunez are years away from being big-league ready. While Parker is significantly more advanced than Vollmuth and Nunez, he, too, isn't quite ready for prime-time. In fact, he isn't even a non-roster invitee to major league camp, although Parker is participating in the A's minor league spring mini-camp, so he will be available to play with the A's big leaguers at any point this spring should the A's like to take a longer look at the BYU alum. Still, Parker has only a handful of games under his belt at the Triple-A level and there are questions about whether he will stick at third defensively.

The A's believe he has the skills to remain at third, but he struggled with errors while with Midland last season. Parker has an excellent eye at the plate and has demonstrated the ability to hit for average since turning pro, but the left-handed hitter saw a significant dip in his power numbers last season with the Rockhounds. Another year of development will likely serve Parker well in the long run.

Back-up infielders Eric Sogard and Adam Rosales both have experience at third base at the big-league level and both are capable of filling in at the position on a temporary basis. However, neither profiles as a third baseman from an offensive perspective. Sogard, a natural second baseman, is an extremely patient hitter who makes a lot of contact and works the count well. He has average power for a second baseman, but he isn't close to having corner infield power. Rosales has flashed decent power at times, but his offensive game profiles best as a middle infielder and he is coming off of a down year at the plate.

Looking For Help

Should Sizemore's injury prove to be serious enough to knock him out for the majority of the season, it is likely that the A's will consider the trade or free agent markets to fill the void. The A's have depth in the outfield and in the bullpen that they can dip into should they try to go the trade route. The pickings are relatively slim at the moment, however.

Displaced Detroit Tigers' third baseman Brandon Inge is a possibility, although Inge is coming off of a terrible season offensively and is owed \$5.5 million for the season. The Angels could be willing to talk about Maicer Izturis if the Mark Trumbo-to-third experiment goes well. Izturis doesn't have a traditional third baseman's bat, however, and he posted a 722 OPS in 122 games for the Halos last season. The A's were reportedly interested in Chone Figgins last off-season and the Seattle Mariners would probably love to move the expensive veteran, who has been a massive disappointment in two seasons with Seattle. However, Figgins comes with a big price tag and was abysmal in 81 games last season, making him a less-than-ideal candidate, to put it lightly.

The A's could also call on Seattle to gauge their interest in dealing third base prospect Alex Liddi. Liddi had a promising 15 game stint with the Mariners last season and had an 821 OPS for the Triple-A Tacoma Rainiers. The 23-year-old native of Italy is considered average, at best, defensively and his swing can get long, but he has potential. With the Mariners considering moving second base prospect Kyle Seager to third, Seattle could be willing to part with Liddi. It wouldn't be cheap, however, and the A's won't have much of a big league track record to go on with Liddi.

Another possibility is New York Yankees' third base prospect Brandon Laird. The younger brother of former A's catching prospect Gerald Laird, Brandon had a down 2011 season in the Yankees' organization, but he did have a cup of coffee with New York in 2011 and had a promising 2010 campaign at the Double-A level. He is only 24 and it might not cost a lot to pry

him away from the Yankees. Laird would be better served as a temporary replacement, however.

On the free agent market, there aren't many options still remaining. Former A's star Miguel Tejada is available and would likely jump at the opportunity for another big league tryout. However, his level of play has declined significantly the past two seasons and his offensive output with the San Francisco Giants was so bad last year that the team cut him during the season despite being one of the worst offensive teams in baseball. Wes Helms is also still on the free agent market, but the longtime National Leaguer will turn 36 in May and hit .191 last season for Florida. Felipe Lopez, Pedro Feliz and Angel Berroa are other names on the free agent list, but none are particularly attractive options.

The A's could also wait until the end of spring training to see which players become available as teams set rosters and make final cuts. This may be a little more difficult for the team to do given their early start in Japan, but may be their best recourse should they need a full-season replacement for Sizmore.

Conclusion

No matter how anyone spins it, Sizmore's injury is a blow to the A's, especially if it lingers deep into the regular season.

The chances of the A's making a move that replaces Sizmore's production from 2011 are relatively slim. Also, if Sizmore misses all or most of this year, the A's will be losing the opportunity to see how his defense develops at the position.