

## A's News Clips, Saturday, March 10, 2012

### Newly acquired Josh Reddick eager for everyday role with Oakland A's

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

By all accounts, Josh Reddick was ticketed to become the starting right fielder for the Boston Red Sox this year.

Then out of left field, just three days after Christmas, Reddick was traded to Oakland as part of the deal that sent Andrew Bailey and Ryan Sweeney to the Red Sox. Reddick didn't see it coming.

"I was very shocked," he said. "If it was going to happen, I thought it would happen at the winter meetings. At first I was upset, and I had very mixed feelings about it. I was just so surprised, because it came out of the blue."

Worse yet, Reddick knew next to nothing about Oakland, so on his first flight to the West Coast, he watched the movie "Moneyball" just to see if he could glean anything significant about how the A's and general manager Billy Beane operated.

Was it helpful?

"Not really," he said. "But once I actually talked to Billy and he made it clear I was going to be put out there every day no matter what, it was a real confidence booster. That's something I was never guaranteed in Boston -- you never knew who they might be bringing in."

The A's have not backed off their stance about Reddick, even after acquiring Cuban standout Yoenis Cespedes in mid-February. Reddick, a 25-year-old left-handed hitter, still will be Oakland's everyday starting right fielder and perhaps a large part of the team's future.

Reddick's not doing anything to discourage the A's belief in him. He's acclimated himself to the Oakland clubhouse and he's off to a nice start this spring. He's 7 for 15 (.467) with a double, triple and five RBIs in the early going and has shown himself to be adept in the field as well.

"The tools are there -- he runs well, throws well, can play any position in the outfield, he has good bat speed and some power," said the A's new hitting coach, Chili Davis. "The biggest thing with Josh is controlling his effort level and not get into that power-hitter mode."

Davis has helped Reddick establish his comfort level in Oakland and is excited to have him under his guidance again. The two worked extensively together last year when Reddick was at Triple-A Pawtucket and Davis was the hitting coach there.

"I think it's good for both of us, because I have a little history with him, and he knows I'm someone he can turn to on a team with a lot of new faces," Davis said. "It took me a while to get to know him, but once I did, he listened and became a better hitter."

Reddick hit .280 in 254 at-bats in two stints with the Red Sox last year with 28 extra-base hits, including seven home runs. But in the best-case scenario, he will be more of an all-fields hitter with Oakland than a power guy. That said, he likely will deliver a little more punch than the A's got from Sweeney and the departed David DeJesus.

"That's how I have to be, because if I start getting too pull-happy, I start getting myself out," Reddick said. "As long as I think about going the other way all the time, my hands will react to the inside pitches and I'll hit my share of home runs."

After playing Fenway Park's spacious right field, Reddick's not worried at all about O.co Coliseum.

"I've heard it can be tricky, but at least I don't have to worry about running into the Pesky Pole anymore," he said. "Basically, I'll do what I have to do to catch a ball in the outfield. I'll run through a brick wall as long as I make the catch."

Davis said Reddick reminds him of himself when he was breaking in with the Giants in the early 1980s.

"After having a real nice 1981 spring training and doing well in Triple-A, the words that were constantly said to me is, 'It's your job to lose,' " Davis said. "It's his job to lose now, so I want him to approach this opportunity and tell himself, 'I don't have this team made.' If he does that and trusts what he's got, he'll surprise himself. And A's fans will really like him."

### **Oakland A's notebook: Newcomer Yoenis Cespedes will make Cactus League debut on Saturday**

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

It's finally official: Yoenis Cespedes will make his much anticipated spring training game debut for the A's on Saturday.

Cespedes, the highly touted 26-year-old Cuban player the A's signed to a four-year, \$36 million free agent contract on Feb. 13, will play center field and bat second when Oakland hosts Cincinnati at Phoenix Municipal Stadium.

"I'm ready for my first game and I'm very excited about it," Cespedes said through coach/interpreter Ariel Prieto on Friday after a third day of participation in a simulated game against minor leaguers. "This will be a dream come true for me."

Cespedes wasn't as dynamic hitting the ball as he was the first days in simulated action. He said he spent Thursday afternoon lifting leg weights and was feeling some next-day soreness. But even though he went just 1 for 4 -- a chop infield single, two strikeouts and a double-play grounder -- he ran the bases well and had a fairly uneventful outfield stint.

Manager Bob Melvin said everyone in the organization is looking forward to seeing Cespedes in a real game. His simulated session Friday was attended by a large contingent from the A's front office, including owner Lew Wolff and general manager Billy Beane.

"It was a wait to actually even see him," Melvin said. "Then he gets here and all eyes are on him in batting practice, then he's over at Papago (Park, the A's minor league complex). We're just looking forward to seeing him out there and being part of the team. Doing some things in a game, that's part of the camaraderie and chemistry, so I know he's looking forward to it, too."

Melvin wasn't sure how much of the game Cespedes would play but said he would get two or three at-bats.

Landon Powell, the switch-hitting backup catcher who caught Dallas Braden's perfect game in 2010, was released by the A's on Friday.

Powell, who turns 30 March 19, hit just .171 last season in 36 games with the A's and .207 in 123 games over three seasons with Oakland. He was originally a first-round draft pick by the A's in 2004 and the 24th selection overall. He was actually taken ahead of starting catcher Kurt Suzuki, who was a second-round pick in the same draft.

Powell was a nonroster invitee this year, but Oakland still has six catchers in camp even after his release. It's likely Anthony Recker will assume Powell's role as Suzuki's backup in 2012 as well as Josh Donaldson, who is currently working at third base.

"We just feel like the guys that we have are better options," said Melvin. "We wanted to do it early enough so that (Powell) could go and potentially catch on with another team. That's not the end-all, be-all reason for it, but it played into it, because he's been here a while and we respect him."

Brandon McCarthy threw 60 pitches and worked 42/3 innings in the A's 6-4 victory over Colorado as he continued on his accelerated pace to be ready to start the A's opener in Japan on March 28.

McCarthy gave up four hits, two runs, walked none and struck out three. McCarthy will make just two more spring appearances before the opener.

Eric Sogard had three hits, and Grant Green hit a solo homer.

First baseman Daric Barton, who hit against live pitching for the first time Thursday, was scheduled to begin throwing for the first time since shoulder surgery last August.

□ A's minor leaguer Jason Pridie faces a 50-game suspension for violating baseball's drug policy, a person with knowledge of the situation told the Associated Press. The person, speaking on condition of anonymity because details had not been made public, said the outfielder's infraction was for a drug of abuse rather than a performance-enhancing drug. Pridie, 28, batted .231 with four home runs and 20 RBIs in 101 games last season for the New York Mets.

### **Dad's lesson for A's Josh Reddick: Never give up**

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Josh Reddick is swinging the bat as well as anyone else in the A's camp. And, as it happens, Oakland's new outfielder has one of the most compelling back stories in baseball.

He certainly has a most incredible father: Kenny Reddick, now 49, was working for the Savannah (Ga.) Power Co. in 1988 when a supervisor turned a power line back on while Reddick was at lunch. Reddick returned, touched a high-voltage line and incurred a massive electrical burn that nearly killed him.

Reddick was brought back to life twice - more on that to come - but lost his left arm from the forearm down and two fingers on his right hand.

The accident occurred just before Josh Reddick's first birthday, so he never knew his father with two functioning hands - he said he sees photos of his dad with hands and it looks strange to him. So toddler Josh did everything with his feet, too. He grabbed things with his feet, he maneuvered objects with them.

"I don't really remember it, but everyone tells me, when I dropped something, I picked it up with my toes - because that's what my dad did," he said.

"Josh didn't use his hands at all - that was just what was normal for him," Kenny Reddick said during a recent visit to spring training. "His hands were really weak. We worried about him. But I think it really helped him with his balance."

From an early age, all Josh Reddick wanted to do was play professional baseball, his dad's favorite sport, but he was cut from his middle-school baseball team. Twice. But when your dad has beaten much greater odds, giving up is not an option. Kenny Reddick is stubborn - when a doctor in Louisville, Ky., wanted to amputate both his hands, Reddick flatly refused, saying, "You and I ain't going to get along, get out of here."

Josh took after his old man.

"Every day when he came home from school, he hit 200, 250 balls off the tee," Kenny Reddick said. "He'd have a snack, go back and hit some more. Ken Griffey Jr. was his favorite player, so he perfected his swing."

Kenny Reddick formed a traveling team from the cut players and called them the Renegades. Josh Reddick went on to have a good high school career, hit .461 in junior college and was drafted by the Red Sox in the 17th round in 2006. Acquired by Oakland in the Andrew Bailey deal this winter, Reddick, 25, is slated to play right field and is batting .467 this spring.

Kenny Reddick vividly remembers being burned. "It was 1:30 on Saturday afternoon, I was 25 years old, and I didn't know my life would change forever," he said. "The power was cut all day long, but when I came back, the supervisor made it hot and 7,620 volts went into my left hand, through my heart and blew my right hand apart. I felt like my whole body was in a compression machine."

He felt certain he was dying.

"I said, 'Lord, if you're ready to take me, go ahead,' and I felt like I was standing on a beach, looking at the curvature of the Earth, and there was a blinding white light on the horizon. Everything else was black.

"Then I blinked my eye, and I was above my body, watching them perform CPR, saying, 'Come on, Kenny, come on, Kenny,' and then I blinked again and I was halfway to the bright light. It was so peaceful, and I knew exactly what was going on. Then I blinked again and I was on the other side of my body and everyone was frantic. I was saying, 'It's OK, it's OK,' but no one could hear me. Then I blinked, and the light was so bright, but it didn't hurt my eyes, and I thought, 'Here I am at the pearly gates.' And I blinked again and I was back in my body."

The pain was excruciating, Reddick said, and no one would let him look at his hands initially; when he finally saw them, the sight was horrifying. He said it took two hours to get an ambulance, because of traffic, and he was then airlifted to Augusta. A week later, he nearly died again - an artery burst in the middle of the night, and he lost 5 1/2 pints of blood before it was discovered, his mattresses soaked all the way through. Most people would not have made it through that, he was told.

Reddick fought hard to keep one hand, and a doctor in Louisville used arteries and muscles from Reddick's back, groin and leg to help refashion his right hand. He has enough movement in his pinkie to be able to write, brush his teeth and drive, and Reddick said he learned to use the end of his left arm and his right hand together by watching a nature documentary about squirrels.

That allowed him to be able to throw again, to be able to catch and to swing a bat - he re-learned right along with his young sons, Bradford and Josh - and Kenny Reddick then turned into a baseball coach for them and for many other children in the Savannah area, though even that took a fight. At first, the parks and recreation department thought Reddick might frighten children, and it took the threat of a lawsuit to give him a chance at coaching. Two years later, he was the president of his youth league.

"I show kids that being physically challenged don't matter," Reddick said. "God don't make junk. The kids always accepted me; it was the parents who were scared. It is a shock - it's not every day you see a man with three-quarters of an arm and three fingers, but I can make kids feel comfortable.

"I show people what they can really do when you really put your mind to. Anything you're faced with, you can overcome it."

Josh Reddick says he credits his mom, Cheryl, for a lot, too - at age 22, she had two little boys and a severely injured husband to care for, and Josh said she, too, threw baseballs to the boys.

His dad, though, remains his primary coach, even if now it's mostly by phone. Kenny Reddick always knows whatever it is Josh might be doing wrong at the plate and can give him a fix for it.

Josh Reddick spends time visiting children's hospitals and burn centers when he can. And because of his dad's injuries, Josh said, "I don't take a whole lot for granted. That's the simplest way I can put it."

### **Yoenis Céspedes' spring debut 'a dream come true'**

John Shea, San Francisco Chronicle

**Yoenis Céspedes** was looking forward to today long before signing with the A's last month for four years and \$36 million.

The Cuban star will make his Cactus League debut against the Reds, playing center field and batting second at Phoenix Municipal Stadium.

"The most important thing in my life is to play in the big leagues," Céspedes said through interpreter **Ariel Prieto**, "and now it's a dream come true because I'm going to start (a game) now in spring training."

In three simulated games, Céspedes was 8-for-16 with two homers. Friday, he went 1-for-4 with an infield single, two strikeouts and a double-play grounder.

Céspedes was bummed he struck out on a slider by minor-league lefty **Trey Barham**. "I didn't feel my best today," he said. "I'm a better hitter against left-handers than right-handers."

Manager **Bob Melvin**, admittedly eager to watch his new outfielder face someone other than minor-leaguers, said Céspedes will get two or three at-bats today. Pitcher **Johnny Cueto** is starting for the Reds.

"We're looking forward for him to get in games and unite with the team," Melvin said. "Doing things in games is part of the camaraderie."

**Powell released:** The A's released catcher **Landon Powell**, who backed up **Kurt Suzuki** the past three years and caught **Dallas Braden's** perfect game. A defensive-minded catcher, he hit .171 in 36 games last year, and the A's were 18-12 in his 30 starts.

"It's something I knew was coming," said Powell, now a free agent. "It's not like I was completely shocked or anything."

The A's removed Powell from the 40-man roster after acquiring minor-league catcher **Derek Norris** from Washington in the **Gio Gonzalez** trade. **Anthony Recker**, who hit .287 with 16 homers and 48 RBIs in 99 games for Triple-A Sacramento, could become the backup.

"The coaching staff and pitching staff all respected me and liked me as a catcher, and I can hang my hat on that," Powell said. "Definitely, some people have my back."

The A's will save money. Powell was due \$620,000.

"I've been with the A's since '04, so it's bittersweet to leave the only organization I've ever been with and a team I feel I was good enough to be on," Powell said. "It's hard to process all of it. I'm sure I will in the next couple of days."

**Outfielder's suspension:** Outfielder **Jason Pridie** tested positive for a recreational drug, violating the minor-league drug-testing policy, and was suspended 50 games, according to industry sources.

An announcement would come from Major League Baseball once Pridie chooses not to appeal, which is expected.

The A's signed Pridie to a minor-league deal in November after he hit .231 in 101 games for the Mets last year. It was his second positive test for recreational drugs.

He can continue working out with the A's and appear in Cactus League exhibitions. The suspension would begin once the regular-season starts.

## **A'S 6, ROCKIES 4**

**Notable:** Pitcher **Brandon McCarthy**, who'll start the March 28 opener in Tokyo, threw 60 pitches in his second exhibition start. "A little bit of an accelerated program," said McCarthy, who began throwing earlier than normal, knowing he'd have just four spring-training starts. He figures to up his pitch count his next two outings to at least 75 and 90. . . . **Eric Sogard** collected three hits and scored twice. One of four third-base candidates, he played both third and short. . . . **Grant Green** homered for Oakland's final run.

**Quotable:** "In Cleveland, veterans did it for me when I came up."

- *Manny Ramirez, volunteering to be an interpreter for Yoenis Céspedes.*

**Today's game:** Reds (**Johnny Cueto**) at A's (**Bartolo Colon**), 12:05 p.m., CSNCA, 95.7 FM.

## **Drumbeat: Landon Powell on release by A's: 'It's something I knew was coming'**

John Shea reporting from A's camp . . . 3/9/2012, 1:51pm

The man who caught Dallas Braden's perfect game is looking for work. Landon Powell was released by the A's today and said he wasn't surprised.

"It's something I knew was coming," Powell said as he packed his belongings in the A's clubhouse at Phoenix Municipal Stadium. "It's not like I was completely shocked or anything. They tendered me a contract in the offseason and ended up making a trade for a catcher (Derek Norris from the Nationals in the Gio Gonzalez deal), which lessened the need for me. at which point they took me off the roster. When I cleared waivers, I knew they weren't going to pay me \$625,000 to play in Triple-A.

"They were either going to give me a chance to make the team in camp – which I thought they were going to — or they were going to do this. Obviously, here we are, seven days into the games, and they're releasing me.

"Essentially, they didn't give me a chance to make the team. They gave me a chance to go somewhere else. I respect that, doing it early enough for me to go somewhere else. But I've been with the A's since '04, so it's bittersweet to

leave the only organization I've ever been with and a team I feel I was good enough to be on. It's hard to process all of it. I'm sure I will in the next couple of days."

The likely backup is Anthony Recker, who hit .287 with 16 homers and 48 RBIs in 99 games for Triple-A Sacramento last year.

Powell hit .171 in just 36 games last year (30 as the starting catcher) as workhorse Kurt Suzuki's backup. He's a solid defensive catcher, and pitchers love him. The A's were 18-12 in his starts.

"The coaching staff and pitching staff all respected me and liked me as a catcher, and I can hang my hat on that," Powell said. "Definitely, some people have my back."

Powell said he'll remain in Arizona for now in case he's picked up by one of the other 15 teams training here.

### **Cespedes to make A's debut Saturday**

By Barry M. Bloom / MLB.com

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. -- The intrigue is over. Yoenis Cespedes will make his debut for the A's on Saturday in a Cactus League game against the Reds at Phoenix Municipal Stadium, manager Bob Melvin said on Friday. Cespedes will bat second and play center field.

Fans can catch Cespedes' debut on **MLB.TV** at 12:05 p.m. PT.

"Am I looking forward to seeing him out there? Absolutely," Melvin said after the A's beat the Rockies, 6-4, on Friday at Salt River Fields at Talking Stick. "I think everybody is, even his teammates. It was a wait to even see him [in camp]. Then he gets there and it's all eyes on batting practice. Then it was Papago. We're looking forward to see him out there and being part of the team."

The decision was made after Cespedes played in his third consecutive simulated game at Papago Park in Phoenix earlier on Friday. In one of the most highly attended simulated games, the Cuban-born player went 1-for-4 with an infield single and a strikeout, and played center.

The entire A's hierarchy was there, from owner Lew Wolff and general manager Billy Beane on down to Melvin, who was present for a few innings before catching the bus to nearby Scottsdale. Beane had said afterward that a green light from the training staff was the only impediment to Cespedes playing. That green light obviously was given.

Cespedes is evidently game ready. In the previous two simulated games, he hit two homers -- one in each game -- and went 3-for-6 on Thursday. How much he will play on Saturday is still to be determined.

"It depends on the pace of the game, how he does in the outfield, what he does in his two or three at-bats," Melvin said. "So it's more of feel type of thing."

Melvin said earlier this week that he's not concerned about the outfielder's physical condition, but is concerned that he is not in baseball shape. Cespedes has played in only eight games in the Dominican Republic since he defected from Cuba last year. Melvin confirmed that Manny Ramirez will return from a sore back to be the designated hitter on Saturday and that Seth Smith will play left field. Smith missed Friday's game with a sore back.

The A's signed Cespedes this past month to a four-year, \$36 million contract, their highest impact acquisition of the offseason.

### **With opener in sights, McCarthy zipping along**

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. -- A's right-hander Brandon McCarthy threw 60 pitches and almost finished the fifth inning in the A's 6-4 victory over the Rockies on Friday at Salt River Fields at Talking Stick. If that seems like a lot for only a second spring start, it is.

But McCarthy, Oakland's No. 1 starter, is getting ready for the season opener against the Mariners on March 28 at the Tokyo Dome. So he's on a hurry-up Spring Training schedule.

"It's a little bit of an accelerated program because of where we're going," McCarthy said. "I only have two more starts before that so I have to be game ready. I threw a little extra coming into the season. So that's just showing up in games now where I'll be a little bit ahead innings-wise, but pitch count-wise it was only 15 more than the last time."

McCarthy allowed two runs on four hits with three strikeouts and no walks over 4 2/3 innings.

He was 9-9 with a 3.32 ERA in 25 starts for the A's last season, earning him the top spot in the rotation. Bartolo Colon, who made a comeback last year with the Yankees after missing 2010 because of right elbow problems, is slated to start on March 29 in Japan.

"He's right on pace," A's manager Bob Melvin said of McCarthy. "He's right where we need him to be."

### **Catcher Powell released by A's**

PHOENIX -- The A's released veteran catcher Landon Powell on Friday, ostensibly to give him time to sign with another team, Oakland manager Bob Melvin said. Powell was invited to spring camp, but was not on the A's 40-man roster.

"A guy like Landon, you want to make a decision earlier rather than later so he has a chance to catch on," Melvin said. "Certainly that's not the end all be all reason for it, but it certainly played into it. He's been here a while. We respect him. Therefore, we did it early, so hopefully he can catch on with another team."

Powell had been the backup to starting catcher Kurt Suzuki for the past three seasons. Anthony Recker, who played 99 games for Triple-A Sacramento last season, is now pegged as Suzuki's backup. Recker batted .287 with 16 homers and 48 RBIs last year for Sacramento. At 28, he's spent practically his entire career since 2005 in the Minor Leagues, save for five games last season with the A's.

Powell was 2-for-6 in three Cactus League games this spring. Now 29, he played in 123 games in the past three seasons, batting .207 with 10 homers and 45 RBIs.

### **Smith doesn't want to be 'left' out with A's**

By Barry M. Bloom / MLB.com

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. -- Seth Smith is looking for an opportunity to play every day with the Oakland A's. A left-handed hitter with a sweet swing, he just wants a chance to play regularly against left-handed pitchers.

Considering the A's crowded outfield and designated-hitter situation, manager Bob Melvin couldn't guarantee that Smith would get it. After all, since the trade that brought Smith from the Rockies for two pitchers on Jan. 16, the A's have signed Yoenis Cespedes and Manny Ramirez. Then add Coco Crisp and Josh Reddick to the mix.

"I would say Smith would rotate in [the outfield]," Melvin said before the A's defeated the Rockies, 6-4, on Friday at Salt River Fields at Talking Stick. "Depending on where we are with Cespedes at the end of the spring, it's either going to be outfield or DH for Smith. I can't project out how many games he'll play right now. We'll see where we are with Manny down the road, so there are a lot of moving parts."

Smith, who missed Friday's game against his former team because of a stiff back, has been there before. His career stats don't belie the one-dimensional way he is used. Lifetime, he's a .290 hitter against right-handers and a .202 hitter against left-handers. Of course, he has 1,210 plate appearances against right-handers and only 210 against left-handers in just over three full big league seasons.

So in some ways, how he's used has been a self-fulfilling prophecy. It's hard to get better in certain situations if you don't play.

"He's a left-handed bat, and it's a pretty darned good one," Rockies manager Jim Tracy, who managed Smith the past few seasons, said on Friday. "He was better in 2009 against lefties than he was in 2010 and 2011. That's what I saw. Look, it takes a couple of left-handers to pitch you tough and then your swing is altered. That was something that, at times, went through our heads. But against right-handers, he was a terrific player."



Smith tries not to worry about it. He knows the score. In 2011, he batted .299 against righties and .217 against lefties. In '10 he was even worse, hitting .154 against southpaws. Tracy was on the mark about 2009: Smith hit .259 vs. lefties.

A deeply religious man, Smith said he tries to block out what he can't control, but he knows why he became expendable.

The trade from Colorado for pitchers Guillermo Moscoso and Josh Outman gave the Rockies two guys who right now are competing for the big league rotation.

"It's a business and things happen," Smith said. "So nothing should surprise anyone. People build their organizations the way they feel is best for them. That's how I see it, and I really have no say in it."

Smith certainly would like to settle in. The Rockies had a disappointing 2011 season and made numerous roster changes, beginning with the trade that sent All-Star pitcher Ubaldo Jimenez to Cleveland at last year's non-waiver Trade Deadline. The A's have also been in flux, as they work toward a possible relocation of the club from Oakland to San Jose, a move that has been studied by a Major League Baseball committee for almost three years.

It was like a tale of two offseasons for the A's, who shed pitchers Trevor Cahill and Gio Gonzalez in trades before bringing back Crisp and signing Bartolo Colon, Ramirez and Cespedes.

Melvin said that just because he doesn't have a definitive role yet for Smith, it doesn't mean the A's aren't going to fully utilize him.

"We traded two pretty good pitchers for him, so he's going to be a big part of this team," Melvin said. "He's a good hitter, and we feel that [at 29], he's at a point of his career where we're going to see an upswing as well with some more consistent at-bats. He's got some power. You look at his swing, he's got one of the best swings we have out here. He's a professional hitter."

Melvin said Smith's back flared up Thursday, and he was scratched from Friday's game as a precautionary measure. Even though Smith was ready to go, given how early it is in Spring Training, Melvin thought it was wise to push him back a day. He's expected to be in the lineup and in left field on Saturday against the Reds at Phoenix Municipal Stadium, the same day that the Cuban-born Cespedes makes his A's debut right next to him in center.

These are the better days to come.

"This new environment hasn't been an adjustment for me, really," Smith said. "I just have to go out there, try and get better and get ready for the season. I just want to be full speed once the season starts."

### **McCarthy goes long in second spring start**

By Thomas Harding / MLB.com

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. -- Rockies right-hander Juan Nicasio threw three strong innings on Friday in his first game action since suffering a frightening neck injury last August.

Nicasio, who suffered a broken vertebrae after being hit in the head by a liner by the Nationals' Ian Desmond on Aug. 5, held the Athletics to one unearned run and five hits in three innings of his Cactus League debut in Oakland's 6-4 victory. The first hit, a single by Eric Sogard, zoomed frighteningly close to Nicasio, but he maintained composure. A passed ball charged to catcher Wilin Rosario set up the Athletics' only run off Nicasio, which came on Josh Reddick's single.

"I felt good and was excited," Nicasio said. "I was not nervous. I went to the mound and threw strikes. That's my job."

The Rockies' Troy Tulowitzki opened the second with a double off Athletics starter Brandon McCarthy, took third on Todd Helton's grounder and scored on Michael Cuddyer's sacrifice fly. Tulowitzki doubled with two outs in the fourth and scored on Helton's double for a 2-1 lead. McCarthy struck out three and gave up two runs and four hits in 4 2/3 innings.

The Athletics pulled ahead with two sixth-inning runs against Rockies rotation hopeful Tyler Chatwood. Coco Crisp led off with a triple and scored on Kurt Suzuki's one-out single. Josh Donaldson added an RBI double. Chatwood struck out four in three innings.

Athletics outfield prospect Grant Green hit a solo homer in the eighth off Rockies left-handed pitching prospect Edwar Cabrera.

**Athletics up next:** It'll be a big day on Saturday against the Reds at 12:05 p.m. PT, with outfielder Yoenis Cespedes and Manny Ramirez expected to be in the lineup. The Cuban star is set to make his first Cactus League start, batting second, while Ramirez has missed the past three games with a sore back. Manny will DH, while Cespedes will play center field. The A's are expected to throw Bartolo Colon against Reds right-hander Johnny Cueto.

### **Reddick responds to job security with hot bat**

#### **Trade acquisition is 7 for 15 since team told him he's starting right fielder**

PRESS DEMOCRAT NEWS SERVICES

PHOENIX — After the A's acquired Josh Reddick in the deal that sent Andrew Bailey and Ryan Sweeney to the Boston Red Sox, A's general manager Billy Beane had a talk with the right fielder.

"He made it clear I was going to be put out there every day no matter what," Reddick said. "It was a real confidence booster."

The A's have not backed off their stance about Reddick, even after acquiring Cuban standout Yoenis Cespedes in mid-February. The 25-year-old left-handed hitter will still be Oakland's everyday starting right fielder and perhaps a large part of the A's future.

Reddick's not doing anything to discourage the A's belief in him. He has acclimated himself to the Oakland clubhouse and is off to a nice start this spring. He's 7 for 15 (.467) with a double, triple and five RBIs in the early going and has shown himself to be adept in the field as well.

"The tools are there — he runs well, throws well, can play any position in the outfield, he has good bat speed and some power," said the A's new hitting coach, Chili Davis.

Reddick hit .280 in 254 at-bats in two stints with the Red Sox last year, with 28 extra-base hits, including seven home runs. But in the best-case scenario, he will be more of an all-fields hitter with Oakland than a power guy.

After playing Fenway Park's spacious right field, Reddick's not worried at all about O.co Coliseum.

"Basically, I'll do what I have to do to catch a ball in the outfield. I'll run through a brick wall as long as I make the catch," he said.

### **Sogard lifts A's to 6-4 win over Rockies**

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SCOTTSDALE -- Juan Nicasio needs no reminders of the frightening line drive last summer that fractured his skull, broke his neck and nearly killed him.

The Colorado Rockies' stocky right-hander got one anyway.

In his first start since that game on Aug. 5, when Washington's Ian Desmond scorched a fastball off his right temple, Oakland's second hitter, Eric Sogard, sent a heater whizzing by Nicasio's head in the first inning of the Athletics' 6-4 win Friday.

"It was close. I said, `Oh (shoot)!" Nicasio recounted. "Oh my God, it was close to me. But I don't think about it."

After wiping his brow and taking a deep breath, Nicasio got back on the mound and seemed unfazed by the close call. He threw three impressive innings, scattering five singles, allowing one unearned run, walking none and striking out two.

Nicasio threw in an intrasquad game earlier in the week, his first action without an "L" screen to protect him, and the Rockies were eager to see if he'd be shy Friday, recoiling or cutting off his follow through to protect himself because of what happened to him.

"I see no sign of that whatsoever," Rockies manager Jim Tracy said. "That's so encouraging to see."

Tracy, himself, cringed at the comebacker, though.

"I can't really tell you how I felt about the baptism by fire, if you will, when I saw that one line drive go back through the middle. I mean, it didn't take very long for that to happen," Tracy said. "But, actually, maybe a good thing as we move forward. But I can tell you this, the ball was coming out of his hand big-time. The slider, it's there."

He threw first-pitch strikes to 11 of the 13 batters he faced, and his fastball topped out at 94 mph.

Nicasio, who went 4-4 with a 4.14 ERA and 58 strikeouts with 18 walks as a rookie last year before he got hurt, is trying to make the Rockies' rotation just eight months after the accident that landed him in the hospital for 11 days and had doctors - who usually see fractures of the C-1 vertebra in diving or auto accident patients - wondering if he'd ever walk again, much less pitch in the majors.

Nicasio, who never lost consciousness when he got hurt last summer, said he had no flashbacks, even when Sogard sent the screamer whizzing past him.

"Yeah, I'm not thinking about what happened last year," Nicasio said. "I'm not thinking nothing about that. Now, it's a new season, you know? I don't think about last year."

Everyone around him still does.

"I think I'm thinking about it way more than him," shortstop Troy Tulowitzki said. "It seems like he's past it and moved on. It is a good story. I mean, it's crazy to me."

"It was amazing, it's nice to see that guy going back to the mound after all that stuff that he went through," slugger Carlos Gonzalez said. "This guy's a tough guy. It's not easy to do what he's doing right now. He's a competitor. He's unbelievable."

Tulowitzki said he was awed by Nicasio even before the game.

"Today we started off with what we call rag-smash, it's basically pitchers fielding comebackers, and he made it to the finals," Tulowitzki said. "That was impressive to me. I was thinking for a guy to be last year on the field just laid out on the mound from a line-drive comebacker ... it speaks volumes about how fearless of a kid he really is."

"And then to see him take the mound today, there was some balls hit hard back up the middle. Just to see him attack the strike zone even after those things happened is pretty impressive," Tulowitzki added.

Brandon McCarthy allowed two earned runs on four hits in 4 2-3 innings for Oakland, and Jerry Blevins picked up the win by retiring the only batter he faced.

Tulowitzki hit two doubles and scored twice off McCarthy to put the Rockies ahead 2-1 before the Athletics rallied for four runs off Tyler Chatwood in three innings.

Oakland manager Bob Melvin said Cuban defector Yoenis Cespedes will make his first start Saturday against Cincinnati. He'll bat second and play center field in his spring training debut.

"We're just looking forward to seeing him out there and being part of the team and doing some things in the game," Melvin said. "That's all part of the camaraderie and chemistry. So, I think he's looking forward to that, too."

Notes: DH Manny Ramirez will also return to the Athletics' lineup Saturday. ... This was the only meeting between Oakland and Colorado this spring. ... Rockies new closer Rafael Betancourt returned from a stiff neck that had sidelined him for a few days by throwing a 1-2-3 ninth.

