

A's News Clips, Tuesday, April 3, 2012

Melky Cabrera gets San Francisco Giants off on right foot in Bay Bridge Series

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

Melky Cabrera homered in his first game at AT&T Park, and the Giants scored three seventh-inning runs despite getting just one hit to beat the A's 4-2 in the opener of the Bay Bridge series Monday night.

Eric Sogard hit a two-run home run in the top of the third, and Oakland carried a 2-0 lead into the sixth after starter Graham Godfrey pitched five scoreless innings.

But Cabrera hit a low liner over the left-field wall against the A's Jordan Norberto, and the Giants struck for three more in the bottom of the seventh against Fautino de los Santos. Cabrera had an RBI single in the rally and finished with three hits.

Madison Bumgarner pitched four innings for San Francisco in his final spring tuneup. Four Giants relievers combined to hold the A's hitless over the final five innings. Brian Wilson pitched a scoreless ninth to finish it.

Buster Posey played his first game at AT&T since last May 17 and received a standing ovation when he came to the plate in the first. Posey was 0 for 2 in the game.

Daric Barton is still in mix at first base for Oakland A's despite shoulder surgery last September

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune

After missing the trip to Japan, Daric Barton is back with the A's and still in the first base mix. Over the next few days, it should be determined whether he'll stay there.

Manager Bob Melvin hasn't ruled out that Barton, who is on the verge of completing his recovery from left-shoulder surgery last Sept. 12, might be with the club for the A's home opener Friday, even though Barton isn't sure he's ready.

"It's definitely getting better, but I still need to play a few games in a row to determine whether I feel comfortable being out there," Barton said Monday night. "If it's not now, it's just a matter of time before I'm ready to play. We're on the last leg of it. But I don't want to come back until I feel healthy enough to play a full season."

Barton said he played back-to-back nine-inning games for the first time Friday and Saturday in extended spring training. He hopes to get some game action the next few days to see how he handles playing in the cooler Bay Area weather.

"That's going to tell a lot, and we'll make a decision after Wednesday," he said. "We just have to get to a point where I'm comfortable playing three or four days in a row and not have to limit."

One of Barton's concerns is that he hasn't had to make a really hard throw all spring in a game. He said he had a few throws to second base on pickoffs and felt some tightness, but it's something he knows he has to work through.

Adding to the Barton dilemma is that he still has a minor league option, and the two other competing first basemen, Brandon Allen and Kila Ka'aihue, do not.

- The A's optioned Adam Rosales to Triple-A Sacramento, meaning Eric Sogard will be the utility infielder for now and perhaps the long term. Melvin has been impressed by Sogard all spring, and a two-run homer in Monday's Bay Bridge series opener didn't hurt. Rosales needs more work than he's likely to get at the big league level right now. "He really needed to go down, get some at-bats and some confidence offensively," Melvin said.
- Melvin still wasn't prepared to make a rotation decision despite Graham Godfrey's five shutout innings against the Giants. He allowed four hits, struck out three and didn't walk a batter. "Tyson (Ross) pitches (Tuesday) and then we'll figure out what we're going to do," Melvin said. Since the A's don't need a fifth starter until mid-April due to a number of off-days, either Godfrey or Ross is likely to be optioned to Triple-A to start the season to allow the A's to keep an extra position player. Godfrey was pleased with his performance against the Giants. "My spring training outings have been a little inconsistent, to say the least," he said. "It's definitely a confidence-booster, and also knowing what's at stake, it was a good outing for me."
- Starter Dallas Braden was in New York on Monday to be examined by Dr. David Altcheck, the surgeon who surgically repaired the torn anterior capsule in his left shoulder last May. The A's were expected to get a report on Braden either late Monday or sometime Tuesday.

- Shortstop Cliff Pennington left Monday's game before the bottom of the second after experiencing tightness in his left groin. Melvin said after the game he didn't think Pennington's condition was serious but added he likely wouldn't play Tuesday night.
- The Seattle Mariners have altered their rotation and Jason Vargas will start against Oakland on Friday night with ace Felix Hernandez scheduled to pitch Saturday. That means the A's will also face Hernandez in Seattle's home opener April 13.

Inside the Oakland A's: Barton isn't sure he's ready; Braden has exam, Devine may get one; other pre-Bay Bridge notes

By Carl Steward, Oakland Tribune, 4/2/2012, 6:13pm

In for Joe Stiglich all three days of the Bay Bridge Series as he continues to recover from Japan jetlag

We're on the calm side of things here at AT&T Park for the first game of three. The Matt Cain signing dominated the news here, but the A's weren't without a few noteworthy ditties.

For starters, infielder Adam Rosales was optioned to Triple-A, meaning Eric Sogard has made the team as the roving middle infielder. Rosales might have been the preference initially, but was set back by a shoulder problem early in spring and never really got it going once he got on the field. Manager Bob Melvin said Rosales needs at-bats, and he'll get them in Triple-A.

The A's still have two more roster trims to make. One of them could wind up being whoever the fifth starter turns out to be, since with a slew of early-season off days, they won't need a fifth starter until mid-April. The other trim will likely take place among the three first basemen — Daric Barton, Kila Ka'aihue and Brandon Allen. It almost seems like a no-brainer. I talked to Barton before the game and he admitted he's not completely sure he's fully ready for everyday play. Among other things, he said he hasn't cut loose with a hard throw to second base yet, and he only played back-to-back games in extended spring training this past weekend. Yet Melvin hasn't ruled him out of the Oakland Opening Day mix.

Another factor: Brandon Allen and Ka'aihue are out of options and Barton isn't. What's more, the two former players had solid springs. Allen hit .303 with a couple of homers, Ka'aihue hit just .242 but led the club in home runs with three.

Elsewhere, Dallas Braden flew East and was scheduled to have his left shoulder examined by Dr. David Altcheck, the Mets medical director who performed surgery to repair Braden's torn anterior capsule last May. Results of the exam should be known later tonight or Tuesday.

Another pitching shutdown was announced Monday — left-handed reliever Joey Devine, who had already been optioned to the minors. Devine's elbow is acting up again. He's experiencing soreness, and will be examined in the next day or so.

Catcher Kurt Suzuki said he's feeling fine after getting hit in the arm with a pitch against Sacramento pitcher Jarrod Parker Saturday night.

Yoenis Cespedes is batting cleanup tonight against the Giants' Madison Bumgarner. That could be fun. Even if it isn't, great to have baseball back in the Bay. Now all we need are some games that really count.

A's Eric Sogard homers; he'll sub at 3 spots

Susan Slusser, San Francisco Chronicle

Eric Sogard won the A's backup infield spot before Monday's game, then, pressed into action early, drove in both Oakland runs in a 4-2 loss to the Giants with a homer in the third.

Sogard went to shortstop in the bottom of the second inning because **Cliff Pennington** felt some slight groin tightness on a throw during pregame warm-ups. Manager **Bob Melvin** said that he might hold Pennington out of Tuesday's game, too, as a precaution, and have him play only in Wednesday's series finale.

The A's sent their other backup infielder, **Adam Rosales**, to Triple-A Sacramento on Monday. Sogard hit .341 in 18 Cactus League games, and he's a left-handed hitter. Rosales, like third baseman **Josh Donaldson**, is right-handed.

Rosales hit .167 this spring after missing a week with a shoulder injury.

"We know he's a better player than what he's shown," Melvin said.

The A's must make two more cuts before Friday. Though **Daric Barton** remains in the first-base hunt, it is becoming increasingly apparent that he'll open the season on the disabled list. Barton, who had shoulder surgery in August, has not played consecutive games at first base.

Removing Barton from the 25-man roster, along with whichever pitcher wins the fifth-starter job, would allow the team to keep six outfielders, plus the A's other two first basemen, **Brandon Allen** and **Kila Ka'aihue**.

Barton, who still experiences shoulder tightness, wouldn't mind starting on the DL to make sure he's ready for the long haul.

"When I get back here, I want to stay," Barton said. "I need to make sure I'm right."

Devine setback: **Joey Devine**, who has struggled to come back from 2009 Tommy John surgery, was shut down because of right elbow soreness, and Melvin said the team hopes to learn more about his condition in the next day or so.

The A's also expect to hear more about **Dallas Braden's** left shoulder strain Tuesday. Braden visited **Dr. David Altchek** in New York on Monday; Altchek performed Braden's May 17 shoulder-capsule surgery.

Thumbs up for Down Under: Major League Baseball is strongly considering Australia for a regular-season opening series in 2014, and Aussie closer **Grant Balfour** is all in favor.

"That would be great," he said, "especially if I'm going. It would be good for the country. It would be awesome."

The Drumbeat: Godfrey's strong effort likely nails down rotation spot

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at AT&T Park, 4/2/2012, 10:17pm

Graham Godfrey called his five scoreless innings of work "pretty satisfying," and it's quite likely that allowing four hits and striking out three – no walks – has nailed down one of the last two spots in the rotation for the right-hander. Tyson Ross is the other contender for one of the two spots, with Jarrod Parker and Brad Peacock nominally still in the hunt.

After the game, manager Bob Melvin wouldn't tip his hand about the final two rotation jobs, saying that, with Ross pitching Tuesday, he'll wait to make any announcements. So....maybe we'll find out after Tuesday night's game, but it's fairly clear at this point it's Ross and Godfrey, and probably in that order.

As happy with his evening as he was, Godfrey was even more excited about the A's defense. Josh Donaldson made a terrific running catch in foul ground in the third, holding onto the ball despite a collision with shortstop Eric Sogard, and the same inning, Jemile Weeks made a great diving stop to his left to rob Melky Cabrera of a hit.

In the fourth, Josh Reddick provided what he called his "stupidity play" in right field, throwing behind Aubrey Huff and allowing him an easy double. He followed that up, however, two batters later, by fielding Brandon Belt's single to right and throwing Huff out at the plate. Reddick said that was good, because as well as Godfrey was pitching, he didn't want to have to go back into the dugout hanging his head. Asked if it evened out, Reddick grinned and said, "I think it did."

Melvin agreed after the game that Reddick's throw home atoned for throwing behind Huff, and he credited Huff for that one, anyway, at least to some extent, saying that the veteran read the play well. That, Melvin said, can make a fielder "look silly."

The A's held a 2-0 lead when Godfrey departed on the strength of a two-run homer by Sogard, who replaced Cliff Pennington in the bottom of the second. Pennington was lifted with what was described as "left groin tightness." I'd think

the team might be cautious with him the rest of this series, then – no need to push it with an important player. Dusty Coleman, borrowed from the minors for this series, might see far more playing time than he'd anticipated.

Jordan Norberto allowed a solo homer by Cabrera in the sixth, then Fautino De Los Santos had a rough seventh. He walked a batter, hit a batter and the Giants scored a run on Donaldson's error on a bunt. A groundout by Angel Pagan scored another run, and Cabrera singled in one more. That was the only hit De Los Santos allowed in the inning, but his occasional command problems are one reason Ryan Cook might see more time in right-handed set-up duty.

If you hadn't heard, the Mariners have flipped Jason Vargas and Felix Hernandez on Friday and Saturday – ensuring the A's also will face Hernandez in Seattle the following week.

That's kind of what Oakland had been expecting all along, a triple dose of King Felix. The two teams will just be sick of each other period after next week's games at Seattle. Melvin said they'll be thinking "good riddance" after that series is done, considering they'll have played a series at Japan, one in Oakland and one in Seattle in a two-week span. Plus, three spring training games.

The Drumbeat: Joey Devine shut down with elbow soreness, A's expect Braden news

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at AT&T Park, 4/2/2012, 6:06pm

It's been such a long road for Joey Devine since his 2009 Tommy John surgery, with numerous setbacks and other ailments, and now he's developed more elbow soreness and has been shut down again.

The reliever had been eligible to come off the DL on Monday, but I can't imagine that we'd see Devine in the next several weeks given this news. What a shame, because the last time he was healthy, Devine had one of the great seasons ever by a reliever, going 6-1 with a 0.59 ERA. He was a potential closer this year, if needed at any point, but continued injury issues just seem to keep derailing his career.

The A's should have more news about Devine in the next day or so, and they also expect information about Dallas Braden's setback from shoulder-capsule surgery either tonight or tomorrow. Braden flew to New York today to see Dr. David Altchek, who performed his surgery last May.

Shoulder-capsule surgeries are not yet a common procedure in pro sports, and the results aren't really uniform. It has taken Johan Santana two years to come back from his, and there is just no real way to forecast even the steps following surgery. The good thing, I guess, is that Braden had done extremely well up until this, he hasn't had recurring issues. And almost every surgery, even the somewhat routine Tommy John surgery, usually involves setbacks of some sort (or many, see above).

Braden likes being on the disabled list less than any other player I've ever seen, and I know this is driving him nuts, but I think everyone with the A's and most people in the general pro sports medical community would have expected that things would not go perfectly in his comeback. As long as it's nothing terribly serious (another tear in the area, damage to another structure), this is probably just a normal blip in the rehab process. The A's were very cautious with Braden's rehab, and they were aware they needed to hold Braden back from going to hard, that's for sure.

Here's the A's lineup tonight vs. the Giants: Weeks 2B, Pennington SS, Crisp LF, Cespedes CF, Suzuki C, Reddick RF, Donaldson 3B, Ka'aihue 1B, Godfrey P.

The A's have borrowed minor-league infielder Dusty Coleman and outfielder Brandon Moss for this series. Coleman wasn't in big-league camp, so he's thrilled to be here – he's never played in a big-league stadium, either, and there's a good chance he'll get into one or more of these games, considering the A's sent Adam Rosales down to Triple-A Sacramento earlier today (see the previous Drumbeat).

"I don't think the team knows I'm here," Moss joked to me. "I just snuck in here."

Outfielder Collin Cowgill might be a little distracted tonight; the former Kentucky baseball player is a huge Wildcats fan and he told me he's wondering if he can get batboys to run scores from tonight's Finals to the dugout for him. Any A's fans near the dugout, do him a favor and hold up a sign for him or shout the score every now and then if you've got a smart phone.

The Drumbeat: A's send Adam Rosales to Sacramento, roster taking shape

From Chronicle Staff Writer Susan Slusser at AT&T Park, 4/2/2012, 3:44pm

As I wrote last week while we were in Japan, the A's needed to trim three more players once they returned to the U.S. and today they started with infielder Adam Rosales, optioning him out to Triple-A Sacramento and leaving Eric Sogard as the primary backup third baseman and middle infielder.

The A's still have three first basemen and six outfielders; I believe they'll drop down to two first basemen and also one starting pitcher in the next few days. That will allow them to keep two first basemen, which would be key considering both Brandon Allen and Kila Ka'aihue are out of options. Now, if Daric Barton is one of those kept around, that equation changes, and manager Bob Melvin has made it clear than Barton is still in the running.

However, he is coming off a poor season, the result of a shoulder injury that required surgery, and he has options left. If he doesn't somehow claim the job outright here in the next few days, it's not hard to imagine that the A's would have him start the season at Sacramento to ensure he gets in more game action and that he's back to normal offensively and defensively.

The A's don't need a fifth starter until as late as April 17, so there's no reason to keep five starters right now – not when Melvin has said that he could see keeping six outfielders and when the team has two first basemen out of options.

And hey, you never know: As clubs trim rosters this week, the A's suddenly might pick up a corner infielder or make a trade for one who has become available.

Godfrey sharp vs. Giants in final spring start

By Rick Eymer / MLB.com

SAN FRANCISCO -- Graham Godfrey gave Athletics manager Bob Melvin something to ponder when it comes time to determine the fifth spot in the A's rotation.

Madison Baumgarner would have been in the Giants' rotation no matter what he did Monday night in San Francisco's 4-2 victory over Oakland.

Godfrey threw a four-hitter over five innings, did not walk a batter and struck out three in his most impressive outing of the spring.

"I'm pretty satisfied with it," Godfrey said. "My Spring Training outings have been a little bit inconsistent, to say the least, so tonight was definitely a confidence booster. Also, knowing what's at stake, it was a good outing for me."

Brandon Belt, who has reached base in each of his last eight games, had two hits for the Giants. Melky Cabrera added a line-drive home run that rocketed over the left-field fence, and the Giants scored three runs in the seventh to take the lead. Brian Wilson struck out the side in the ninth to earn his first save of the spring.

Eric Sogard hit a two-run home run against Bumgarner, the only blemish of yet another solid outing from the left-hander. Bumgarner gave up four hits, walked three and struck out seven.

"I just tried to get all my walks out tonight so I won't have any for the next month," Bumgarner deadpanned. "I definitely got a lot out of the way."

Sogard was in the game only because starting shortstop Cliff Pennington departed after one inning with tightness in his left groin.

Sogard was with the team because the A's decided to send Adam Rosales to Triple-A Sacramento earlier in the day.

Up next: These same two teams will meet again Tuesday night in Oakland with Tyson Ross going for the A's and Matt Cain, who signed a five-year extension Monday, going for the Giants. Ross had a forgettable effort in his last outing. He was tagged for eight runs on 10 hits in four innings by the Hanshin Tigers in Japan last Monday. Ross, who figures to be the A's fourth starter, has had an impressive spring otherwise with an ERA of 0.90 in games played in Arizona. Cain threw a solid game against the Texas Rangers in his last start, allowing two runs on three hits over seven innings. With his contract settled, Cain heads into the season with a clear head and a strong right arm.

A's keep Sogard, send down Rosales

By Alex Espinoza / Special to MLB.com

SAN FRANCISCO -- The Athletics trimmed their roster to 27 on Monday, sending infielder Adam Rosales to Triple-A Sacramento to get more at-bats. Oakland needs to make two more moves to cut its roster down to 25 players by Wednesday's deadline.

Rosales, who was slowed by injuries this spring, was vying with Eric Sogard to become Oakland's top utility infielder. A's manager Bob Melvin said Monday's move was a result of Sogard's solid spring and Rosales needing more time at the plate.

"We know he's a better player offensively than he showed last year and certainly this spring," Melvin said of Rosales. "There's probably a lot of reasons for it. This year he had a shoulder injury that set him back some, and couple that with the fact that we had a shorter schedule and he really never was able to get going."

Rosales batted .167 in 18 Spring Training at-bats this year, driving in two runs while walking three times and striking out four times. Sogard, meanwhile, started the spring off hot and finished with a .341 average, two home runs and seven RBIs in 44 at-bats.

With Rosales gone to Triple-A, Sogard said he felt the A's front office gave him a vote of confidence to stay at the big league level in 2012, after he played four games with Oakland in 2010 and 27 in 2011. Sogard said he feels comfortable at second base, third base and shortstop, crediting A's assistant coach Mike Gallego for helping improve his defense.

"It's been nice kind of getting my feet wet the past year or two," Sogard said. "I continue to feel more comfortable up here at this level. Especially this spring, I proved to myself that I could succeed at this level. I think big things are coming, I'm excited."

Barton remains long shot for home opener

SAN FRANCISCO -- Daric Barton was disappointed he didn't get to travel to Japan with his A's teammates for the season-opening series against the Seattle Mariners, but he was busy rehabbing his right shoulder. The 26-year-old first baseman, who underwent a procedure in September to shrink his shoulder capsule and repair a partially torn labrum, said "things would have to go perfect" in order for him to be available for Friday's regular-season contest against Seattle.

"Sometimes it feels good, sometimes it feels a little stiff," Barton said. "I'm going to go through ups and downs this year, I understand that."

Barton has appeared in just seven Spring Training games, batting .176 in 17 at-bats, with his only extra-base hit being a double. Doctors told Barton that players usually take a year to make a full recovery, if at all, as there's only a 50 percent chance of him being able to throw normally again.

"It's kind of tough to swallow," Barton said. "Then again, I know that they fixed my shoulder and I'm not going to have the same issues that I had last year. It's just something else I'm going to have to deal with and push myself through. There's going to be discomfort, but hopefully it gets to the point where it's discomfort that I can deal with."

Barton is still currently on the active roster, but could be one of the two remaining roster cuts before Wednesday's deadline, as the A's have two other healthy first basemen: Kila Ka'aihue and Brandon Allen. Aside from rehabbing during Oakland's Japan trip, Barton said he also got to know Manny Ramirez and pick his brain during batting practice, saying the two also enjoyed dinner at Ramirez's house in Arizona.

Elbow an issue for Devine; Braden sees doc

SAN FRANCISCO -- The hits keep on coming for A's right-handed reliever Joey Devine, as manager Bob Melvin said Monday that Devine suffered yet another injury setback.

"His elbow's bothering him a little bit again," Melvin said. "We're going to get a further report on him tomorrow or the next day."

The news is another blow for Devine, who has incurred a bevy of injuries since going 6-1 with a 0.59 ERA in 42 appearances with the A's in 2008. Devine was placed on the 15-day disabled list in March with right biceps tendinitis and is eligible to return Sunday, but it doesn't look like that's a possibility now. The 28-year-old missed the 2009-10 seasons and had a 3.52 ERA in 26 appearances in 2011.

Melvin also had an update on Dallas Braden, saying the southpaw met with Dr. David Altcheck in New York on Monday. Altcheck performed last year's shoulder capsule surgery on Dallas Braden, and Melvin said the A's were expecting an update by Tuesday.

Braden was originally hoping to return to the rotation by early May, but he experienced shoulder soreness before the A's left for their season-opening series in Japan. The eccentric lefty hasn't pitched since April 16, 2011.

Pennington exits early with groin strain

SAN FRANCISCO -- A's shortstop Cliff Pennington left Monday night's contest against the Giants with a strained groin in the second inning. He was replaced by Eric Sogard, who delivered a two-run homer in the third inning.

Oakland manager Bob Melvin said Pennington tweaked his groin during warmups and that he may hold him out of Tuesday's exhibition game against the Giants in Oakland. Melvin wants to see how Pennington feels before speculating on his availability for Friday's home opener against the Seattle Mariners.

"I just know that I wanted to be as careful as I can be, and that's why he came out so early," Melvin said.

Posey return highlights night for Giants back home

By JANIE McCAULEY, AP Baseball Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) Buster Posey heard the cheers when he warmed up his legs in the outfield well before first pitch. And again when he took his position at catcher, and each time he came to the plate.

Posey made another big step in his comeback just by playing at home again after an injury-shortened season last year, and the 2010 NL Rookie of the Year didn't even need to do much in the San Francisco Giants' 4-2 exhibition win over the Oakland Athletics on Monday night.

His mere presence on the field mattered most. Fans roared in support at every opportunity.

"It's one of the coolest experiences I've had in baseball," Posey said. "I feel really lucky to play here in San Francisco. This was really cool, all of it. It was fun. It was special."

Melky Cabrera earned his own share of praise from his new supporters when he connected for a solo home run in the sixth to put San Francisco on the board. He then added an RBI single in the seventh for his third hit.

Bearded closer Brian Wilson ran out for the ninth to roars of his own. He struck out the side in order for his first spring save and showed no ill effects from the elbow problem that sidelined him late last season, thrilling the sellout crowd of 41,823 at AT&T Park eager for another special October run like the 2010 World Series winners had.

"Every time I come out to pitch I feel like they get louder," Wilson said. "It's really encouraging."

Graham Godfrey didn't allow a run and gave up four hits in five innings with three strikeouts and no walks to make his case for the fifth spot in Oakland's new-look rotation.

Eric Sogard hit a two-run homer to the elevated right-field arcade in the third after entering the game to replace shortstop Cliff Pennington, who left after the first inning because of tightness in his left groin.

Sogard hit his third homer of the spring in the first of three exhibition games in this preseason Bay Bridge Series, and is using his steady bat to vie for a spot on the 25-man roster.

"My spring training outings have been a little bit inconsistent to say the least so tonight was definitely a confidence booster," Godfrey said. "Also, knowing what's at stake, it was a good outing for me."

Posey received a rousing ovation some 20 minutes before first pitch - and he was only jogging in the outfield to warm up. The star catcher is making his long-awaited return from three torn ligaments in his left ankle and a broken bone in his lower leg suffered in a season-ending collision at the plate with Marlins base runner Scott Cousins last May 25.

"I was kind of waiting for it," Giants starter Madison Bumgarner said of the reception for Posey, "the first time the home fans got to see him run. It was pretty neat to see that. He's loved here."

Fans jumped to their feet again and cheered when Posey stepped in to hit in the first inning. He grounded out to third on the first pitch he saw. He wound up 0 for 2 with a pair of walks.

"I can't express enough how meaningful it was," Posey said.

And Bumgarner knows this crowd will take it up a notch for Posey when the games actually count. The Giants' home opener is April 13 against Pittsburgh.

"That's quite a welcome back," San Francisco manager Bruce Bochy said. "They know the long road he went down to get back."

Bochy ran out what very well might be his opening day lineup Friday at defending NL West champion Arizona.

The A's have already played their opening day after two regular-season games in Tokyo last week against Seattle. The Mariners come to Oakland for two more games starting Friday.

Yoenis Cespedes went 1 for 2 with a double, a walk and a strikeout in his Bay Area debut after the Cuban defector signed a \$36 million, four-year contract with the A's early last month.

Bumgarner, San Francisco's No. 2 starter behind ace Tim Lincecum, allowed Sogard's homer among his four hits over four innings, struck out seven and walked three.

"I just tried to get all of my walks out there today so I don't have any walks for the next month," Bumgarner joked. "I definitely got a lot out of the way tonight."

A's manager Bob Melvin said he removed Pennington as a precaution and the shortstop might sit out Tuesday and play Wednesday's exhibition finale.

"I wanted to be as careful as I can be, and that's why he came out so early," Melvin said.

Oakland left-hander Dallas Braden had his surgically repaired shoulder examined in New York by Dr. David Altchek - who performed his procedure last - and the team expected to know more by Tuesday.

NOTES: RHP Matt Cain starts Tuesday night in Oakland after signing a new \$127.5 million, six-year contract Monday. He's looking to finish up 4-0 in exhibition starts. Cain tipped his cap when shown in the dugout after the third inning. ... Melvin isn't concerned about suspended slugger Manny Ramirez's tender hamstring, which should be healthy well before he's eligible to play on May 30 - his 40th birthday. "He's the type of guy who gets up on the December day and is able to hit," Melvin said. ... A moment of silence was held before the national anthem for victims of a deadly shooting earlier in the day at a small Christian university in Oakland that killed at least seven. ... Oakland RHP reliever Joey Devine, already on the DL for right biceps tendinitis, is being shut down for the time being because of further problems with his elbow. He had reconstructive Tommy John surgery in April 2009.

Godfrey well on his way to become A's No.4 starter

Ray Ratto, csnbayarea.com

The Giants spent \$112 million to keep their No. 2 starter, and judging by the reaction, it was worth every dime.

The A's spent five innings to sort out their No. 4 and No. 5 starters, and though manager Bob Melvin is playing coy even now, Graham Godfrey's five scoreless innings went a long way toward making his mind up for him.

We grant you that Matt Cain's deal is the bigger deal, bigger than Dallas Braden's latest shoulder setback/visit to New York for a specialist's evaluation, and definitely bigger than Godfrey's breakout start.

But it can't always be about the look on Larry Baer's face when he helps burn someone else's money, or Cain's reserve when every atom of his being craved to jump shirtless onto an interview table and shriek, "I'M RICH! RICH, I TELL YOU! I'M THE KING OF THE FREAKING WORLD!"

However, choosing not to imitate the Lexington Police Scanner in his moment of fiduciary triumph is not Cain's way. He tried to pass it off as one more day on the job.

And so did Godfrey for a different reason. He was in his way just as happy with his five spotless innings (four hits, three strikeouts, no walks) as Cain was with his 112 million new best friends, after a spring which Godfrey charitably described as "inconsistent, to say the least."

"I'm pretty satisfied with it, to tell you the truth," Godfrey said. "It was definitely a confidence booster."

Godfrey was most impressed for public consumption by his strike percentage and his ability to use his breaking ball when he fell behind, and he did acknowledge a number of strong defensive plays by those behind him, particularly the strange Josh Reddick double of (a) throwing behind Aubrey Huff on a single and helping the ponderous Giant reach second, and then b)

throwing him out at the plate moments later.

But on a day when Braden's condition started to look season-threatening, Godfrey's outing stood out even more than Eric Sogard's home run or Yoenis Cespedes' ringing double, if for no better reason than the A's needed Godfrey's outing most of all.

"What surprised me was how few pitches he threw," manager Bob Melvin said. "We needed to get a look at him, but we couldn't stretch him out too long, so the way he looked really made a difference in how we're going to handle the fourth and fifth spots (in the rotation)."

In fact, Melvin all but said that Tyson Ross' start tomorrow in Oakland against the Giants would go a long way toward determining which of the two would be the fourth starter, and which would start the year in Sacramento for a start, and then return in time for the game on the 17th against the Angels, the first time the No. 5 starter would need to appear.

"Well, let me say this," the manager said. "We'll have a decision tomorrow."

And since he didn't have a decision Monday night, one can infer that Ross has a lot to say about who pitches when in a rotation that took another blow when Braden's shoulder went for another walk in the woods.

As for the game itself, Oakland broke early with two in the third off a surprisingly strike-zone-skittish Madison Bumgarner, but a run in the sixth off Jordan Norberto and three more off Fautino de los Santos in the seventh sent a surprisingly large crowd of 41,823 home satisfied. Melky Cabrera had three more hits, including his fourth home run of the spring, and Brandon Belt added a single and double to bump his March-and-beyond average to .391.

For the A's, shortstop Cliff Pennington tweaked a groin muscle and was pulled after one at-bat, but the injury is not considered serious by anyone not named Cliff Pennington.

But for Graham Godfrey, nothing hurt. He felt fine, in fact. He made one small step toward his own \$112 million, with many more still to go.

Hey, a fellow can pitch five innings and dream, can't he?

MLB Offers Manny Ramirez Early Return ... For A Price

By [Sports Press International](#)

Apr 2, 2012 - In an unprecedented move, Major League Baseball has announced that Oakland A's outfielder Manny Ramirez will be allowed to purchase his way out of his suspension, and may be added to his club's 25-man active roster as soon as he remits payment.

Ramirez, who retired after 17 at-bats with the Tampa Bay Rays last season rather than serve a suspension stemming from a failed drug test, signed a one-year minor-league contract with Oakland in February and spent spring training with the club. He began serving the suspension, already reduced from 100 to 50 games, when the A's traveled to Japan to take on the Seattle Mariners in the first two games of the regular season.

The exact amount of the buy-in has not been made official, but sources close to both parties indicate it is approximately \$100,000 per game. While Ramirez's 2012 contract calls for a salary of just \$500,000, he has made over \$20 million per season at various times and has earned more than 10 times that amount in his career.

"We know he has the money, otherwise we wouldn't have extended this offer," continued the spokesman, "We wouldn't waste our time on some broke-ass chump."

The 39-year old Ramirez has amassed 555 home runs and 1,831 RBI in a career marked by suspensions and behavior often best described as eccentric. His last full season came in 2008, when he hit .332 for the Boston Red Sox and Los Angeles Dodgers. He was signed this winter by Oakland general manager Billy Beane to bring some power to an A's lineup lacking a real home-run threat. Never known for his defense, Ramirez is set to be the Oakland designated hitter on or about May 30, when his suspension was originally scheduled to be lifted.

"But now he doesn't have to wait," said a source close to MLB's legal advisors. The motivation for the offer from the Commissioner's office may be tied to recent revelations that none of the staff at MLB have been putting money in the honor can next to the break-room coffee pot.

"The honor system has broken down completely," said an MLB insider, "and the hope is that the Manny money will help replenish these very necessary funds."

Minor League News

Green's Grand Slam Lifts River Cats Past Ports

SACRAMENTO, Calif. - Down to their final out in the last of the 9th inning, the Sacramento River Cats got a walk-off grand slam from former Stockton Port Grant Green as the A's Triple-A affiliate knocked off the High-A affiliate in the first of two exhibition games by a final of 8-6. The walk-off grand slam, hit out to left field, came off Connor Hoehn in what was Hoehn's only inning of relief.

Heading into the 9th inning, Stockton held a 6-3 lead, getting two-run homers from Josh Whitaker in the 3rd inning and Max Stassi in the 5th. Five of the six Stockton runs came off River Cats starter Brad Peacock, who allowed 7 hits in 4.1 innings of work.

Ports starter T.J. Walz also went 4.1 innings, allowing 3 runs on 4 hits while striking out three.

With the score knotted at 3-3, Stassi came up in the 5th and homered off Peacock to give the Ports a 5-3 edge. Stockton would add another run in the inning when shortstop Brandon Hicks committed a throwing error to make it 6-3, which is where the score stayed until Sacramento's five-run 9th inning.

Carlos Hernandez tossed 2.2 innings for the River Cats, allowing an unearned run on two hits. Neil Wagner and Merkin Valdez also had a scoreless inning each.

For the Ports, Sean Doolittle tossed 1.2 innings in relief as he made his first appearance in a Ports uniform since starring as a first baseman in 2008. Arnold Leon tossed two innings in relief in his first appearance with Stockton since 2008.

Stockton and Sacramento will play their final exhibition game on Tuesday at 6:35 p.m. at Banner Island Ballpark in Stockton.