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Ogando staves off A's to set up Rangers' win

By T.R. Sullivan

6/6/2012 2:44 AM ET

OAKLAND -- This is why the Rangers want Alexi Ogando in their bullpen. This is why they have resisted the idea of putting him back into the rotation while Neftali Feliz is on the disabled list.

He can be a dominating bridge in the Rangers' bullpen, the link between the starter and the last line of defense that consists of Mike Adams in the eighth and Joe Nathan in the ninth.

That's how the Rangers worked it on Tuesday night with Ogando getting the big outs in the sixth and seventh inning to help preserve a 6-3 victory over the A's.

The A's had two on against Ogando in both innings and both times he left the runners stranded. The A's were 1-for-10 with runners in scoring position on the night, including 0-for-3 against Ogando.

"Ogando was huge tonight," Rangers manager Ron Washington said.

"That's what he does," Nathan said after earning his 12th save. "He's the guy who holds our bullpen together. He's the glue and tonight was a prime example about how much this guy means to us."

Ogando was the perfect tonic for the stomach virus that has been bothering Rangers starter Derek Holland, who started to fade in the fifth inning. Holland revealed that he has been bothered by the stomach virus for the past couple of weeks and has dropped about 15 pounds.

"I just got a little fatigued out there," Holland said. "I was doing everything I could to stay out there, but it started creeping up on me in the middle innings. I was doing everything I could. I just need to keep plugging away and get my strength back."

Holland went 5 1/3 innings and was able to get the victory that raised his record to 5-4 with a 5.10 ERA. The bullpen kept him from letting a 5-0 lead slip away and Ogando was first in line when Holland came out in the sixth.

"They're deep," Oakland manager Bob Melvin said. "They have a lot of options in the bullpen, and they can bring in plus guys like him in the sixth inning. They have one left-hander in the bullpen [Robbie Ross] who is 5-0. They can rest guys, move guys up. Their bullpen is a strength, no question, and he's obviously a big part of that."

This is the fifth time this season that the combination of Ogando, Adams and Nathan locked down a victory once the starter exited the game with a lead.

"I like our chances of we're asked to get that done," Adams said. "We've got quite a few guys in the bullpen that can step up into key roles however they want to use us. That one seems to be the formula that's working."

Ogando manhandling the sixth and/or seventh is a key component to the Rangers' formula for success. In his first 15 appearances of the season, he had a 0.54 ERA and held opponents to a .111 batting average. The Rangers were 11-4 in that stretch.

In his last 11 appearances prior to Tuesday night, Ogando had a 4.73 ERA while opponents were hitting .275 off him. The Rangers were 3-8 in those games.

His work kept the Rangers from letting a five-run lead get away from them. Holland had a 5-0 lead going into the bottom of the fifth before giving up a two-run home run to Collin Cowgill. The A's made it a two-run game in the sixth when Yoenis Cespedes led off with a home run.

Holland then put what was left of his lead in jeopardy when he walked Brandon Inge and, after Jonny Gomes popped out, gave up a single to Kila Ka'aihue. That put the tying runs on base, the go-ahead run at the plate and Ogando into the game.

"Early, Holland was able to pound the strike zone and keep the ball down," Washington said. "Then he got into the fifth inning and started raising it. He got hit around a little bit and couldn't find the strike zone consistently. He had that stomach virus and got a little weary at the end."

Ogando came to the rescue. He struck out Kurt Suzuki and then retired Adam Rosales on a pop to first baseman Mike Napoli to end the threat.

"I felt good out there," Ogando said. "I kept my fastball down and was able to throw my slider over."

Ogando walked Jemile Weeks to lead off the seventh but struck out Cowgill and Reddick. Cespedes singled, but Inge, after both runners advanced on a wild pitch, went down swinging on a full-count slider to end the inning.

"He broke off one heck of a pitch to Inge," Washington said. "That was the pitch of the game."

The Rangers had the right pitcher in there at the right time.

Rangers confident Day 2 yields impact talent

By Christian Corona

06/06/12 2:01 AM ET

ARLINGTON -- The Rangers took a wide array of players in Tuesday's second day of the First-Year Player Draft, ranging from a 17-year-old outfielder to a college right-hander that had Tommy John surgery at age 14 to a pair of highly-touted football prospects.

The day began by the Rangers picking a pair of high school outfielders in the second round -- Indian River (Dagsboro, Del.) product Jamie Jarmon and Galveston (Texas) Ball standout Nick Williams. Jarmon, the 83rd overall pick, turns 18 later this month. The 6-foot-1, 193-pounder was named Gatorade Player of the Year for his efforts on the gridiron, where he led Indian River to a state title as a quarterback. Jarmon batted .491 with 21 RBIs and 10 stolen bases as a senior.

"He's an outstanding athlete," said Kip Fagg, the Rangers' director of amateur scouting. "We're very comfortable with the kid, his athletic ability and his ability to play in center field, and his ability to be a productive hitter at the Major League level. We were very excited to get Jamie with that pick.

"Nick is a decorated younger player that our area scout has recommended heavily over the past two or three years," Fagg said. "He's a very productive hitter, has a great body, a great tool set, and has a chance to be a five-tool guy."

The Rangers, who selected three high school players on Monday and started Tuesday by picking two more, took a college player in 11 straight rounds. Patrick Cantwell, a catcher from Joe Nathan's alma mater, SUNY Stony Brook in New York, was the Rangers' third-round pick. A 39th-round pick in 2011, Cantwell helped Stony Brook reach the Super Regionals for the first time in school history.

Polk State College right-hander Alec Asher became the first pitcher taken by the Rangers on Tuesday, when he was picked in the fourth round. Asher, who underwent Tommy John surgery at age 14, was the first of seven pitchers taken by the Rangers on the second day.

"Our philosophy is to always take impact players," senior director of player personnel A.J. Preller said. "We took the players that we felt could take and build around, that had a good makeup, and had a chance to reach their ceiling. When some of these guys reach their ceiling, they're going to be impact players at the big league level."

The Rangers then took University of Texas-Arlington outfielder Preston Beck, a Dallas native, who batted .335 and drove in a school-record 71 runs while leading the Southland Conference with a .602 slugging percentage. Beck was one of six outfielders taken by the Rangers on Tuesday after they picked Coral Springs (Fla.) High School outfielder Lewis Brinson in the first round.

"Every Draft is different and I think the strength of this Draft was the outfield class," Fagg said. "We did a lot of work on these players. We really liked those players and the evaluation that we had on those players. We're very happy with the guys we acquired."

After picking University of Texas southpaw Sam Stafford in the 13th round, the Rangers ended the day by taking a pair of two-sport standouts. Dillon High outfielder Kwinton Smith, who's committed to play wide receiver at South Carolina, was picked in the 14th round.

The Rangers' last pick was Hueytown (Ala.) High switch-hitting outfielder Jameis Winston, the nation's top quarterback prospect, according to both Rivals.com and ESPN. Winston, a five-star recruit, has signed a letter of intent to play for Florida State.

"We know that Jameis is going to play football at Florida State," Fagg said. "We've done a lot of work around the kid and the family and seen him as a baseball player. There is a possibility that Jameis will come out and play baseball with the Texas Rangers in the offseason."

As long as Winston doesn't intend to play baseball for the Seminoles, or Smith with the Gamecocks, their eligibility as college football players won't be affected.

"[Kwinton] is a guy that's obviously a talented football receiver and has ability on the baseball diamond. We just identified somebody with talent and hopefully giving Kwinton an option if he wants to play baseball here down the road," Preller said. "[Jameis] is possibly the top college football recruit in the country. Jameis has expressed some interest in playing baseball professionally while also playing football at Florida State."

Here is a complete list of players that the Rangers drafted Tuesday:

- Round 2 (83rd overall): OF Jamie Jarmon, Indian River HS (Del.), 6-1, 197 pounds.
- Round 2 (93): OF Nick Williams, Galveston (Texas) Ball HS, 6-3, 195.
- Round 3 (123): C Patrick Cantwell, SUNY Stony Brook, 6-2, 205.
- Round 4 (156): RHP Alec Asher, Polk State College (Fla.), 6-4, 220.
- Round 5 (186): OF Preston Beck, University of Texas-Arlington, 6-2, 190.
- Round 6 (216): OF Royce Bolinger, Gonzaga, 6-2, 200.
- Round 7 (246): 2B Cameron Schiller, Oral Roberts, 6-0, 195.
- Round 8 (276): RHP Cody Kendall, Fresno State, 6-2, 210.
- Round 9 (306): RHP John Niggli, Liberty University, 6-4, 185.
- Round 10 (336): RHP Casey Shiver, Southern Poly Tech (Ga.), 6-2, 175.
- Round 11 (366): RHP Eric Brooks, McLennan CC (Texas), 6-1, 195.
- Round 12 (396): RHP Keone Kela, Everett CC (Wash.), 6-1, 190.
- Round 13 (426): LHP Sam Stafford, University of Texas, 6-4, 200.
- Round 14 (456): OF Kwinton Smith, Dillon HS (S.C.), 6-3, 175.
- Round 15 (486): OF Jameis Winston, Hueytown (Ala.) HS, 6-4, 190.

Five Rangers in line early for All-Star starts

By T.R. Sullivan / MLB.com

06/05/12 9:57 PM ET

OAKLAND -- Josh Hamilton is well on his way his fifth straight All-Star Game. He is expected to have several teammates go with him.

But they will not be watching him in the Home Run Derby. Hamilton said on Tuesday that he has already told the Commissioner's Office that he will not participate again this year. Hamilton set a record with 28 home runs in the first round of the 2008 Derby in Yankee Stadium.

It is one of the most memorable moments in the history of the Derby even though Justin Morneau ended up winning that year. Hamilton has not participated in the Derby since then.

I want to be healthy and the best I can be. I don't want to risk anything entertaining the fans. So I respectfully declined again. You just take one swing ... you've got to be smart about it."

Hamilton is the leading vote-getter in both leagues, with 2,587,991 votes in the first ballot update in the All-Star voting as he bids to start in the American League outfield for the fifth straight season.

He is not alone among his teammates. Second baseman Ian Kinsler, catcher Mike Napoli and third baseman Adrian Beltre lead the voting at their positions. Nelson Cruz is third among outfielders. Five starters would be a first for the Rangers.

Cruz was selected to the 2009 AL All-Star team as a reserve but did not get to play in the game. He did participate in the Home Run Derby. He was shocked to hear that he was third in the outfield voting behind Hamilton and Curtis Granderson of the Yankees.

"I'm glad people like me and they're really into Nellie," Cruz said. "There are a lot of good outfielders, so I'm glad to hear I have a lot of support from the fans."

Of those five, Napoli is the only one who has never been to an All-Star Game.

"Awesome ... thanks to our fans," Napoli said. "It would mean a lot to me. It would mean a lot to every player to make the All-Star Game. I want my numbers to prove I deserve to be an All-Star. I love the fans giving me such great sport."

The Rangers went into Tuesday's games leading the AL in attendance, which may have something to do with having five players in position to be starters. The Rangers are also two-time defending AL champions.

"If we keep getting 40,000 people in the ballpark, this thing could work," said manager Ron Washington, who will manage the AL team for the second straight year.

"There's no doubt our fans are very supportive and we've played well enough for them to continue to support us," Beltre said.

"The coolest thing is Wash making it two years in a row as manager," Kinsler said. "We'd like for him to be the manager again next year."

Michael Young is second behind the Red Sox's David Ortiz among designated hitters, and Elvis Andrus is second among shortstops behind the Yankees' Derek Jeter. Young has been to seven All-Star Games.

Kinsler has been to two All-Star Games but has never started. Beltre started at third base for the AL last year.

Fans can cast their votes for starters up to 25 times at MLB.com and all 30 club sites -- online or via your mobile device -- using the 2012 All-Star Game MLB.com Ballot until Thursday, June 28, at 10:59 p.m. CT.

Fans can also once again participate in the State Farm Home Run Derby Fan poll. Fans will have the opportunity to select three players in each league who they would most like to see participate in the State Farm Home Run Derby. The 2012 State Farm Home Run Derby -- part of Gatorade All-Star Workout Day -- will be broadcast live on ESPN, ESPN HD, ESPN Deportes and ESPN Radio in the United States beginning at 7 p.m. on Monday, July 9.

The 2012 AL and National League All-Star teams will be unveiled on Sunday, July 1, on the 2012 MLB All-Star Game Selection Show, televised nationally on TBS. Baseball fans around the world will then be able to select the final player on each team via the 2012 All-Star Game Final Vote on MLB.com.

The final phase of All-Star Game voting will again have fans participating in the official voting for the Ted Williams All-Star Game Most Valuable Player Award presented by Chevrolet. During the Midsummer Classic, fans will vote exclusively online at MLB.com via the 2012 All-Star Game MLB.com MVP Vote, and their voice will represent 20 percent of the official vote determining the recipient of the Arch Ward Trophy.

The 2012 All-Star Game will be played at Kauffman Stadium in Kansas City on Tuesday, July 10. Come to MLB.com for extensive online coverage of the All-Star Week festivities.

The 83rd All-Star Game will be televised nationally by FOX Sports, in Canada by Rogers Sportsnet and RDS, and worldwide by partners in more than 200 countries via MLB International's independent feed. ESPN Radio and ESPN Radio Deportes will provide national radio coverage of the All-Star Game. MLB Network and Sirius XM also will also provide comprehensive All-Star Week coverage. For more information, please visit allstargame.com or royals.com/asg.

Despite struggles, Feldman in line for next start

By T.R. Sullivan / MLB.com

06/05/12 10:51 PM ET

OAKLAND -- The Rangers have batted around a few ideas of what they might do with their starting rotation.

But for now, they are planning on Scott Feldman starting Saturday against the Giants at AT&T Park.

"At this point ... it is what it is," manager Ron Washington said before Tuesday's game against the Athletics.

Feldman is filling in for Neftali Feliz, who is on the disabled list with a sprained right elbow. But he is 0-4 with an 8.80 ERA in his last four starts. The Rangers also signed Roy Oswalt last week with the intention of putting him in the rotation when he is ready.

He is not there yet, and the Rangers are not going to accelerate his program. Oswalt has said he is ready to pitch at least five innings, but the Rangers aren't going to let him right now. Oswalt threw two scoreless innings for Triple-A Round Rock on Saturday and is scheduled to throw approximately 50 pitches on Thursday against Omaha.

"We want Oswalt for the rest of the season, so we want him to get everything he needs so he can come up here and compete at the level we need him at," Washington said. "When he gets here, we don't want him feeling his way or on a pitch count. We want him to be Oswalt. That's why we're going to give him the time he needs."

Robbie Ross, who threw 34 pitches in relief on Monday and has been a starter in the Minors, is one possible alternative. But the Rangers are reluctant to take him out of the bullpen just like they were with Alexi Ogando.

Craig Gentry is not an option. The Rangers are hoping that Gentry's appearance on the mound Monday night was a one-time deal. Gentry did get through his Major League pitching debut without any physical problems and was back in center field on Tuesday night.

"My back is a little sore but my arm is fine," Gentry said.

Gentry was the fourth position player in Rangers history to pitch in a Major League. He gave up two runs in the eighth inning.

"My family thought it was funny -- they were joking around a lot," Gentry said. "People were asking why I didn't throw hard or throw off-speed stuff. I said I didn't want to get hurt. I was excited I only walked one guy."

Former Rangers executive Keller dies at 84

By T.R. Sullivan / MLB.com

06/05/12 6:24 PM ET

OAKLAND -- Hal Keller, who drafted, signed and developed some of the best players in the early years of the Rangers franchise, passed away on Tuesday at his home in Sequim, Wash. He was 84.

Keller worked in player development for the expansion Washington Senators in 1961-62 and 1965-71. He moved to Texas with the franchise in 1972 and remained with them until 1978. Among the players who passed through the system under his watching included Jeff Burroughs, Mike Hargrove, Toby Harrah, Bill Madlock, Roy Smalley and Jim Sundberg.

"I was having trouble with the scout who was trying to sign me and I was told to call Hal directly," Sundberg said. "When I did that, I was signed right away. I have very fond memories of Hal and we stayed in touch. He was a very committed baseball guy. He did a lot of the Senators and the Rangers in those early years. He was a good baseball guy that understood talent."

Keller is believed to be one of the original scouts to use the radar gun, which is now an integral part of both scouting, media coverage and fan entertainment at ballparks.

"Hal Keller signed me to my first contract in 1966 when I was 18 years old," Rangers Hall of Famer Tom Grieve said. "He was one of the most respected talent evaluators in the game but more importantly was one of the most well-liked individuals in baseball. Along with many others, I will miss a great friend, and my thoughts are with his wife Carol and his entire family."

Keller, born July 7, 1927, was the younger brother of Yankees outfielder Charlie Keller, who spent his career in the same lineup with Joe DiMaggio. Hal Keller graduated from the University of Maryland and spent seven seasons in the Senators organization. He played in 25 games at the Major League level.

After leaving the Rangers, he spent seven seasons with the Mariners and also scouted for the Angels, Tigers and Tigers. He received the George Genovese Lifetime Achievement Award in Scouting from the Professional Baseball Scouts Foundation at its seventh annual banquet.

FORT WORTH STAR TELEGRAM

Rebounding Holland sets up Rangers for victory

By Jeff Wilson

06/06/12

OAKLAND, Calif. -- As poorly as Derek Holland pitched last week, just about anything he could have done Tuesday night would have been upgrade.

And he was markedly better against Oakland than when he allowed eight runs in 1 2/3 innings May 30 to Seattle. But not all is right with the left-hander.

Holland continues to be affected by a lingering stomach virus that has caused him to lose 15 pounds in two weeks. His velocity dipped sharply in the sixth inning, and he had to leave the game with his energy level on empty.

But he was the winning pitcher as the Texas Rangers rebounded from a Monday night drubbing to beat the A's 6-3.

"I just got a little bit fatigued," said Holland, who allowed seven hits and threw 92 pitches in 5 1/3 innings. "I've been losing a little bit of weight because of my stomach virus. I tried to give everything I had."

Ian Kinsler and Josh Hamilton had run-scoring doubles in a three-run third inning, and Yorvit Torrealba had a sacrifice fly in the fourth. Michael Young added a two-out RBI triple in the fifth as the Rangers built a 5-0 lead.

Kinsler went 2 for 5 and scored an insurance run in the ninth on a single by Elvis Andrus after stealing second base with one out. Five different players drove in a run, and all nine batters had a hit.

"It's certainly nice that it happens up and down the lineup," manager Ron Washington said. "That's when we're most effective."

Holland (5-4) had allowed three hits and a walk over the first four innings before issuing a leadoff double to Kurt Suzuki in the fifth. Holland got the next to Oakland hitters, but coughed up a two-run homer to Collin Cowgill, his first of the season.

Yoenis Cespedes started the sixth with a solo shot on a decent pitch from Holland, but his velocity was only in the upper 80s. It's usually anywhere from 92 to 95 mph.

Holland got the next batter, but allowed a single to Kila Ka'aihue and was replaced by Alexi Ogando.

"I kind of was creeping with me," Holland said. "In the middle of the fifth is when it really started kicking in."

Ogando, Mike Adams and Joe Nathan held Oakland down over the final 3 2/3 innings, though the A's had at least one base runner against each reliever.

They had runners at second and third with two outs in the seventh after a wild pitch by Ogando, but he got Brandon Inge swinging to end the inning.

"That was the biggest pitch of the game right there," manager Ron Washington said.

Washington said that he isn't concerned about Holland, who had been prescribed medicine to help fight a virus that settled in during the Rangers' three-game series last month at Seattle.

He first pitched with it May 25 against Toronto and lasted 7 1/3 innings, but he needed intravenous fluids after the game. Right-hander Yu Darvish and catcher Mike Napoli were also affected by a stomach bug during the Toronto series.

"I don't feel anything stomach-wise when I'm out there," said Holland, who is eating regularly. "It's more of a weakness thing. I've just got to keep plugging away and get that weight back and it'll be OK. I'm not freaking out or anything."

Rangers take local prospect in fifth round of MLB Draft

By Drew Davison

06/05/12

Preston Beck heard his name a little earlier than he expected Monday.

The UT Arlington right fielder expected to go to the New York Yankees in the fifth round. Instead, the Texas Rangers selected Beck a pick earlier.

"It was pretty awesome," Beck said. "It's definitely good to go to the Rangers instead of the Yankees. I grew up a huge Rangers fan, and even played on a summer team coached by Rusty Greer in 2008."

Beck was one of 15 players taken by the Rangers on Day 2 of the MLB First-Year Player Draft. Beck said he expected to reach an agreement with the Rangers relatively soon, and Rangers director of amateur scouting Kip Fagg said he expected to sign all of the draftees selected in the first 10 rounds.

Under the new collective bargaining agreement, the Rangers have a \$6.6 million budget to sign those first 13 picks. The Rangers have drafted 18 players so far, including 11 college and seven high school players. They went with eight pitchers (seven right-handers, one left-hander), seven outfielders, two infielders and one catcher.

They will make 25 more picks today, as the draft concludes with rounds 16-40.

"Our organization is always looking to have impact players, and in the draft this year that continues to be the case," Fagg said. "We're not just rolling the dice, we believe in these kids, their makeup and if they reach their ceilings, they're going to be impact players."

The Rangers had five of the first 93 picks, and used them all on high school players.

Texas took Jamie Jarmon, a 17-year-old outfielder from Indian River High School in Delaware, with the 83rd overall pick, and then Nick Williams, an 18-year-old outfielder from Ball High School in Galveston, with the 93rd overall pick.

The Rangers then had a steady run of college and junior college players until selecting two high school players committed to play college football in the 14th and 15th rounds. Outfielder Kwinton Smith from Dillon High School [S.C.] is a wide receiver heading to South Carolina, while outfielder Jameis Winston from Hueytown High School [Ala.] is one of the top quarterback recruits in the country going to Florida State.

"With Kwinton Smith, we're identifying a talent and giving him an option and us an option if he wasn't to play football," said A.J. Preller, the Rangers' senior director of player personnel. "Jameis is obviously a high profile football recruit. He has expressed some interest to play baseball professionally and, at that point in the draft, it was a path we wanted to go down as well."

There has been a precedent set that would allow Winston to pursue both college football and professional baseball without affecting his NCAA eligibility. Former Texas running back Ricky Williams did it in the late 1990s.

"We know that Jameis is going to play football at Florida State," Fagg said. "But there is a possibility that he can play baseball in the off-season."

Another noteworthy selection the Rangers made Tuesday was selecting UT left-hander Sam Stafford in the 13th round. Stafford underwent shoulder surgery in February that forced him to miss this season, and he has not fully recovered. The same injury prevented Stafford from signing with the Yankees, who selected him in the second round last year.

"Obviously we expect him to make a full recovery," Fagg said.

Five Rangers in position to start in Midsummer Classic
By Jeff Wilson
06/05/12

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Starting a fifth straight All-Star Game would hardly be a surprise development for Josh Hamilton, especially after it was revealed Tuesday that he is baseball's leading vote-getter for the 83rd Midsummer Classic.

For Hamilton to be joined by four other teammates in the starting lineup, though, would be unexpected. But, after one round of balloting, it's entirely possible.

Hamilton is one of five Texas Rangers players who would be in the American League starting lineup if initial trends hold through the end of voting later this month.

"That's cool," Hamilton said Tuesday before the Rangers played Oakland in a late game on the West Coast.

"We've got a good team. We've got guys that are playing well. I don't expect that to change. I expect it to get better."

Third baseman Adrian Beltre, second baseman Ian Kinsler and catcher Mike Napoli lead voting at their positions. Right fielder Nelson Cruz is third in the outfield, where the top three vote-getters earn starts.

Shortstop Elvis Andrus and designated hitter Michael Young are second in voting.

The Cardinals and Yankees are the only other teams with multiple starters after Round 1, with two apiece.

The Rangers also have more fans than just about any other team in the game, which the would-be starters recognized. Only Philadelphia had a higher attendance average than the 43,452 the Rangers have averaged through 26 home dates.

But players also have noticed more Rangers fans in visiting ballparks. The blue and red has been easy to pick out this season, especially through the first two games at O.co Coliseum.

"We definitely notice that," said Kinsler, who leads Robinson Cano by some 280,000 votes. "It's a good feeling coming to ballparks on the road and seeing people in Rangers shirts and hats."

Beltre said the more Rangers, the better. The coaching staff, led by manager Ron Washington, will oversee the AL team by virtue of going to the World Series last year.

Home-field advantage in the Fall Classic goes to the winning league, something the Rangers haven't had the past two years. They want to do their part to ensure the AL team has it in 2012.

"No one said it, but that could be a reason we lost the World Series," Beltre said.

Fans have until June 22 to cast their ballots at ballparks and can vote online at mlb.com until June 28. The rosters will be revealed July 1 for the July 10 game at Kauffman Stadium in Kansas City.

Hamilton is virtually a shoo-in to be elected -- he has nearly 2.6 million votes, or nearly 1.2 million more than second-place Curtis Granderson -- but he will not participate in the Home Run Derby.

He said he was approached to be the captain of the AL's derby team but declined. In the same breath, he told officials he didn't want to compete.

He has done so only once, when he hit a record 28 homers in the first round in 2008 at Yankee Stadium. To participate again is risking an injury, he said.

"I play major league baseball, but I work for the Texas Rangers," Hamilton said. "I understand they need me healthy, and I want to be healthy for them. I would love to go out there and hit as many home runs as I can. I enjoyed doing it. I had fun doing it. It's not fair to go out there and do something for myself and possibly get injured."

Rangers notes: Possible replacements for Feldman considered until Oswalt's arrival

By Jeff Wilson

06/05/12

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Manager Ron Washington was dancing a fine line Tuesday afternoon with the media when discussing if the Texas Rangers will use someone other than Scott Feldman in their rotation.

Feldman is scheduled to start Saturday against San Francisco, though other possibilities have been mentioned going forward. That's mentioned, not discussed, Washington explained.

"We have time to talk about that," he said.

Ratcheting up Roy Oswalt, he said, has been mentioned, but a discussion never developed because the Rangers want to make sure the recently signed right-hander has an opportunity to work out all the kinks in the minor leagues and be completely stretched out when he debuts with the Rangers later this month.

Oswalt, who is scheduled to pitch Thursday for Triple A Round Rock, said that he felt as though he could have thrown five innings in his first outing Saturday. He threw two.

"He hasn't been in competition," Washington said. "We want to make sure we have Oswalt for the rest of the haul. We want to try to make sure that he gets everything he needs, so when he comes here he's ready to perform for us at a level we know he's capable of."

Martin Perez, who has been inconsistent at Triple A, has not been mentioned or discussed even though he is on the same schedule as Feldman.

Robbie Ross could make a start or two, said Washington, but the Rangers value Ross too much in the bullpen. He's the lone left-hander, and has a 1.50 ERA in 30 innings.

So, until a discussion breaks out, it's Feldman, who allowed eight runs in the second inning Monday.

"I'm not at liberty to discuss the options that were mentioned," Washington said. "I was sworn to keep my lips sealed. All I'm trying to say is there isn't a story here yet, so I'm not going to help create one."

Keller passes

Former club executive Hal Keller, who presided over the player development of the Washington-Texas franchise for 16 years, died Tuesday morning at his home in Sequim, Wash., at age 84 after a long illness.

Keller spent two different stints as the director of player development, from 1961-62 and 1965-78. Under his tenure, players such as 1974 American League MVP Jeff Burroughs, Mike Hargrove, Bill Madlock, Roy Smalley and Rangers Hall of Famers Toby Harrah and Jim Sundberg passed through the system.

So did Tom Grieve, who was signed by Keller in 1966 as an 18-year-old.

"He was one of the most respected talent evaluators in the game, but more importantly was one of the most well-liked individuals in baseball," Grieve said. "Along with many others, I will miss a great friend."

Keller, who also served as general manager for the Seattle Mariners, is probably better known for a significant contribution that changed scouting with the introduction of the radar gun as a way to evaluate pitchers.

Briefly

The two-base error charged to Mike Napoli on Saturday has been changed to a double for Alberto Pujols, which adds an earned run to Yu Darvish's ledger. The Rangers have asked Major League Baseball to take another look. Napoli said there is no doubt that the play, in which he misjudged a pop-up, was an error.

Right-hander Mike Adams tossed a scoreless inning Sunday while working from the full windup for the first time in his career. He said the new delivery corrected a mechanical flaw and was the best he has felt since April.

DALLAS MORNING NEWS

Derek Holland: ill, not hurt

By Evan Grant

12:55 AM on 06/06/12

OAKLAND, Calif. - In the wake of a precipitous drop in velocity Tuesday night, Rangers LHP Derek Holland said he's not healthy, but he's not hurt either.

Holland, who said he has been battling a stomach virus for almost two weeks, saw his velocity drop from 92 mph in the first three innings to an average of 88 in his sixth and final inning of Tuesday's 6-3 win over Oakland.

Holland, who said he has lost between 10 and 15 pounds since getting an episode of diarrhea in Seattle in late May, said he believed the drop was due to fatigue and not injury.

"My stomach doesn't bother me when I'm on the mound," Holland said. "It's more of a weakness kind of thing. I saw the drop in velocity on the scoreboard, but I didn't feel it. It felt to me like it was still coming out of my arm just fine. When I saw that, it concerned me for a little bit, but I've still got to try to get outs."

Asked directly if his shoulder or elbow were bothering him, Holland said both were "fine."

Holland said he is on medication and will likely undergo some gastrointestinal tests to determine the root cause of the lingering virus when the club returns home from its current road trip.

Rangers select top football recruit in nation, QB Jameis Winston, in 15th round

By Evan Grant

06/05/12

OAKLAND, Calif. - On the second day of the draft, the Rangers continued to target athleticism as their main focus.

There was no better example than the selection of 15th round pick Jameis Winston, a pitcher/outfielder from Hueytown, Ala., who was also considered the top high school quarterback in the country. Winston has signed to play football at Florida State in the fall and the Rangers expect him to honor that commitment. He can, however, play baseball professionally if he doesn't play baseball at FSU.

"The scariest thing is to think how much he could improve if he played baseball year-round," Rusty Riley of the Alabama Baseball Academy told ESPN last month. "I've had about five or six scouts watch him train and come sit and talk with him, and their biggest concern is if he's really serious about playing at the next level. Every answer I tell them is yes."

And the 6-4, 205-pound Winston wasn't the only top football recruit the Rangers selected. In the 14th round, they took OF Kwinton Smith of Dillon, S.C. Smith is committed to play receiver at South Carolina. Rangers officials say they are uncertain if Smith will honor the commitment. The Rangers earlier in the day took Delaware's top football player, OF Jamie Jarmon. Jarmon, however, is considered more of a baseball prospect.

The Rangers used seven of their first 18 picks through the first 15 rounds on outfielders. All of them share the same general scouting report: Immense physical talents and athleticism, but uncertainty over whether they will be able to reach their high ceilings.

That is the residue of drafting low. The Rangers, who picked 29th, may have reached a little in terms of refined baseball skill, but they certainly gained something that can't be taught: physical gifts.

"It's always a challenge when you draft low and we hope to keep having that challenge," said scouting director Kip Fagg. "But these guys have a chance to reach their ceilings. We believe in our scouts. They dig deep, get every bit of information they can on these players and get to know them on and off the field. Our expectation level is pretty high, but we're confident that some of these guys will break out and reach their potential."

Rapid Reaction: Rangers 6, A's 3

By Jeff Fletcher

06/06/12

OAKLAND, Calif. — A night after the Texas Rangers were blown out for their fifth loss in six games, they responded with a 6-3 victory over the Oakland A's on Tuesday night at the Coliseum. The Rangers led 5-0 and then withstood a couple late-inning threats.

Clutch relief: Derek Holland started to wobble relatively early, leaving the Rangers bullpen to record 11 outs. Alexi Ogando provided five critical outs. He entered with the two on and one out in the sixth and stranded both baserunners. In the seventh, he created his own mess by issuing a walk, allowing a hit and throwing a wild pitch. But around all that, he managed to strike out the side. The A's had runners at second and third when Ogando whiffed Brandon Inge to end the inning. Mike Adams then worked a scoreless eighth and Joe Nathan pitched the ninth to record his 12th save.

Holland's bounceback: After giving up eight runs in 1 2/3 innings in his last start, Holland pitched a credible game, getting the Rangers into the sixth inning with the lead. However, he faded quickly. He had a 5-0 lead when he took the mound in the fifth, but seemed to lose velocity and managed only four more outs. He left with a 5-3 lead and two runners on base.

Early escape: It looked like this might be a very good night for Holland when he extricated himself from a jam in the third. The A's had runners at the corners with two outs and Josh Reddick — Oakland's most dangerous hitter — coming to the plate. Ron Washington visited the mound and Holland got Reddick on a tapper in front of the plate.

Arm from behind the plate: Catcher Yorvit Torrealba threw out Jonny Gomes trying to steal second in the eighth inning. Gomes had drawn a leadoff walk. He took off for second on a 2-2 pitch to Kila Ka'aihue. It's likely that either Gomes saw a hit-and-run sign that wasn't there or Ka'aihue missed one that was, because a straight steal made no sense down by two. In any case, the Rangers capitalized when Ka'aihue took the wide pitch and Torrealba made a perfect peg to second.

Balanced attack: All nine Rangers starters had at least one hit. Ian Kinsler's two-run double put the Rangers on the board first in the third, with Josh Hamilton following with an RBI double. The Rangers added runs on Yorvit Torrealba's sacrifice fly in the fourth, Michael Young's triple in the fifth and Elvis Andrus's single in the ninth.

Hamilton's day: Other than his double, Hamilton had another rough day. He struck out twice and went 1-for-5. He is 3-for-21 so far on this trip.

Small ball: Although a team with a lineup as powerful as the Rangers wouldn't seem to be the type to use small ball in the third inning, that's exactly what Washington did. He had No. 9 hitter Craig Gentry bunt with runners at first and second and no outs. Gentry moved up the runners, who both scored on Kinsler's double.

Cruz-ing to third: The Rangers caught a break in the fourth inning. Nelson Cruz tried to steal third with nobody out. He left too early and was going to be an easy out at third, except left-hander Travis Blackley balked while stepping off the rubber. It was a big play because Cruz then scored on a sacrifice fly.

More aggressive baserunning: On the sacrifice fly to right-center that scored Cruz, Mike Napoli tagged from first and went to second. He also would have been an easy out, but he was safe because Yoenis Cespedes' throw was wide. Instead, Napoli got himself into scoring position.

UTA's Preston Beck thrilled by selection

By Clint Foster

06/06/12

The dream of playing a game you love professionally is something very few people achieve. And of the select few who get the opportunity to play pro sports, even fewer get the chance to play for the team they grew up rooting for.

UTA outfielder Preston Beck grew up a fan of the Rangers. UT-Arlington outfielder Preston Beck gets to do just that.

"I've always been a huge Rangers fan," Beck said. "I can't imagine any better outcome to the draft. It's such a great opportunity to play for a great club like the Rangers."

Beck, a Dallas native, grew up going to Texas Rangers games. Now he has an opportunity to play for the organization he cheered after being selected in the fifth round (186th overall) of the 2012 MLB Draft.

The selection by the Rangers was especially pleasant for the local talent, considering the Yankees were ready to take him with the very next pick.

Beck is eager to sign with the Rangers and is confident that the two sides can reach an agreement soon.

Rangers director of amateur scouting Kip Fagg said he expects Beck to make a seamless transition to the major leagues and become a solid addition to the organization.

"Being a local kid at UT-Arlington, we had a chance to scout this guy a lot," Fagg said. "We really liked the kid, liked the make-up; it was an easy pick for us."

In his junior season at UTA, Beck was a first team All-Southland Conference selection and led the conference in home runs (14) and RBIs (71). He batted .335 and slugged .602, helping the Mavericks to a Southland Tournament championship and an appearance in the Waco Regional in the NCAA Tournament.

"I hope to progress as a hitter and outfielder and just improve my all-around game," Beck said. "Hopefully I can supply a good bat in the lineup one day and help win some World Series."

His heart is in the right place. Hopefully, if and when Beck gets the call up to the big leagues, the Rangers will still be in the habit of bringing World Series baseball to the Metroplex.

Rangers draft FSU football recruit, load up on pitchers

By Clint Foster

06/05/12

The Texas Rangers targeted players with high athletic ability and multiple pitchers in the final rounds of the second day of the 2012 MLB Draft on Tuesday.

The Rangers aren't worried about 15th-round pick Jameis Winston's commitment to play football at Florida State. The Rangers drafted two four star college football recruits who also play outfield: Kwinton Smith and Jameis Winston.

Winston was the most intriguing selection in the 15th round, as he is already committed to play quarterback at Florida State. Kip Fagg, the Rangers' director of amateur scouting, is willing to wait and see if Winston will choose baseball eventually.

"I don't think it's a situation where we expect or hope that Jameis is not going to play football; he's going to play football at Florida State," Fagg said. "There is a possibility that Jameis could come out and play baseball with the Texas Rangers in the offseason. So that's kind of what we're looking at right now."

In addition to the two outfielders, the Rangers picked four pitchers in the Rounds 10-15. In all, the Rangers have selected seven outfielders and eight pitchers so far in this year's draft. Fagg said the large quantity of same position players is not a worry.

"Every draft is different, and I think a lot of the strength of this draft was in the outfield class," Fagg said. "We're very happy with the guys we acquired."

Here is the complete list of players the Rangers drafted in Round 10 through 15 to finish Day two:

- RHP Joseph Shiver, Southern Polytechnic State (Georgia), 6-foot-2, 175 (tenth round, 336th overall)
- RHP Eric Brooks, McLennan CC (Texas), 6-foot-1, 195 (11th round, 366th overall)
- RHP Keone Kela, Everett CC (Washington), 6-foot-1, 190 (12th round, 396th overall): Also played DH.
- LHP Sam Stafford, Texas, 6-foot-3, 220 (13th round, 426th overall): Drafted by Yankees in second round of 2011 Draft. Missed 2012 season with a shoulder injury. The Rangers organization is confident he can be healthy enough to pitch in the minors soon.
- OF Kwinton Smith, Dillon High School (South Carolina), 6-foot-3, 175 (14th round, 356th overall)
- OF Jameis Winston, Hueytown High School (Alabama), 6-foot-4, 190 (15th round, 486th overall): Read ESPN's story on him here.

More notable local players were also drafted in the 10th-15th rounds across the league:

- SS Joel Hutter, Dallas Baptist (Orioles, 312th overall)
- OF Jonathan Walsh, Texas by way of Coppell High School (Angels, 357th overall)
- OF Kyle Von Tungeln, TCU (Rockies, 408th overall)
- RHP Stuart Pudenz, Dallas Baptist (A's, 409th overall)
- RHP Shane Broyles, Texas Tech by way of Burleson High School (Rockies, 438th overall)
- RHP Lucas Moran, Grayson County College (Reds, 442nd overall)

The 2012 MLB Draft resumes Wednesday at 11:00 a.m. CST for rounds 16-40 and the third and final day.

Buzz: Rangers considered accelerating Roy Oswalt plan

By Jeff Fletcher

06/05/12

OAKLAND, Calif. — A day after Scott Feldman's disastrous start, there was "mention" among the Rangers braintrust of accelerating Roy Oswalt's progress, but it was quickly dismissed, manager Ron Washington said Tuesday.

"It was mentioned — what about accelerating Oswalt? — and that was quickly cut down," Washington said.

Washington said the Rangers decided that they didn't want compromise Oswalt's preparation, so it was not worth speeding up his work in the minors to get him to the Rangers rotation a few days or a week early. He is expected to be ready around June 20.

"There was mention of him accelerating, but we don't want that," Washington said. "We want Oswalt to get ready. That's a quality pitcher. When he gets here we want quality outings. We don't want him to feel his way or be on a pitch count.

"We want him to come out and be Oswalt. We want to make sure, so we're going to give him what he needs."

Oswalt, who signed last week with the Rangers, pitched two innings in his first outing at Triple-A Round Rock. He told the Rangers he could have pitched five, but Washington said the team has not been moved to get him to the majors any quicker than the plan.

Although Oswalt has been ruled out for Saturday's game, which would be Feldman's next turn, Washington did not exactly give Feldman a hearty endorsement. He conceded that there were discussions of alternatives.

"The options that were mentioned, I was sworn to keep my lips sealed," Washington said.

For now, Feldman remains the scheduled pitcher, despite giving up eight runs in 1 2/3 innings Monday night.

Left-hander Robbie Ross was mentioned, Washington said, but "he's an important part of our bullpen and it would be a void to remove him." Ross, the only lefty in the bullpen, has allowed one earned run in his last 16 1/3 innings.

Washington said that Martin Perez is not a candidate to start at the moment. The Rangers' top pitching prospect, Perez has been hit hard in the past three weeks.

Notes:

* Five Rangers — Adrian Beltre, Nelson Cruz, Ian Kinsler, Josh Hamilton and Mike Napoli — were in the lead for All-Star starting spots when the first results were released Tuesday. The Rangers are hoping to have a nice representation in the game for symbolic reasons, but also because they'll have a big role in determining home-field advantage for the World Series.

The Rangers have lost the World Series two years in a row, starting both years on the road because the AL lost the All-Star Game in 2010 and 2011.

"It's pretty important," Beltre said. "That might be a key why we didn't win, even though it was one of us that screwed it up."

Former Rangers pitcher C.J. Wilson took the loss in the 2011 All-Star Game after he allowed a three-run homer to Prince Fielder.

* Outfielder Craig Gentry reported no arm problems a day after he pitched an inning of mop-up duty at the end of the Rangers' 12-1 loss Monday. He said he got a nice response from his friends and family after his performance.

"Everyone was wondering why I didn't throw harder or throw off-speed stuff," he said. "I didn't want to get hurt. I was happy I only walked one guy."

Told that his ERA now will read 18.00, Gentry said: "Maybe I can get another appearance to try to get it under 10."

* A scoring change from Saturday's game in Anaheim added an earned run to Yu Darvish's total. Napoli's dropped popup was changed to a double for Albert Pujols. The Rangers are waiting for the play to be reviewed by MLB officials. Napoli, who was playing first, said it should have been an error.

Five Rangers make Class A All-Star team

By Richard Durrett

06/05/12

The Class A Hickory Crawdads will send five representatives to play on the Northern Division team in the South Atlantic League All-Star Game. Infielder Hanser Alberto, outfielder Chris Grayson, right-handed pitchers Phil Klein and Nick Martinez and left-handed pitcher Victor Payano were selected Tuesday. The game will be played in Charleston, S.C., on June 19.

Here's more from the club's release:

Alberto, 19, will serve as the starting shortstop on the Northern Division squad. The San Pedro de Macoris, Dominican Republic native leads all Crawdads and ranks second in the league with a .347 batting average through 50 games this season. Alberto also leads the team with 68 hits and is tied for the lead with 33 RBIs. He has added three home runs, 10 doubles and 13 stolen bases. Alberto signed with the Texas Rangers as a non-drafted free agent in 2010.

Grayson, 22, will start the All-Star Game in left field for the Northern squad. The Monroe, Louisiana native, who was named the Rangers Minor League Hitter of the Month for April, has compiled a .314 average with three home runs and 21 RBIs through 51 games this season. Grayson has started off the month of June on fire, hitting .412 (7-for-17) with five runs scored through the month's first four games. He was selected by the Rangers in the 13th round of the 2011 June Draft out of Lee University.

Klein, 23, leads all Crawdads with a 2.82 ERA through 15 relief outings this year. The Gahanna, Ohio native is also tied for second on the team with four wins. Through 22.1 total innings of work, Klein has struck out 19 batters, while only allowing eight runs (seven earned) on 22 hits. He has also registered two saves in as many opportunities. Klein was selected in the 30th round of the 2011 June Draft out of Youngstown State University.

Martinez, 21, has posted a 2-1 record with a 3.93 ERA through 14 outings and three starts this season. The native of Miami, Florida, began the season as a reliever before transitioning to the starting role as of late. In 34.1 total innings of work, he has struck out 40 batters while only issuing 10 walks. In his last two starts, he has surrendered just three runs with eight strikeouts through nine innings. Martinez was selected by the Rangers in the 18th round of the 2011 June Draft out of Fordham University.

Payano, 19, leads all Crawdads starters with a 3.10 ERA and is tied for second with four wins. The San Juan de la Maguana, Dominican Republic native has logged 58.0 innings of work through 11 starts on the season, tallying 47 strikeouts. Payano has held batters to a team-best .205 batting average, the 4th-lowest in the league. Through his last two starts, he has struck out 14 batters through 12.2 innings, allowing just three runs on seven hits. Payano signed as a non-drafted free agent in 2010.

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Rangers dominating in All-Star voting

By Anthony Andro

June 5, 2012

Drawing more than one million fans, going to back-to-back World Series and having the best record in the American League are paying early dividends for the Texas Rangers.

The first round of All-Star voting was released Tuesday and the Rangers are dominating.

Texas has five players in place to start the game including Josh Hamilton, who leads all of baseball in votes. Two other Rangers are in second place.

"The fans are coming out more and being supportive of our team," said third baseman Adrian Beltre, who leads Detroit's Miguel Cabrera at third base. "When you win, fans are going to come. Hopefully we can keep doing that. Hopefully we play well enough to make them happy and they keep supporting us."

There were no complaints about the support Tuesday. In addition to Hamilton, who has more than 2.5 million votes and Beltre, Ian Kinsler leads the voting at second base and Mike Napoli is the top vote-getting catcher. Nelson Cruz is third in the outfield voting.

The Rangers also have two players in second at their position as Michael Young trails Boston's David Ortiz at designated hitter and Elvis Andrus is second to New York's Derek Jeter at shortstop.

Hamilton leading the way is nothing new as he's been a starter the last four seasons. He's happy to have so much support.

"It's exciting," Hamilton said. "Any time you're getting close to the All-Star game and you're getting votes it means a lot. Fans enjoy watching you play the game. It's always an honor just to be voted for."

While Hamilton, Kinsler, Beltre and Cruz have all been All-Stars before, it would be a new experience for Napoli. Napoli, who leads Baltimore's Matt Wieters by more than 500,000 votes, had no idea he was in first place.

"Awesome," Napoli said. "Thanks to our fans. I'm just going to keep going out there and playing hard. It's cool. It would be a lot. It means a lot to every player to be in an All-Star Game. I'm just going out there to try and do the best I can. I want my numbers to prove I'm an All-Star."

Voting at ballparks ends June 22 and online voting ends June 28. The teams will be announced July 1.

Texas manager Ron Washington is glad to see he has so many of his players leading the way in voting. Washington, who will manage the game for a second-consecutive year, realizes how important it is with home-field advantage at stake for the winners.

The Rangers haven't had home field for the last two World Series trips. Washington already had Matt Vinnola, the team's director of baseball operations, gathering information on potential All-Stars.

"Right now I'm not into it until Matt gives me all the information like he did last year," Washington said. "Then I'll go through it and I'll have a good idea of what I want to do, how I want to do it, who's available, who's doing what."

Holland beats bug, A's as Rangers rebound

By Anthony Andro

06/06/12

OAKLAND, Calif. — Derek Holland's performance Tuesday was a little guttier than a lot of Texas Rangers fans realize.

Holland, who pitched 5 1/3 innings in a 6-3 victory over Oakland, has been slowed by a stomach bug that he's been feeling since the team traveled to Seattle more than two weeks ago.

It's zapped him of his velocity and weight, but it didn't keep him from pitching long enough for the Texas offense to get going Tuesday as he yielded three runs on seven hits. He had a shutout going until the fifth inning when the lack of steam finally caught up with him.

"I've got a little bit of fatigue and I've been losing a little bit of weight," said Holland, who has dropped nearly 15 pounds since he got sick. "I was making sure to use everything I had. I know we used a couple of arms yesterday. It's my job to make sure and go out there as long as I possibly could despite being a little fatigued."

Holland was able to keep his fastball down in the first four innings but his command started to waver at the same time his strength did. Luckily for him, the Rangers offense was back on track one night after being no-hit until the eighth inning.

Ian Kinsler's two-run double in the third inning started the scoring and Josh Hamilton's RBI double followed. That three-run inning was the biggest for the Rangers since they scored five in a 21-8 loss to Seattle last week.

Texas was able to add single runs in the fourth and fifth and was aggressive on the base paths all night. It was just the kind of performance Texas manager Ron Washington wanted to see out of his team following Monday's 12-1 loss.

"We bounced back today and played a real aggressive ballgame," Washington said. "We were able to play our type of ballgame. We made them work also. That's the way we have to play. That's the way we do play. Sometimes it does cause an inning to end but I'll take that every day of the week."

With the Rangers up 5-0, Holland ran into trouble in the fifth inning when Collin Cowgill hit a two-run homer. Yoenis Cespedes added a solo homer in the sixth and Holland then allowed a walk and a hit to end his night.

Alexi Ogando came on and struck out Kurt Suzuki and induced Adam Rosales to pop out to end the Oakland threat. Ogando worked out of another jam in the seventh as Oakland had the tying runners on base before he struck out Brandon Inge.

Holland (5-4) pitched long enough to get the game to the winning pieces in the Texas bullpen as Mike Adams and Joe Nathan finished things off as the Rangers limited Oakland to 1-for-10 with runners in scoring position. Washington said he didn't know Holland was still feeling bad until after the game.

Holland, who is taking medication, said he's starting to feel better. Tuesday night's win, which followed a disastrous start last week in which he didn't make it out of the second inning, should help too.

"I saw it (my velocity) dropped," said Holland, who walked two and struck out two on his 92-pitch night. "I just have to keep plugging away and get my weight back and everything, and it will be all right. I'm not freaking out about it or anything. It's slowly getting a little better."

Holland getting back on track was good. So was the Texas offense, which received a hit from every starter in the lineup and an RBI from five players. That's the kind of balance the Rangers need to get back on track on a road trip that began with a 1-3 start.

"It's nice that it happens up and down the lineup because when it does happen up and down our lineup that's when we're most effective," Holland said. "The thing I loved the most was how aggressive we were on the base paths."

Keller remembered as top-notch scout

By Tracy Ringolsby

06/05/12

Hal Keller, former Seattle Mariners GM and longtime Texas Rangers executive, helped bring the radar gun to the major leagues. (Barry Sweet/Associated Press)

During baseball's 1980 winter meetings in Honolulu, Hal Keller was walking through the lobby of the host hotel with his two sons, when he saw future Hall of Famer Rod Carew.

"I had not seen Rodney in years," remembered Keller. "I walked up him, and said, 'I don't know if you remember me.' He said, 'Oh yeah. You taught me to hit.'"

Keller smiled.

"I didn't of course," said Keller, "but when he said that, I did stand pretty tall in the eyes of my boys."

Truth is Hal Keller stood tall in the eyes of most anybody associated with professional baseball. The man who brought the radar gun to the game, and the younger brother of Charlie King Kong Keller, Hal Keller died in his sleep in the early hours of June 5.

No cause of death was given, but Keller, who would have turned 85 on July 2, recently underwent radiation and chemotherapy treatment for esophageal cancer. He also fought a long-term battle with diabetes that led to amputation of a foot.

He was hospitalized a week ago because of trouble swallowing, which led to dehydration. On Thursday asked to be allowed to go home, where he was under hospice care until his death.

"He told three doctors he had a wonderful life and had done everything he wanted to do," said his wife Carol. "He said he wanted to go home. He said he didn't want to spend 10 years in a nursing home."

Born on a farm in rural Maryland, Keller grew up in the Baltimore area, graduated from the University of Maryland, and then, after a tour of duty with the Army during World War II, embarked on a professional baseball career that began as a catcher in the farm system of the original Washington Senators and ended with a brilliant legacy of success in scouting and player development.

Of course, Keller, who also happened to be a world-class bridge player, wasn't sure he was worthy.

"The toughest job in baseball is the job of an area scout," Keller once said. "I've never done that. I always saw the cream. The area scout, he has to sit there through 100 games with no players in hopes of finding one."

And those area scouts who worked with Keller found plenty of those "ones" in the nearly half-century that Keller was an active part of professional baseball, including Carew, who was discovered and signed by Herb Stein, an area scout for the Minnesota Twins when Keller was their East Coast crosschecker.

"It was before the draft, and Herb was anxious," said Keller. "There was another left-handed hitter on that team, too. So there were always scouts at the games. One day there was a doubleheader. The other guy didn't play the second game and the scouts started to disappear.

"I told Herb, 'There's your answer. There's not anybody interested in Rodney but you. You'll get him.'"

Stein did get him, and Keller did offer Carew a hitting tip that Carew never forgot.

"He came to spring training and couldn't hit a ball in fair territory," said Keller. "Rodney would hit line drive after line drive. They all went into the left field stands. He held his bat high. One day, I said, 'Rodney, lay the bat down. Get yourself closer to the strike zone.' He did. The rest is history."

Keller's history is impressive, even beyond Carew.

After a playing career, which included brief stints in the big leagues in three seasons, was prematurely ended by a back problem, Keller started teaching school and coaching baseball. Former pitcher Joe Haines, a minor-league teammate of Keller's who married the sister of Senators' owner Calvin Griffith, persuaded Keller to take a summer job managing the Senators' team in Superior, Neb., in 1958.

He then went to work for the expansion Senators when they were formed in December 1960, rejoined the original Senators, who became the Twins, as the East Coast cross checker for two years (1963-64) and then moved into the front office with the Senators, going with the team when it moved to Texas, and then joining the Seattle Mariners, initially as the farm and scouting director and later as the general manager.

He finished out his career scouting for Detroit and the Angels, finally retiring on Oct. 30, 1999, when Disney took over ownership of the franchise. That was the day before the Oct. 31 expiration of scouting contracts and the new Angels regime, headed by Tony Taveras, ordered the firing of 15 scouts, mostly veterans.

"They didn't give anybody any reason or severance," Keller said. "We got a one-day notice."

With Texas, Keller introduced use of the radar gun, "which may not make me popular with some scouts," thanks to the recommendation of former outfielder Danny Litwhiler, then the coach at Michigan State.

"Immediately we signed (Dave) Righetti, David Clyde, Len Barker, Tommy Boggs, Jim Clancy and Danny Darwin," said Keller. "We went from having no arms to a lot of power arms."

The Rangers also drafted and signed impact offensive players during Keller's days, including Bill Madlock, Tom Grieve, Jeff Burroughs, Lenny Randle, Mike Cubble, Roy Howell, Mike Hargrove, Jim Sundberg, Roy Smalley, Bump Wills and Pete O'Brien. Other pitchers included Walt Terrell, Tom Henke, Pete Broberg and Joe Coleman.

In his years with the new and old Senators, Rangers and Mariners, Keller never had a big budget to work with, but made the most out of what he had.

"When I went to Seattle it ranked last in pay for scouts, and when I left with were in the top third," said Keller. "We didn't have a lot of scouts, but I felt we needed to take care of them."

The Mariners only had six scouts, but the results spoke volumes.

During the four years he was scouting director, before he became general manager, players drafted and signed by the Mariners included right-handed pitchers Mike Moore and Bill Swift, left-handed pitcher Mark Langston, outfielder Phil Bradley, and shortstop Spike Owen.

"I had a lot of good people working for me," said Keller modestly. "They found a lot of good players."

And they found it good to work for Keller.

Veteran scout Bill Kearns, who has been on the Mariners staff since the franchise's formation for the 1977 season, recalled Keller initially taking over the scouting department in Seattle. A younger front office type called Kearns a couple of times to see if he had talked to Keller, yet, and Kearns had not.

Finally, Kearns decided maybe he had better call Keller. When Keller picked up the phone, Kearns introduced himself.

"Whaddya want?" Keller asked.

"I just wanted to say hello," Kearns said.

"OK, call when you need something," replied Keller.

Kearns was caught off-guard.

"I thought I might be going to get fired," said Kearns.

To the contrary, Kearns became one of Keller's key talent finders.

"I had six scouts," Keller said when reminded of the incident. "They covered the big leagues, the minor leagues, and all the amateurs in the United States and around the world. I told Bill a few years later, we all had enough on our plate that if a guy did his job, I had other things to worry about, and Bill always did his job."

So did Keller.

Rangers draft UTA outfielder in fifth round

By Anthony Andro

06/05/12

OAKLAND, Calif. – The Texas Rangers didn't have to look far for one of their draft picks on day two of the first year player draft.

The club used their fifth-round pick on Texas-Arlington outfielder Preston Beck, who played his high school ball at Dallas Bishop Lynch.

UTA plays its games just a few miles from Rangers Ballpark.

"I was watching the TV screen and they said my name and I couldn't believe it," Beck said. "It was pretty awesome. It was very relieving for me, but probably more for my parents and my brother. It was a huge relief to finally know where you're going and it's a huge honor to get drafted by a team like the Texas Rangers that you've grown up rooting for and going to their games over the year."

Beck, a junior, led the Mavericks to the Southland Conference Tournament title. He led the conference in home runs with 14 and set a school record for RBI with 71. He also hit .335 and led the conference with a .602 slugging percentage.

Beck said he heard from both the Rangers and the New York Yankees in the second round. The Rangers had the pick before the Yankees in the fifth round.

After drafting high school players with their first three picks Monday, the Rangers hit the college ranks hard on the draft's second day.

Beginning with the pick of Stony Brook catcher Pat Cantwell in the third round, the Rangers drafted college players through round nine.

Beck wasn't the only Texan drafted by the Rangers Tuesday. They also took Galveston Ball outfielder Nick Williams with the 93rd pick.

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Encouraging signs for MLB diversity

By Ken Rosenthal

06/05/12

The Minnesota Twins selected Byron Buxton with the No. 2 overall pick.

Major League Baseball, in its quest to attract more African-American players, experienced a notable sign of encouragement Monday night in the amateur draft.

The 31 first-round picks included seven African-Americans, the most by total and percentage in 20 years, according to research by MLB.

Ten of the 28 first-round picks in 1992 were African-American, or 35.7 percent. The percentage this year was 22.6 percent.

The African-Americans selected in the first round were:

- Outfielder Byron Buxton (No. 2, Twins);
- Shortstop Addison Russell (No. 11, Athletics);
- Outfielder Courtney Hawkins (No. 13, White Sox);
- Outfielder D.J. Davis (No. 17, Blue Jays);
- Right-handed pitcher Marcus Stroman (No. 22, Blue Jays)
- Outfielder Victor Roache (No. 28, Brewers), and;
- Outfielder Lewis Brinson (No. 29, Rangers).

No more than five African-Americans had been selected in the first round since 1992. Just one was chosen last year – right-handed pitcher Joseph Ross, who went to the Padres with the 25th pick.

The percentage of African-Americans on Opening Day rosters this season was 8.8 percent, a slight increase from 8.5 percent last season, which was the lowest since 2007, according to Richard Lapchick's Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sports at the University of Central Florida.

Baseball has attempted to increase its African-American talent pool through its opening of urban youth academies and the Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI) program.

Since 2006, baseball has either opened or planned urban youth academies in Los Angeles, Houston, Philadelphia, New Orleans, South Florida and Puerto Rico.

Shortstop Carlos Correa, the first overall pick by the Astros in this year's draft, attended the academy in Puerto Rico - which, unlike the U.S. academies, combines baseball instruction with a rigorous academic curriculum.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Stomach bug, rapid weight loss hamper Holland in Rangers' 6-3 win

06/05/12

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Derek Holland is still dealing with a lingering stomach virus that has caused him to drop an alarming 15 pounds in 2½ weeks.

His velocity is dropping several miles per hour, too. The Texas left-hander pitched through the fatigue again Tuesday night, doing his part as the Rangers rebounded from an embarrassing rout a night earlier to beat the Oakland Athletics 6-3.

"It was my job to go out there as long as I could despite the fatigue," said Holland, who has cut dairy and eggs from his diet of late. "I'm not freaked out about it. I'm on some medication. I'm kind of puzzled by it."

Ian Kinsler hit a two-run double and Josh Hamilton also doubled in a run to back Holland on a day everybody got involved.

"The thing I'm most proud of is we were aggressive on the basepaths," manager Ron Washington said.

Yorvit Torrealba hit a sacrifice fly, Adrian Beltre singled twice and Holland (5-4) pitched 5 1-3 innings — looking far stronger than in his last start.

Holland struck out two, walked two and allowed three runs on seven hits. That was a big improvement after he was knocked out in the second inning when he allowed eight earned runs in last Wednesday's 21-8 home loss to Seattle.

The Rangers managed a season-low three hits — their fewest since also getting three Aug. 25, 2011, against Boston — in Monday's 12-1 defeat that kicked off a full week of games in the Bay Area for the two-time reigning AL champions, who play a weekend interleague series at San Francisco.

"We had no ill effect from it," Washington said. "We bounced back today with a real aggressive ballgame."

This time, the Rangers had 11 hits and each batter had at least one while five different players drove in runs. Elvis Andrus hit an RBI single in the ninth as the final starter needing a hit.

Michael Young, who broke up Jarrod Parker's no-hit bid Monday with a leadoff single in the eighth, hit an RBI triple in the fifth to chase A's starter Travis Blackley (0-1). Former slugging first baseman Sean Doolittle relieved and made his major league debut. He struck out the first three batters he faced, including Nelson Cruz on a 96 mph fastball to finish the fifth before an impressive 1-2-3 sixth.

He stuck to all fastballs in his 21-pitch outing.

"It was really surreal. Still kind of sinking in, to be honest," Doolittle said. "I was so focused on controlling my breathing and trying to calm myself down that it didn't really let me get too worked up about the situation I was coming into or the guys that I was going to face."

Collin Cowgill hit a two-run homer in the fifth for his first longball of the season, then Yoenis Cespedes connected in the sixth with a solo shot but the A's couldn't do more.

Cowgill's clout followed a close play at first in which leadoff man Jemile Weeks was called out on a throw from second that pulled first baseman Mike Napoli off the bag. A's manager Bob Melvin came out to argue with first base umpire Scott Barry.

The Rangers pounded Blackley for five runs and seven hits in 4 2-3 innings. He struck out five and walked two.

The Australian lefty, whose lone victory came way back on July 1, 2004, for Seattle against Texas, made his second start and fifth appearance for the A's since being claimed off waivers from San Francisco on May 15.

Kurt Suzuki hit a pair of doubles leading off innings for the A's, but struck out in the sixth with two runners on with Oakland down two runs. Oakland's Brandon Inge went 1 for 3 a night after hitting a three-run homer and driving in four runs.

Hamilton was 0 for 4 in the series before his double in Texas' three-run third. The slugger said before the game he won't participate in the Home Run Derby at next month's All-Star festivities in Kansas City in an effort to stay healthy for the Rangers.

Joe Nathan pitched the ninth for his 12th save in 13 opportunities, and 10th in a row.

"He's the Joe Nathan I saw in Minnesota and hated to see come into the ballgame," Washington said.

Melvin made the tough call to sit Seth Smith after the designated hitter produced four hits Monday. But Jonny Gomes often plays as DH against lefty starters.

"That's what we signed him for," Melvin said.

Notes: A's reliever Andrew Carignan left the game in the eighth with a sore elbow. He will be re-evaluated Wednesday. ... Oakland SS Cliff Pennington had the night off. ... Washington is still listing Scott Feldman (0-4) as his Saturday starter. Newly acquired Roy Oswalt, a three-time All-Star signed to a minor league deal May 29, won't be rushed — even if he is eager to join the Rangers and told the team he could have gone five innings instead of two in his first minor league appearance Saturday at Triple-A Round Rock. "We want Oswalt for the rest of the haul," Washington said. "That's a quality pitcher. We want quality outings." ... Rangers RHP Yu Darvish's impressions of the Oakland Coliseum: "It's very historic. There's a lot of history in this park." The Japanese star (7-3) starts Thursday's series finale here.

Rangers' Yu Darvish: 'I can't say right now that I should make the All-Star team'

06/06/12

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Texas slugger Josh Hamilton said Tuesday he will pass on this year's All-Star Home Run Derby after being offered the chance to captain the American League team.

Hamilton likely will still be an All-Star for manager Ron Washington's AL team for the July 10 game, and Rangers teammate Yu Darvish would love to join them in Kansas City — even though the Japanese pitching star is far from ready to pronounce himself worthy in his rookie season.

Ever the diplomat, Darvish isn't sure he has earned that distinction just yet.

"That's hard to say," Darvish said Tuesday through interpreter Joe Furukawa. "Just looking at my numbers, it's not a bad performance. If you take away my last outing, it's good and bad. I can't say right now that I should make the All-Star team."

Considering the players pick five starters and two relievers, Darvish's chances appear strong to join Hamilton and other likely Rangers selections such as Nelson Cruz.

"Yeah, why not?" Washington said when asked whether Darvish had done enough to earn an All-Star nod. "He's one of the top winners in the American League."

The 25-year-old Darvish is 7-3 with a 3.21 ERA in 11 starts and 67 1-3 innings heading into his next start, Thursday afternoon against the Athletics.

But Darvish, a physical presence at 6-foot-5 and 215 pounds, has lost two of three and hasn't pitched more than 6 1-3 innings during that stretch. Darvish said his statistics and everything else must be on par to the best pitchers in baseball to be an All-Star.

"If my numbers and my approach and everything is worthy to be an All-Star, then I would be happy to," Darvish said.

Washington hopes to have a full cast of All-Stars at his disposal this time around. The AL — minus aces such as Justin Verlander, Felix Hernandez and CC Sabathia — lost 5-1 to the NL squad managed by Giants skipper Bruce Bochy of 2010 World Series champion San Francisco.

"What he had was all his All-Stars from the National League," Washington said. "I didn't have all mine. I just want to have all my All-Stars, then I'll take my chances. I'm tired of going against the National League weak."

AUSTIN AMERICAN STATESMAN

Express shut out by Albuquerque

By Suzanne Halliburton

06/05/12

ROUND ROCK — Zach Jackson's changeup was working to near perfection Tuesday night in his start against Albuquerque. Unfortunately for the Express lefty, his team's offense stumbled for a second straight night.

The Isotopes beat the Express 2-0 in front of an announced crowd of 8,915 at Dell Diamond. It was only the second shutout of the year for Round Rock (27-33).

In ending the homestand, the Express scored just one run in its past two games. Its only run in the last 18 innings came with two outs in the bottom of the ninth Monday night.

Jackson, though, enjoyed his best outing of the season. He was charged with the loss — his sixth of the season — but the only run Jackson gave up was unearned.

Jackson, however, did share in most of the blame for the run. His throwing error on a pickoff attempt allowed Aaron Miles to take third, and Miles scored on a grounder one batter later.

"He's throwing the ball well, hitting his spots," Express manager Bobby Jones said of Jackson. "I was very impressed."

Jackson did more than enough to win a game, if the Express had given him run support. That's been the case over the past two months: Round Rock is averaging only 3.45 runs a game in which Jackson has started.

The former Texas A&M ace pitched six innings and allowed three hits, with two walks. Of his 76 pitches, 40 were strikes. His changeup generated six groundouts with two strikeouts.

Jackson was good, but Albuquerque's John Ely was better.

Coming into the game, Ely was second in the Pacific Coast League in strikeouts with 70. He had eight Tuesday in his 6 2/3 innings, allowing five hits with a walk. Only three Express batters reached second base, two on doubles.

Jones said he's not concerned about the Express' lack of offense the past two nights. As far as runs go, it's the worst two-game stint of the season for the Express.

"We've run into two good pitchers," Jones said. "We'll go on the road and hopefully win against Omaha."

HICKORY DAILY RECORD

Crawdads' 8-game win streak ends in Charleston, S.C.

By Record Staff

06/05/12

CHARLESTON, S.C. — Walks and errors equaled the end of the Hickory Crawdads' eight-game winning streak on Tuesday night.

Using four walks by starting pitcher Nick Martinez and three Hickory errors, Charleston (S.C.) beat the visiting Crawdads 10-3 in South Atlantic League baseball.

In the opening game of a three-game series in Charleston, the RiverDogs (35-22) had the Crawdads down 6-0 by the end of the third inning.

Martinez lasted four innings, giving up six hits, six runs (all earned) and walking four.

Charleston scored three runs in the first inning, one of a single by Dante Bichette Jr., one on a groundout and the other when Gary Sanchez stole home.

In the third, the RiverDogs added three more runs, two on a double by Tyler Austin and one on a ground out.

Bichette went 3-for-5 with two RBI and Reymond Nunez and Mason Williams each hit a solo home run in the seventh inning for Charleston.

Hickory (31-26) left 12 men on base and went 1-for-13 with runners in scoring position.

Jeremy Williams had three of Hickory's nine hits, while Hanser Alberto and Zach Cone added two each.

Game 2 of the series is Wednesday in Charleston, S.C.

The Crawdads will be at home to face Greenville, S.C., on Friday night at L.P. Frans Stadium.