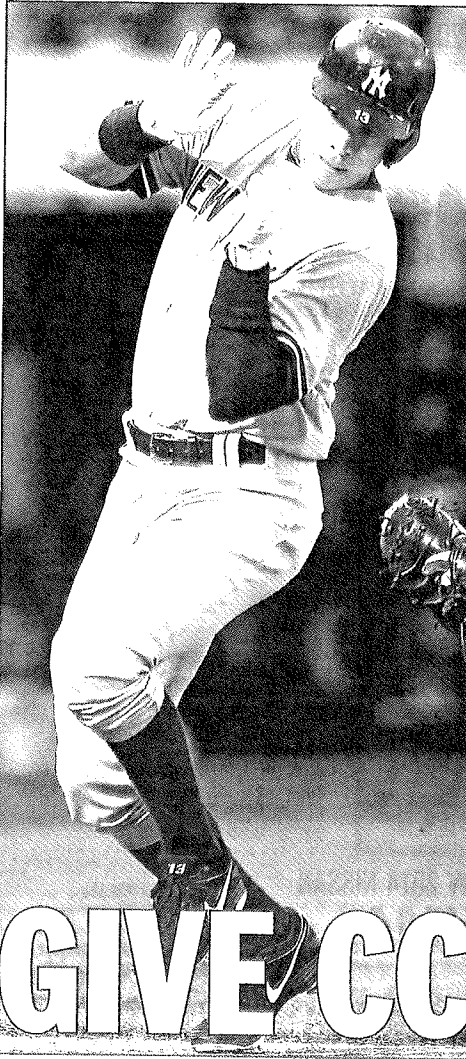




New York Yankees Clips
Friday, May 29, 2015



EXTRA INNINGS

STAT OF THE DAY

60 The Yankees entered Thursday with 60 home runs in 47 games. They did not hit their 60th home run last season until their 75th game.

TEST YOUR YANKEES IQ

On this date in 2009, Mariano Rivera earned his 58th career save of a game won by Andy

Pettitte, establishing a new pitcher-closer record. Whose record did they break?

NEXT GAME

Friday, at Oakland, 10:05 p.m.; LHP Chris Capuano (0-2, 7.36 ERA) vs. RHP Sonny Gray (5-2, 1.77 ERA); TV: YES

A: Bob Welch and Dennis Eckersley

Alex Rodriguez avoids being tagged by A's catcher Josh Phegley on play in which he is originally called out but is reversed following replay challenge. GETTY

GIVE CC AN F VS. A'S

Roughed up again in Oakland, lefty blows 3-0 lead

BY MARK FEINSAND
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

OAKLAND — Thursday started out as a happy homecoming for CC Sabathia. By the end of the night, it was just another in a long line of crushing losses at the Coliseum for the big southpaw.

The Athletics scored five times between the fifth and seventh innings to erase the Yankees' three-run lead, giving Oakland a 5-4 win to start the four-game series.

Sabathia was charged with all five runs over six-plus innings, allowing eight hits and one walk, striking out four as he fell to 2-7 for the season.

Brian McCann homered and drove in two runs, while Alex Rodriguez also had an RBI, tying Barry Bonds for second place on MLB's all-time list as the Yankees built up an early lead.

But Oakland's bats woke up after four sleepy innings, then watched the bullpen finish off the game despite a shaky ninth inning by closer Tyler Clippard. Brett Gardner's RBI double pulled the Yankees

within a run, but Chase Headley flied out to center to bring an end to the Bombers' three-game winning streak.

"It's hard to figure out," Girardi said of falling to the last-place A's after sweeping the Royals. "Baseball doesn't make sense on a daily basis."

A'S	5
YANKEES	4

Sabathia had seemingly turned his season around with wins against the Rays and Royals, but his last start was a disaster as he allowed six runs over 2.1 innings in a loss to the Rangers.

Despite Sabathia's poor history pitching in his hometown — he was 8-10 with a 4.66 ERA in 27 career starts at the Coliseum, including a 4-6 record and 5.30 ERA since joining the Yankees — Joe Girardi was optimistic that the veteran would get himself back on track Thursday night.

Sabathia had everything working early, retiring the side in order in the first two innings.

McCann gave the Yankees a 1-0 lead in the second, drilling a 2-1 cutter from starter Kendall Graveman over the right-field wall.

McCann added to the lead in the fourth with an RBI single to center, although it took a superb slide by Alex Rodriguez — and a video replay review — for the run to score.

A-Rod, at second after his leadoff single and a Mark Teixeira walk, took off on McCann's single up the middle. Center fielder Billy Burns charged the ball and fired home, his throw beating A-Rod to the plate. But A-Rod avoided catcher Josh Phegley, swiping the plate with his fingertips.

Home plate umpire Ed Hickox didn't initially make a call, so Phegley tagged A-Rod, who was called out. Rodriguez immediately signaled to Girardi for a review, which the manager asked for after getting word from the clubhouse that A-Rod was safe. It took nearly three minutes for the ruling to be made, but it was ultimately

reversed, giving the Yankees a 2-0 lead.

A-Rod made it 3-0 in the fifth, his sacrifice fly to right field driving in Gardner. The RBI was No. 1,996 for Rodriguez, pulling him into a tie with Bonds.

Sabathia was cruising to that point, but he ran into some trouble in the third after three consecutive singles loaded the bases with one out. The big lefty was unfazed, fanning Marcus Semien for the second out before catching Ben Zobrist looking at strike three to escape the inning.

Sabathia took the mound with a three-run lead in the fifth, but Burns belted a solo home run down the left-field line.

Oakland tied the game an inning later on Brett Lawrie's two-run blast off Sabathia. The Athletics struck again in the seventh, knocking Sabathia out of the game after Phegley's leadoff single and a Mark Canha walk.

David Carpenter took over, but proved to be even more flammable, giving up a one-out single by Semien to load the bases before walking Zobrist to force in the go-ahead run.

Billy Butler added a sacrifice fly to center to push Oakland's lead to two runs.

SABATHIA-UGH

By GEORGE A. KING III

OAKLAND, Calif. — CC Sabathia against the A's has never been a good matchup for the veteran lefty. David Carpenter in a big spot also isn't working for the Yankees.

Armed with an early three-run lead against the worst team in the American League, Sabathia appeared to be on his way to taming his hometown team, which has routinely been hard on him.

ATHLETICS	5	Boxscore Page 50
YANKEES	4	

Then Sabathia gave up a two-run homer in the sixth to Brett Lawrie and ignited a two-run seventh by allowing the first two batters to reach base.

By the time the seventh inning was finished, the A's were on their way to a 5-4 victory Thursday night that was witnessed by 21,795 at O.co Coliseum.

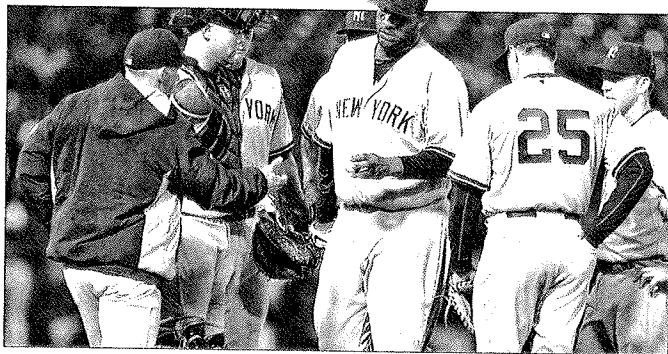
The loss stopped a three-game Yankees winning streak and reduced their AL East lead to one game over the second-place Rays.

Sabathia is 8-11 with a 4.75 ERA in 28 career starts against the A's, the team he followed growing up in Vallejo, Calif.

In six-plus innings, Sabathia allowed five runs and eight hits. He is 2-7.

Brian McCann drove in two of the Yankees' three runs with a homer in the second and a single in the fourth, when the Yankees scored twice to up the lead to 3-0.

The bottom of the A's order ended Sabathia's night in the seventh, when Josh Phegley, the No. 8 hitter, led off with a single and Sabathia issued a five-pitch walk to Mark Canha.



Carpenter arrived to get a force out at third on Billy Burns' bunt but gave up a single to Marcus Semien, which loaded the bases for the switch-hitting Ben Zobrist.

With the count full, Carpenter walked Zobrist to force home Canha and give the hosts a 4-3 lead. Pitching coach Larry Rothschild visited Carpenter on the mound while lefty Chasen Shreve threw in the bullpen.

Billy Butler's fly to center plated Burns for a two-run advantage and the Yanks brought in Shreve to face the left-handed hitting Stephen Vogt.

After pitching out of a one-out, bases-loaded jam in the third, Sabathia was an out away from not getting hurt by Zobrist's lead-off double in the sixth. Butler flied to right and Vogt, the A's best hitter, whiffed on a 1-2 pitch.

Sabathia's first pitch to Lawrie was a ball and the second cleared the left-field fence and tied the score, 3-3.

That the homer was hit by a right-handed batter wasn't a shock because they started the game hitting .345 (60-for-174) with seven homers against Sabathia.

Cruising with a 3-0 lead in the fifth, Sabathia watched in shock when Burns lofted a 78-mph pitch over the left-field wall near the foul pole with two outs. It was Burns' second homer and third RBI of the season.

In the top of the inning, Alex Rodriguez tied Barry Bonds for second place in history with his 1,996th RBI, which became an official statistic in 1920.

Rodriguez drove home Brett Gardner with a sacrifice fly to up the Yankees' lead to 3-0.

Sabathia's first taste of trouble surfaced in the third, when the A's loaded the bases on three consecutive one-out singles by Phegley, Canha and Burns.

Sabathia responded by striking out Semien swinging and Zobrist looking at a 1-2 pitch.

McCann's solo homer with one out in the second accounted for the game's first run. It was McCann's seventh homer.

The replay system bailed out Yankees' third base coach Joe Espada who wrongly sent Alex Rodriguez around third from second on McCann's single to center. Rodriguez was initially called out by plate umpire Ed Hickox but the Yankees' challenged the call and after a 2:45 delay Rodriguez was called safe.

With runners on first and second and no outs McCann singled up the middle. Instead of holding Rodriguez at third to set up Carlos Beltran with the bases loaded and no outs, Espada sent the chugging Rodriguez home.

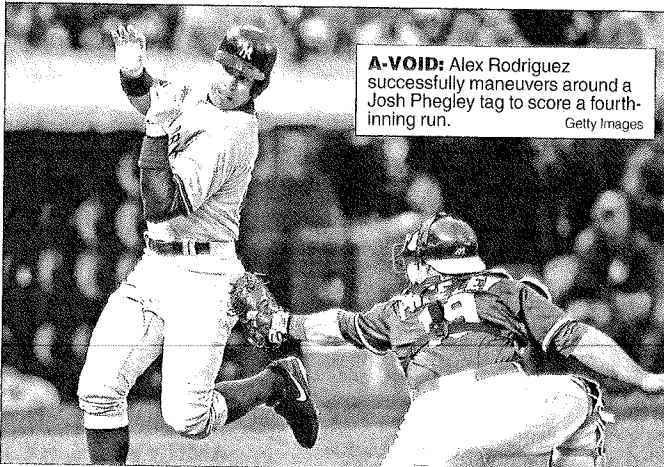
Burns' throw arrived at catcher Phegley's glove well ahead of Rodriguez, who avoided a tag attempt and bent over to touch the plate with his left hand. Hickox waited for Phegley to tag Rodriguez before calling him out since the umpire believed Rodriguez never touched the dish.

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CC, pen fall apart as Yanks' win streak halted at 3

**NOTHING TO
CC:** CC Sabathia
walks back to the
mound after
allowing a Billy
Burns home run in
the Yankees' 5-4
loss to the
Athletics on
Thursday.

Getty Images (2)



A-VOID: Alex Rodriguez
successfully maneuvers around a
Josh Phegley tag to score a fourth-
inning run.

Getty Images



ON DECK

AT AS

FRIDAY — 10:05
LHP Chris Capuano
(0-2, 7.36) vs.
RHP Sonny Gray
(5-2, 1.77)

SATURDAY — 10:05
RHP Nathan Eovaldi
(4-1, 4.27) vs.
RHP Jesse Hahn
(2-4, 3.69)

SUNDAY — 4:05
RHP Adam Warren
(3-3, 3.91) vs.
RHP Jesse Chavez
(1-5, 2.44)

All games on YES, WFAN
(660 AM, 101.9 FM)

INSIDE THE MATCHUPS

YANKEES: Capuano has been shaky since returning from the DL, throwing a total of 7 1/3 innings in a pair of Yankees losses. On Sunday, he couldn't escape the fifth inning in a 5-2 loss to the Rangers, allowing eight hits and three runs (two earned) in 4 1/3 innings.

ATHLETICS: In his third season, Gray has come into his own, mowing down opposing batters and limiting them to a .202 batting average. The 25-year-old has been particularly sharp at home, where he has allowed four earned runs in 30 1/3 innings (1.19).

STAT SQUAD

YANKEES: Andrew Miller has held opponents to a .070 batting average (5-for-71), the best among AL relievers.

ATHLETICS: Outfielder Sam Fuld hasn't had a multihit game since April 22, going 8-for-74 (.108) in the span.

Tight Bonds

A-Rod ties Barry on RBI list

OAKLAND, Calif. — Alex and Barry are together again.

The two sluggers with the PED past spent some time together this winter in the batting cage as A-Rod crafted his swing in his return from the 2014 suspension.

On Thursday night Alex Rodriguez tied Barry Bonds for second place on

MLB's all-time RBI list at 1,996, according to Elias, with a fifth-inning sacrifice fly in the Yankees' giveaway of a game at O.co Coliseum, a terrible 5-4 loss to the lowly A's.

That A-Rod RBI put the Yankees ahead, 3-0 but CC Sabathia gave it all away and more by allowing a solo home run to Billy Burns in the fifth and a two-run home run to Brett Lawrie in the sixth.

Joe Girardi stuck with Sabathia in the seventh and paid the price as No. 8 hitter Josh Phegley singled and Sabathia walked No. 9 hitter Mark Canha.

Reliever David Carpenter came into the game, but a bases-loaded walk to Ben Zobrist and a sacrifice fly by Billy Butler sealed the Yankees' fate.

All five runs were charged to Sabathia.

One thing is certain, with the Yankees shaky starting pitching, A-Rod and the other hitters are going to have to turn it up a notch. This seven-game trip could get ugly. Masahiro Tanaka will return to the rotation in Seattle.

Chris Capuano (0-2, 7.36) goes against Sonny Gray (5-2, 1.77 ERA) on Friday.

Rodriguez scored the second run for the Yankees when he deftly avoided the tag at home plate on Brian McCann's single to center. Rodriguez slapped home plate with his left hand as he tumbled home.

He was called out by umpire Ed Hickox but after a review the call was overturned and A-Rod celebrated with another hand slap.

A-Rod has passed all hitting tests this season. He is the Comeback Player of the Year right now.

"Being the DH has really helped Alex," Mark Teixeira said. "He loves the fact that he can focus all his attention on being in the batter's box, which is great for us. He's meant so much to us as a team."

Rodriguez' numbers are far better than anyone anticipated, hitting .277 with 11 home runs and 27 RBIs, although when Rodriguez met with The Post in January in Miami, he insisted he was on the path to success with the Biogenesis scandal suspension completed and was confident he would be a rock-solid hitter again.

He has proven to be just that.

This trip is a huge test because Rodriguez is playing in two big ballparks, the O.co Coliseum, and then onto Safeco Field, where A-Rod

remains a scorned player for leaving the Mariners so many years ago.

Rodriguez was batting .310 this year at Yankee Stadium and .247 on the road entering Thursday night. His on-base percentage was .400 at home and .351 on the road and his OPS was a robust .963 at home and still an impressive .919 on road.

In the just completed homestand,

Rodriguez batted .455 with six runs, one double, one big home run, four RBIs, three walks and hit by pitch in six games as a DH.

Clearly, he feels the love at home from the fans and his teammates and that has helped put him at ease.

On the road Rodriguez has hit seven home runs while only four at home, so that tells you he has been looking to go big or go home with his at-bats on the road.

With Bonds help, he made some terrific adjustments in his swing, focusing on hitting the ball back up the middle and not trying to pull everything.

"I knew what I had was enough," he told The Post.

There's also something to be said for sitting out a year in that A-Rod was able to rest his body.

Remember, Andy Pettitte's retirement year paid the same kind of dividends for him. Both athletes got a break from the constant wear and tear of the season, year after year after year.

Now comes a vital push and A-Rod is needed more than ever considering the state of the Yankees starting pitching.

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Kevin Kernan

A-Rod ties Bonds

PLAYER	RBIs
Hank Aaron	2,297
Alex Rodriguez	1,996
Barry Bonds	1,996
Lou Gehrig	1,993
Babe Ruth	1,990

Source: MLB and Elias Sports Bureau
Note: RBIs did not become an official stat until 1920, and MLB does not recognize pre-1920 RBIs

More Yankees / P. 55

Newsday

CC Sabathia can't hold on to 3-0 lead as Yankees lose to A's, 5-4

By ERIK BOLAND - Updated May 29, 2015 3:15 AM

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Though CC Sabathia's most recent outing certainly seemed like the kind that might get him going in the wrong direction, Joe Girardi didn't sense that would be the case. "I have a good feel about tonight," he said Thursday.

The feeling lasted not quite six innings.

Spotted a three-run lead, Sabathia couldn't hold it in a discouraging 5-4 loss to the A's in front of 21,795 at O.co Coliseum, a defeat that ended the Yankees' winning streak at three games.

Sabathia was far better than he had been in Saturday's start against Texas, when he lasted only 2 1/3 innings in a 15-4 loss.

But he saw a familiar story play out -- familiar in recent seasons, anyway -- as he coughed up a late lead. He was charged with five runs, as David Carpenter allowed two of Sabathia's runners to score, and allowed eight hits in six innings-plus.

"It's tough," said Sabathia, who is 2-7 with a 5.67 ERA. "They put up the runs early and you want to be able to hold that lead and get the ball to the back of our bullpen, and I wasn't able to do that."

Said Girardi, "He was pitching really well and it just kind of got away from him."

Ahead 3-0 going into the bottom of the fifth, Sabathia allowed a two-out solo homer by Billy Burns that made it 3-1. He gave up a two-out, two-run blast by Brett Lawrie an inning later that tied it at 3-3. "Changeup that was just up and down the middle and he put a good swing on it," Sabathia said of Lawrie. "He saw that one pretty good."

After allowing a single by Josh Phegley and walking No. 9 hitter Mark Canha to begin the seventh, Sabathia received no help from Carpenter, who hasn't been much help to anyone thus far.

Carpenter, who entered with a 5.19 ERA in 19 outings, made a good play on Burns' bad bunt, getting the lead runner at third, but Marcus Semien's single loaded the bases. Ben Zobrist walked to force in the go-ahead run and Billy Butler's sacrifice fly made it 5-3. "I feel bad doing that to CC and everything," Carpenter said. "You want to come in, you want to leave those guys there, especially after he's battled his butt off . . . I don't like letting guys down."

Girardi said Justin Wilson, Dellin Betances and Andrew Miller were unavailable. On the difficulty of navigating the end of the game without Betances and Miller, he said, "Guys have to

get it done, That's what we're asking them to do. That's part of the game. We just weren't able to do it tonight."

In the ninth, former Yankee Tyler Clippard retired Stephen Drew and Chris Young on hard-hit line drives before providing some theater. He walked pinch hitter Garrett Jones and allowed an RBI double to left-center by Brett Gardner that made it 5-4 before getting Chase Headley to fly to the warning track in center.

Alex Rodriguez reached a milestone in the fifth in giving the Yankees a 3-0 lead. After one-out singles by Gardner and Headley put runners at the corners, A-Rod lifted a fly to right, plenty deep enough for a sacrifice fly. It gave him his 1,996th career RBI, tying him with Barry Bonds for second on the all-time list. "You say the same thing about Gehrig and Ruth and Barry's the same thing, he's one of the greats," A-Rod said. "This is kind of special because he's also a friend."

Brian McCann gave the Yankees a 1-0 lead in the second with his seventh homer.

It gave him at least one RBI in each of his last six games and ended the A's streak of five straight games in which their starters had not allowed an earned run, the team's longest such streak since 1914.

After Rodriguez led off the fourth with a single to move within 18 of 3,000 hits and Mark Teixeira walked, McCann grounded a single to center and third-base coach Joe Espada made an aggressive send with the slow-footed A-Rod. Burns's throw home took Phegley slightly up the third-base line and A-Rod, after eluding the tag, dived toward the plate with his left hand and kept tumbling. After umpire Ed Hickox made no call, Phegley went after Rodriguez, who clearly believed he was safe, and tagged him out. A calm A-Rod went right to Girardi, however, and a replay review showed that his left hand indeed had grazed the back of the plate. After a 2-minute, 45-second delay for the review, the Yankees were awarded a run that made it 2-0.

But after Carlos Beltran's grounder put runners on second and third with one out, Drew popped up and Young struck out.

Gardner and McCann each had three of the Yankees' eight hits.

New York Times

Alex Rodriguez's Savvy Stumble Can't Keep Yankees Upright

By BILLY WITZ - MAY 29, 2015

Alex Rodriguez hit a sacrifice fly that scored Brett Gardner in the fifth and put Rodriguez in a tie for second place with Barry Bonds with 1,996 runs batted in. Credit Ezra Shaw/Getty Images

OAKLAND, Calif. — A younger man might have been able to nimbly slide around Oakland catcher Josh Phegley. Then again, such a maneuver would not have been necessary for a younger man — he would have arrived home far before the throw from center fielder Billy Burns.

But Alex Rodriguez, closing in on his 40th birthday in July, is no longer a younger man.

He runs upright, arms pumping, like a Sherpa chugging up a hill with a cord of firewood on his back. Rodriguez covers ground just as slowly. And thanks to surgically repaired hips, he now changes directions as deliberately as a school bus.

The thought of a hard or dexterous slide was clearly part of the risk-reward analysis as Rodriguez rounded third and headed for home on Brian McCann's fourth-inning single Thursday night.

Thus Rodriguez eschewed a slide, arching his back to avoid the tag of Phegley and reaching down to try to touch a corner of home plate. He strained to reach it. Perhaps because of the awkward approach, the umpire Ed Hickox ruled that Rodriguez had missed the plate and called him out when Phegley turned back and tagged him.

But in this season of revival for Rodriguez, he quickly signaled that he was safe. The Yankees challenged the call, and the replay proved him right.

It turned out to be a hollow victory in the Yankees' 5-4 loss to the Athletics. But this sort of lurching, not-so-graceful play has seemed to typify the Yankees' season. They remained in first place in the American League East despite losing a three-run lead and falling to Oakland (18-32), the worst team in the league.

The loss ended a three-game winning streak, which followed a string in which the Yankees lost 10 of 11. Before that, they had won 18 of 24.

“It's hard to figure out,” Manager Joe Girardi said. “Baseball doesn't make sense on a daily basis.”

As the Yankees (25-23) have meandered through the first two months of the season, Rodriguez has established himself as an indispensable figure as a designated hitter. He has 11 home runs and 27 R.B.I. and has re-established himself in the third spot in the batting order.

His fourth-inning single on Thursday put him 18 hits shy of 3,000 for his career and gave him a streak of 12 consecutive starts with a hit. His fifth-inning sacrifice fly, which scored Brett Gardner, increased his R.B.I. total to 1,996, tying him with Barry Bonds for second on the official career list (the statistic was not kept until 1920).

Rodriguez was self-deprecating after the game when describing the play at the plate.

“That was not pretty,” he said. “That looked like Shaquille O’Neal coming out of a pick.”

Girardi, who was concerned for Rodriguez’s safety, said, “I don’t want to see him do that too many times.”

Yankees starter C. C. Sabathia, returning to near where he grew up in Vallejo, Calif., did not make many mistakes, but he was punished for the ones he did.

Sabathia worked out of a bases-loaded, one-out jam in the third. But Burns pulled a fastball down the left-field line that cleared the wall by inches for a solo homer in the fifth. Brett Lawrie added a two-run homer about 20 feet farther in the sixth, tying the score, 3-3. Both home runs came with two outs.

Sabathia was lifted after Phegley singled and Mark Canha walked to open the bottom of the seventh. David Carpenter entered in relief and eventually walked in one run and allowed another on a sacrifice fly. Both runs were charged to Sabathia, who fell to 2-7.

“Right now, trying to find the silver lining in this has been tough,” said Carpenter, who has struggled in the seventh-inning role.

After the game, Girardi said his three top relievers — Andrew Miller, Dellin Betances and Justin Wilson — had not been available, except in an emergency, because of their recent heavy workload.

The Yankees got a run back in the ninth when Gardner’s two-out, full-count double scored Garrett Jones, who had walked as a pinch-hitter. But Tyler Clippard, a former Yankee, recovered to retire Chase Headley on a fly ball to deep center field.

On deck was Rodriguez, who could not rescue the Yankees with his bat — or something that was less graceful.

Yankees' Sabathia Can't Hold Lead, Drops To 2-7 On Season

A-Rod Ties Bonds For 2nd On All-Time RBIs List, But Bombers Blow It In Oakland

AP- May 29, 2015 6:23 AM

OAKLAND, Calif. (CBSNewYork/AP) — With his bullpen worn down, New York Yankees manager Joe Girardi had to turn to David Carpenter in a key spot against Oakland.

The move backfired when Carpenter walked Ben Zobrist with the bases loaded to score the go-ahead run and the Yankees went on to lose 5-4 to the Athletics on Thursday night.

“Guys got to get it done,” Girardi said. “That’s what we’re asking them to do, and sometimes it’s going to be like that. That’s part of the game. We just weren’t able to do it tonight.”

CC Sabathia (2-7) allowed homers to Billy Burns and Brett Lawrie to squander a 3-0 lead and the Yankees had their three-game winning streak snapped in the opener of a seven-game West Coast trip.

Alex Rodriguez tied Barry Bonds for second place on the all-time RBIs list and Brian McCann homered in his third straight game for the Yankees.

Rodriguez’s sacrifice fly in the fifth made it 3-0 and tied him for second with 1,996 career RBIs. Hank Aaron has the record with 2,297. Babe Ruth drove in 2,214 runs, according to baseball-reference.com, but RBIs did not become an official stat until 1920 and the Elias Sports Bureau officially credits him with 1,992.

“He’s one of the greats,” Rodriguez said of Bonds. “It is kind of special because he’s also a friend and I know him very well.”

Sabathia couldn’t hold the lead. Burns hit his second homer of the season just inside the foul pole in left field in the fifth and Lawrie tied the game with a two-run shot in the sixth.

“It’s tough,” said Sabathia, whose ERA rose to 5.67. “You get the runs early and you want to be able to hold that lead and get the ball to the back end of our bullpen. I wasn’t able to do that.”

The A’s knocked out Sabathia when Josh Phegley and Mark Canha reached to open the seventh.

“I had to make a change,” Girardi said of Sabathia. “But he was pitching really well, and it just kind of got away from him.”

Carpenter, put into the game in a tight spot because of the tired bullpen, walked Zobrist with one out to force in Canha with the go-ahead run and Billy Butler added a sacrifice fly to make it 5-3.

Evan Scribner (1-0) retired all five batters he faced for the win. Tyler Clippard allowed a two-out RBI double by Brett Gardner in the ninth before getting Chase Hedley to fly out for his fifth save in six chances.

“We played the game the right way tonight,” Lawrie said. “Ben Zobrist with a great at-bat. That was pretty much the whole game right there.”

The A’s won their first one-run game at home since last Sept. 6, ending a 12-game skid that was the longest in franchise history. The A’s were 2-15 overall in one-run games this season, a major reason why they have the worst record (18-32) in the American League.

TRAINER’S ROOM

Yankees: RHP Masahiro Tanaka, out since April 29 with right wrist tendinitis and forearm strain, is expected to rejoin the starting rotation next week. Tanaka pitched three innings in a rehab start for Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre on Wednesday and is flying to meet the team in California before the Yankees head north to begin a three-game series in Seattle. ... CF Slade Heathcott was scratched from the lineup with a strained right quad. Chris Young replaced him in the lineup.

Athletics: An MRI taken on LHP Scott Kazmir’s pitching shoulder showed no structural damage and he may only miss one start. Kazmir left Wednesday after three innings and complained of tightness.

REPLAY REVIEW

Rodriguez was initially called out on McCann’s single in the fourth inning when umpire Ed Hickox ruled he missed home plate while eluding the tag. Phegley then tagged Rodriguez out as he stood next to the plate. But Rodriguez emphatically waved that he was safe and he was proven correct on replay, which showed his hand just got a piece of home plate.

“That was not pretty,” Rodriguez said. “That looked like Shaquille O’Neal coming out of a pick. I’m glad they got it right.”

UP NEXT

Yankees: LHP Chris Capuano (0-2) is looking to avoid losing three consecutive starts for the first time since 2012. Capuano missed the first six weeks of the season with a strained right quad.

Athletics: RHP Sonny Gray (5-2) makes his second career start against New York. Gray’s 1.77 ERA is the third-lowest by an Oakland pitcher after 10 starts in the designated hitter era.

A's Sink Sabathia, Yanks

Former Cy Young winner's record sinks to 2-7; ERA now one of the worst in baseball at 5.67

Daniel Barbarisi - May 29, 2015 2:46 a.m. ET

OAKLAND—In the good old days, when CC Sabathia was a top-of-the-rotation force, he could afford to make a mistake or two and get away with it. His fastball was powerful, his change-up was deep, his breaking balls had bite.

But it is 2015, and those good times are half a decade gone. In 2015, the tightrope that Sabathia walks leaves no room for such mistakes. When he makes one, it is punished, his team pays the price, as the Yankees did Thursday in losing to the worst team in the American League, the Oakland A's, 5-4.

Thursday night, Sabathia was cruising along with a 3-1 lead when he made one of those mistakes, leaving a change-up over the plate to Oakland third baseman Brett Lawrie. Lawrie did what batters do now with Sabathia's errors: He sent it flying 400 feet away, leaving it in the left-field seats to tie the game at 3-3.

"It's tough," Sabathia said. "They get the runs early and you want to be able to hold that lead and get the ball to the back of our bullpen. I wasn't able to do that."

The major damage done, Sabathia made a few more, lesser mistakes the next inning—and was soon out of the game with two men still on base, leaving it to the bullpen to clean up his mess.

If the best Yankee relievers, Dellin Betances and Andrew Miller, had been available, they might have. But the pair had been worked hard recently, and that left the job to struggling righty David Carpenter.

Carpenter couldn't pull it off, giving up a ground-ball single and then committing the sin of walking Ben Zobrist with the bases loaded to give the A's the lead. Oakland's Billy Butler followed up with a sacrifice fly to score another run, and soon the Yankees were in a hole they couldn't dig out of.

"I got the ground ball that just finds a hole," Carpenter said. "Tried to plan on Zobrist being aggressive, ended up getting to a 3-2 count and then walking him. Then Butler hitting the sac fly, it's tough."

The loss left Sabathia's record at an ugly 2-7. The former Cy Young winner has a 5.67 ERA, one of the worst in baseball.

The Yankees continue to befuddle, losing this game to the basement-dwelling A's after sweeping the best team in the American League, the Kansas City Royals. Manager Joe Girardi had no answer as to why.

"It's hard to figure out," Girardi shrugged. "Baseball doesn't make sense on a daily basis. It really doesn't."

Yankees let a winnable game slip away in Oakland

Posted by: [Chad Jennings](#) - Posted in [Misc](#) on May 29, 2015

The Yankees were going to win this game. It really felt that way. They'd scored early, added a few runs in the middle, and CC Sabathia was pitching well. But when it started to unravel, it just wouldn't stop. Sabathia gave up a couple of homers, David Carpenter walked in the go-ahead run, and the Yankees' winning streak ended with a 5-4 loss in Oakland. Sabathia fell to 2-7, and now the Yankees have to face Sonny Gray tomorrow.

Sabathia pitched well early in the game, but he allowed a game-tying home run in the sixth, then he let the first two batters reach base in the seventh. Carpenter wound up loading the bases, walking in a run and allowing a sacrifice fly. Brett Gardner pulled the Yankees within a run with an RBI double in the ninth, but Gardner was left stranded when Chase Headley flied to center to end the game.

After retiring the first seven batters he faced, Sabathia had to pitch out of a bases-loaded jam in the third inning — back-to-back strikeouts did the trick — and he was delivering a fine start even after solo home run in the fifth inning, which made the score 3-1. In the sixth, though, Sabathia gave up a two-out, two-run homer to Brett Lawrie to tie the game at 3. It was the next inning that the A's climbed in front.

Brian McCann had three hits and drove in the first two Yankees runs. In the second inning, McCann hit his first road homer of the year (his seventh home run overall). In the fourth, McCann singled up the middle, and Rodriguez scored from second on an awkward tag-dodging dive at the plate. The throw beat him easily, but Rodriguez went around the tag and kind of tumbled toward the plate, just grazing it with his hand. A lengthy replay was required to get the call correct. The very next inning, Rodriguez hit a sacrifice fly to pull him into a tie for second place on baseball's all-time official RBI list.

CC Sabathia, bullpen can't hold down Athletics in Yankees' 5-4 loss | Rapid reaction

Brendan Kutty | May 29, 2015 at 12:58 AM, updated May 29, 2015 at 7:17 AM

OAKLAND, Calif. —Here's a breakdown of the Yankees' 5-4 loss to the A's at O.co Coliseum Thursday night.

WHAT IT MEANS: The end. Well, that's being dramatic, but it was the end of the Yankees' (25-23) three-game winning streak, and it happened against Oakland (18-32), which has the worst record in the American League. The loss also dropped the Yankees' AL East lead over the second-place Rays to a game.

TURNING POINT: When reliever David Carpenter walked Ben Zobrist with the bases loaded in the seventh inning, scoring Mark Canha and giving the A's a 4-3 lead. Billy Butler then hit a sacrifice fly to center field off Carpenter to make it 5-3 Oakland.

SABATHIA: Yankees starting pitcher CC Sabathia's final line was ugly: Five earned runs and eight hits, including two homers, over six innings. But he wasn't actually that bad. Sabathia had given up just three runs on a pair of homers until he sputtered in the seventh. Manager Joe Girardi pulled Sabathia after he gave up a leadoff single and walk, with the score tied, 3-3. Carpenter allowed both of Sabathia's runners to score.

LONG LEASH: Carpenter has struggled all season. Entering Thursday, the veteran righty had a 5.19 ERA in 17 1/3 innings. Yet Girardi has continued to let Carpenter work out his issues, which have mostly been control-related, even in big spots. The question is starting to become: How much longer will the Yankees wait?

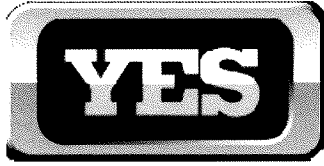
NO LIE: Alex Rodriguez was caught telling the truth in the fourth inning. After hitting a leadoff single and moving to second on Mark Teixeira's walk, Rodriguez tried scoring from there on Brian McCann's single to center. Billy Burns' throw nearly met Rodriguez at the plate, but catcher Josh Phegley missed the tag, and Rodriguez tumbled instead of sliding, reaching back for the plate. Umpire Ed Hickox initially called Rodriguez out, but A-Rod was adamant that he touched the plate. The Yankees challenged the call and Rodriguez's run gave the Yankees a 2-0 lead.

LATER, BARRY: Rodriguez's sacrifice fly in the fourth inning gave him his 1,996th career RBI, tying him with Barry Bonds for second place in Major League Baseball history. Rodriguez still trails Hank Aaron, who finished with 2,297.

INJURY REPORT: Yankees rookie center fielder Slade Heathcott was pulled from his starting spot. Heathcott has a tight right quad, the team said.

NO PLACE LIKE ROAD? Brian McCann's second-inning homer was his seventh of the season and it gave the Yankees a 1-0 lead. It was McCann's first road home run of the season.

NEXT: Yankees lefty Chris Capuano (0-2, 7.36 ERA) will face A's righty Sonny Gray (5-2, 1.77 ERA) at 10:05 p.m.



Oakland Athletics erase early deficit, take first of four games against New York Yankees, 5-4

By The Associated Press - 05/29/2015 1:13 AM ET

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) -- The Oakland Athletics came out on the right side of a one-run game for a change.

Ben Zobrist drew a bases-loaded walk from David Carpenter in the seventh inning to break a tie and the A's rallied from a three-run deficit to beat the New York Yankees 5-4 on Thursday night.

"We haven't won many games like that this year," starter Kendall Graveman said. "For them to battle back and put up runs late in the game and for our bullpen to a great job tonight, that's a big confidence builder for us."

Billy Burns and Brett Lawrie homered off CC Sabathia (2-7) to start the comeback from a 3-0 hole and the A's went on to beat the Yankees for the 10th time in their past 11 meetings in Oakland.

The A's won their first one-run game at home since last Sept. 6, ending a 12-game skid that was the longest in franchise history. The A's were 2-15 overall in one-run games this season, a major reason why they have the worst record (18-32) in the American League.

"We played the game the right way tonight," Lawrie said. "Ben Zobrist with a great at-bat. That was pretty much the whole game right there."

Alex Rodriguez tied Barry Bonds for second place on the all-time RBIs list and Brian McCann homered in his third straight game for the Yankees, who had their three-game winning streak snapped.

Evan Scribner (1-0) retired all five batters he faced for the win. Tyler Clippard allowed a two-out RBI double by Brett Gardner in the ninth before getting Chase Hedley to fly out for his fifth save in six chances.

Sabathia was cruising with a three-run lead in the fifth inning before Burns hit his second homer of the season just inside the foul pole in left field.

Lawrie tied the game with a two-run shot in the sixth and the A's knocked out Sabathia when Josh Phegley and Mark Canha reached to open the seventh.

Carpenter, put into the game in a tight spot because of a tired bullpen, walked Zobrist with one out to force in Canha with the go-ahead run and Billy Butler added a sacrifice fly to make it 5-3.

"Guys got to get it done," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "That's what we're asking them to do, and sometimes it's going to be like that. That's part of the game. We just weren't able to do it tonight."

Rodriguez's sacrifice fly in the fifth made it 3-0 and tied him for second with 1,996 career RBIs. Hank Aaron has the record with 2,297. Babe Ruth drove in 2,214 runs, according to baseball-reference.com, but RBIs did not become an official stat until 1920 and the Elias Sports Bureau officially credits him with 1,992.

"He's one of the greats," Rodriguez said of Bonds. "It is kind of special because he's also a friend and I know him very well."

TRAINER'S ROOM

Yankees: RHP Masahiro Tanaka, out since April 29 with right wrist tendinitis and forearm strain, is expected to rejoin the starting rotation next week. Tanaka pitched three innings in a rehab start for Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre on Wednesday and is flying to meet the team in California before the Yankees head north to begin a three-game series in Seattle. ... CF Slade Heathcott was scratched from the lineup with a strained right quad. Chris Young replaced him in the lineup.

Athletics: An MRI taken on LHP Scott Kazmir's pitching shoulder showed no structural damage and he may only miss one start. Kazmir left Wednesday after three innings and complained of tightness. ... RHP A.J. Griffin pitched two innings of a simulated game and will wait for the team to determine the next step in his recovery from elbow surgery.

REPLAY REVIEW

Rodriguez was initially called out on McCann's single in the fourth inning when umpire Ed Hickox ruled he missed home plate while eluding the tag. Phegley then tagged Rodriguez out as he stood next to the plate. But Rodriguez emphatically waved that he was safe and he was proven correct on replay, which showed his hand just got a piece of home plate.

"That was not pretty," Rodriguez said. "That looked like Shaquille O'Neal coming out of a pick. I'm glad they got it right."

UP NEXT

Yankees: LHP Chris Capuano (0-2) is looking to avoid losing three consecutive starts for the first time since 2012. Capuano missed the first six weeks of the season with a strained right quad.

Athletics: RHP Sonny Gray (5-2) makes his second career start against New York. Gray's 1.77 ERA is the third-lowest by an Oakland pitcher after 10 starts in the designated hitter era.

CC lets lead slip away as Yanks fall to A's

By Bryan Hoch and Jane Lee / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | 2:00 AM ET

OAKLAND -- [Billy Burns](#) and [Brett Lawrie](#) homered, and the A's posted a pair of runs in the seventh inning to break ahead and claim a **5-4 series-opening victory** over the Yankees at the Coliseum on Thursday evening.

Lawrie wiped away a two-run Yankees lead in the sixth with a two-run home run off left-hander [CC Sabathia](#), who allowed eight hits in six-plus innings and was charged with all five runs, and the A's went ahead in the seventh when [Ben Zobrist](#) drew a bases-loaded walk against right-hander [David Carpenter](#).

"Just coming in every day, knowing we have the ability to not only come back and then go ahead, that's huge, and we played the game the right way tonight," said Lawrie. "Ben Zobrist with a great at-bat tonight, that was pretty much the whole game right there. You never know what happens if they get the out right there and we don't score."

Yankees catcher [Brian McCann](#) notched his seventh homer of the season and third in as many games with a solo shot against A's starter [Kendall Graveman](#) in the second, one of McCann's three hits on the night. [Alex Rodriguez's](#) fifth-inning sacrifice fly gave him **1,996 career RBIs**, tying him with Barry Bonds for second on the all-time list, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

"On any given day, you have to come ready to play every day because any team can beat anybody," Rodriguez said. "We proved that last week; we beat one of the best teams in baseball in Kansas City and lost nine out of 10. It's just important to come out every day mentally tough and play to win."

[Brett Gardner](#) drove in [Garrett Jones](#) with a two-out RBI double in the ninth off A's closer [Tyler Clippard](#) to make it 5-4, but [Chase Headley](#) flew out to center for the final out.

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Homer happy: Lawrie was hitless in his previous 11 at-bats when he stepped to the plate with two outs in the sixth and knotted the game at 3 with a two-run home run to left field off Sabathia. It was the third homer of the season for Lawrie and just the second A's hit with runners in scoring position in their past 31 at-bats. Burns' fifth-inning solo shot, meanwhile, was his second in five days on the first pitch.

"Obviously we've been looking for one big hit," said A's manager Bob Melvin. "Certainly the way things were going with runners in scoring position, it was a struggle again for a little while, but Lawrie's hit was huge, to get us back to even."

Another 'L' at the 'O': Sabathia likes the Coliseum; he attended A's games here as a kid and still holds Raiders season tickets, but the Vallejo, Calif. product has not had much luck pitching there. After escaping a bases-loaded, one-out jam in the third with a pair of strikeouts, it looked like his fortune might be changing, but he served up two homers -- including Lawrie's game-tying shot in the sixth -- and once again left with a defeat. He is 4-7 with a 5.32 ERA in 15 career starts at Oakland.

"It's tough. They get the runs early and you want to be able to hold that lead and get the ball to the back of our bullpen," Sabathia said. "I wasn't able to do that."

Leaky 'pen: The Yanks tried to squeeze an extra inning out of Sabathia, but called to Carpenter after the first two batters reached base in the seventh. Carpenter wasn't able to hold the line, issuing a tiebreaking bases-loaded walk to Zobrist and a deep sacrifice fly to Billy Butler. Sabathia was charged with five runs and eight hits over six-plus innings.

"I'm frustrated. I'm not happy about how I'm performing right now," Carpenter said. "I don't like letting guys down. That's the thing that upsets me the most, not so much about numbers or anything like that, just letting guys down."

SOUND SMART WITH YOUR FRIENDS

McCann's second-inning homer was his first on the road this season; all six of his previous homers had come at Yankee Stadium. That fact is nothing new for McCann; since joining the Yankees in 2014, 25 of his 30 homers have been hit in the Bronx.

IN REVIEW

Rodriguez scored New York's second run on McCann's fourth-inning single to center field. The throw beat Rodriguez, who dodged catcher Josh Phegley's swipe tag and tumbled over the plate. Home-plate umpire Ed Hickox believed that Rodriguez missed the plate and called him out when Phegley applied a tag, but a review of two minutes, 45 seconds overturned the call, as Rodriguez's left hand was shown to have touched the plate. **More >**

"That was not pretty. That looked like Shaquille O'Neal coming out of a pick," Rodriguez said. "I'm glad they got it right."

WHAT'S NEXT

Yankees: Left-hander Chris Capuano (0-2, 7.36 ERA) will try again for his first victory of the season as the Yankees play the second game of a four-game series with the A's on Friday at 10:05 p.m. ET. Capuano has not completed five innings in either of his starts.

Athletics: Ace Sonny Gray takes the mound for the A's on Friday for a 7:05 p.m. PT start at the Coliseum. Gray's American League-leading 1.77 ERA is the third-lowest by an A's pitcher after 10 starts in the designated hitter era.



Game 48: Yankees at Athletics

Posted by: [Chad Jennings](#) - Posted in [Misc](#) on May 28, 2015

YANKEES (25-22)

Brett Gardner LF
Chase Headley 3B
Alex Rodriguez DH
Mark Teixeira 1B
Brian McCann C
Carlos Beltran RF
Stephen Drew 2B
Chris Young CF
Didi Gregorius SS

LHP CC Sabathia (2-6, 5.47)

Sabathia vs. Athletics

ATHLETICS (17-32)

Billy Burns CF
Marcus Semien SS
Ben Zobrist 2B
Billy Butler DH
Stephen Vogt 1B
Brett Lawrie 3B
Josh Reddick RF
Josh Phegley C
Mark Canha LF

RHP Kendall Graveman (2-2, 6.04)

Graveman has never faced any of the Yankees

TIME/TV: 10:05 p.m., YES Network

WEATHER: Low 60s and high 50s. A little chilly, but clear skies.

UMPIRES: HP Ed Hickox, 1B Mike Estabrook, 2B Dana DeMuth, 3B Paul Nauert

MORE THAN LAST YEAR: The Yankees enter this game with 60 home runs this season. They reached that number in 47 games. Last season, the Yankees didn't hit their 60th team home run until their 75th game. Quicker is better.

BELTRAN STREAKING: Carlos Beltran's 15-game hitting streak is tied for the second-longest of his career (he last had a hitting streak this long back in 2010). His career-best is a 16-game streak with the Mets in 2009.

ON THIS DATE: On May 28, 1946, Yankee Stadium hosted its first night game. A crowd of 49,917 saw Washington beat the Yankees 2-1.

UPDATE, 10:21 p.m.: Brian McCann's first road home run of the year. Yankees up 1-0 in the second.

UPDATE, 10:53 p.m.: Big strikeout for Sabathia to get out of the third with the bases left loaded. Huge outs there. Could have turned into almost the exact same thing as last time.

UPDATE, 10:59 p.m.: Awkward "slide" for Rodriguez — more like a tumbling dodge/dive/reach — but it was definitely successful. As it happened live, it didn't look like he could have possibly gotten his hand onto the plate, but he did. Just barely touched it for a 2-0 lead in the fourth. McCann has both RBI.

UPDATE, 11:30 p.m.: Sac fly for Alex Rodriguez gives the Yankees a 3-0 lead and gives A-Rod a share of second place on baseball's all-time official RBI list.

UPDATE, 12:01 a.m.: This was shaping up to be a really nice start for Sabathia, but he just allowed a two-out, two-run home run in the sixth. That home tied the game at three and left Sabathia doubled over at the waist in frustration.

UPDATE, 12:25 a.m.: Oh man, David Carpenter with another rough outing here in Oakland. Sabathia put two on to start the inning. Since then, Carpenter's gotten an out on a comebacker, allowed a single to load the bases, brought in the go-ahead run with a walk, and allowed an insurance run on a sac fly. Now here comes Shreve. it's a 5-3 A's lead. Winable game that's slipped away.

Rapid Reaction: Athletics 5, Yankees 4

Wallace Matthews, ESPNNewYork.com – 5.29.15

OAKLAND -- The New York Yankees' puzzling season goes West, and perhaps eventually, south. They follow their encouraging three-game sweep of the Kansas City Royals, the team with the best record in the American League, by dropping the first of a four-game series with the Oakland Athletics, the team with the worst record in the AL. The A's, who started the day 15 games under .500, take this one, 5-4, with two runs in the seventh inning. Brett Gardner's RBI double with two out in the ninth inning made it a one-run game, but Chase Headley's fly out to center ended a frustrating defeat.

Overplaying the ace: The one-time ace, anyway. Joe Girardi's decision to send CC Sabathia out to start the seventh inning, after he had given up a game-tying two-run homer in the sixth, led to the Yankees' unraveling. Sabathia allowed the first two hitters to reach base and was replaced by David Carpenter (gory details below). Sabathia (now 2-7) pitched so-so -- 6 innings, eight hits, a walk, four strikeouts and charged with all five runs -- but the manager probably should have taken the six innings of three-run ball from CC and given his bullpen a clean inning to start with.

Part-time job: The Yankees' six hits and three runs through the first five innings -- and then just one single the rest of the way. And after No. 5 hitter Brian McCann, who had three hits, including a home run, and two RBI, the 6-7-8-9 hitters went 0-for-14 with two walks.

Walk of shame: Although Girardi brought him into a tough situation -- two on, none out, tie game in the seventh -- Carpenter made things worse by allowing a single to Marcus Semien that loaded the bases (Mark Canha was held at third), and then walking Ben Zobrist to force in the go-ahead run. Billy Butler then hit a ball to deep center, the sac fly scoring the A's fifth run of the game.

Tying one on: Sabathia was cruising along with a 3-1 lead until the sixth inning, when he allowed a leadoff double to Zobrist, and after getting two outs, hung a 1-0 slider to Brett Lawrie, who lost it in the leftfield seats for a game-tying two-run home run. It was the 10th home run allowed by Sabathia this season, the team high.

Alex, meet Barry: Alex Rodriguez' fifth-inning sacrifice fly drove in the Yankees third run of the game and pulled him even with Barry Bonds with 1,996 RBIs, good for second place on baseball's all-time list.

Tumblin' in: The Yankees got their second run of the game on a McCann single that brought Rodriguez around from third, but not without some drama. The throw from CF Billy Burns beat Rodriguez home, but he sidestepped C Josh Phegley and tumbled across the plate while trying to swipe with his hand. Home plate umpire Ed Hickox originally called Rodriguez out -- Phegley chased him down and tagged him after he got up -- but the Yankees challenged the call and it turned out Rodriguez had indeed caught the plate with his fingers as he rolled past, giving the Yankees a 2-0 lead.

Fan dance: Sabathia got into deep trouble in the third, allowing three straight singles -- one of them a bloop to right that Carlos Beltran seemed to give up on -- with one out in the third, and then got himself out of it with two big strikeouts, getting Semien to swing over a changeup and catching Zobrist looking at a two-seamer to escape any damage.

Road worrier: McCann hit his first home run away from Yankee Stadium -- and seventh of the season -- turning on a 2-1 cutter from Kendall Graveman with one out in the second inning and driving it into the rightfield seats to give the Yankees a 1-0 lead. McCann loves hitting in the Bronx -- this was just his fifth home run away from Yankee Stadium (out of 30) in two seasons in pinstripes.

Burned: Sabathia lost his shutout with two outs in the fifth when A's leadoff hitter Burns jumped on a first-pitch slider and hit it into the leftfield stands to cut the Yankees lead to 3-1.

Tomorrow: Game 2 of this four-game set matches Chris Capuano (0-2, 7.36) and RHP Sonny Gray (5-2, 1.77), first pitch at 10:05 p.m. ET (YES).



Game 48: Yankees (25-22) @ Athletics (17-32)

Wallace Matthews, ESPNNewYork.com – 5.28.15

OAKLAND, Calif. -- The Yankees will try to carry the momentum they gained in their just concluded three-game sweep against the Kansas City Royals at home across the country, when they open a four-game set against the Athletics at O.co Coliseum (10:05 p.m., YES).

CC Sabathia (2-6, 5.47) gets the start against RHP Kendall Graveman (2-2, 6.04). In his last outing, Sabathia was torched for six earned runs in 2 1/3 innings by the Texas Rangers in a 15-4 Yankees loss last Saturday. Yankees rookie Slade Heathcott was a late scratch due to a sore right quad; he was replaced in center field by Chris Young.

Here's the lineup:

Brett Gardner LF

Chase Headley 3B

Alex Rodriguez DH

Mark Teixeira 1B

Brian McCann C

Carlos Beltran RF

Stephen Drew 2B

Young CF

Didi Gregorius SS

Sabathia LHP

Sabathia, who is from nearby Vallejo, California, is 8-10 with a 4.66 ERA in 27 career starts against Oakland. He has not faced the Athletics since June 11, 2013, when he took a 6-4 loss here, allowing six earned runs in six innings. The Yankees have never faced Graveman, who is making just his fifth major league start.



Alex Rodriguez ties Barry Bonds for second on all-time RBI list

Joe Rodgers - May 29, 2015 1:05am EDT

Yankees slugger Alex Rodriguez tied Barry Bonds for second on baseball's all-time RBI list with a fifth-inning sacrifice fly Thursday night against the A's.

A-Rod's drive off Oakland starter Kendall Graveman brought home Brett Gardner for RBI No. 1,996. Rodriguez is 301 short of the all-time RBI leader, Hank Aaron.

It's worth noting that RBIs were not an official statistic until 1920, meaning Babe Ruth would have 2,213 instead of his "official" mark of 1,990. Cap Anson, who retired in 1897, finished with 2,075 RBIs.

Rodriguez keeps working his way up baseball's all-time leaderboards. He passed Willie Mays for fourth on the all-time home run list earlier in the year. He is 18 hits shy of 3,000.



Why Alex Rodriguez's complicated legacy doesn't diminish his current production

By [Tim Brown](#) 6 hours ago

ANAHEIM, Calif. – "What are you doing?" a friend would ask.

"Pretending," I'd say.

This was back when Barry Bonds was threatening Babe Ruth or Hank Aaron or some other icon in the category of home run accumulation over a lifetime. A bunch of us were tramping around the country recording and expanding upon every grunt, glare, swing and fly ball emanating from Bonds, sometimes for weeks at a time. This was not all that fun, because nobody really wanted us around, least of all the man of the era. Sorry, hour.

So, basically, many of us found ourselves bored with the spectacle (in some ways we *were* the spectacle), as there was no access, no context and, outside one particular city, very little joy. The rest of the world, it seemed, either didn't believe in Bonds or didn't care. But we wrote daily, because it was, you know, history (or not), and the stories were breathless accounts of long homers or near misses and whatever else that was if not interesting, at least lapped up against interesting.

Bonds did finally reach and pass Aaron and therefore became the game's greatest home run hitter. Ask anyone. We all wrote it big.

What am I doing?

"Pretending," I'd say.

Anyway, the same guy texted Thursday morning conversationally about Alex Rodriguez, who by some accounts had driven in as many runs as anyone in American League history. Rodriguez on Wednesday night had tied Lou Gehrig at 1,995 RBI. (Ruth actually leads them both by more than 200, but there apparently wasn't an RBI statistic for the first six years of Ruth's career, so he's not recognized as the AL leader, which is very baseball.)

"What," he asked, "should I make of this?"

I've stopped trying to decide. Whatever's in the box score. Go with that.

The great thing about Rodriguez holding (by some accounts) an RBI record is it combines the two most mysterious and controversial elements of our time: RBIs and performance-enhancing drugs. (If you could throw in pitchers' wins, well, let's not cross those streams.) We can't decide if RBIs are important and we're pretty sure, but not positive, PEDs are, but you could find plenty to argue the reverse. RBIs, it can be said, are the result of the confluence of skill and opportunity. Just like steroids. One does not beget the

other, of course, and yet here's Rodriguez and there's a record (sort of) and we have no idea what it means, beyond him being a great hitter in the middle of some good lineups for a very long time. And why was he a great hitter in the middle of some good lineups for a very long time? A not unreasonable question, it would seem.

The New York Yankees have decided what they think of Rodriguez and his numbers – 665 home runs, 1,996 RBI (he added another Thursday night), 2,981 hits – and won't be kicking around the "M" word (milestone) much as a result. Once considered a lock to be retired or kicked out by now, Rodriguez instead has the look of a man who'll one day reach 700-plus home runs and 3,000-plus hits and, like only Hank Aaron, Ruth and Cap Anson before him, 2,000 RBI.

Look at Rodriguez's name beside those he's passed or is coming up on. Pick a statistic, and you'll get Aaron and Ruth and Gehrig and Willie Mays and Stan Musial and Ted Williams and Frank Robinson, on and on. Is he as good as they were? Is he better?

Maybe.

Rodriguez did not give himself a chance to find out. No one will ever know. That's a shame.

What we're left with is a near 40-year-old ballplayer with some skills yet, who has overcome the self-inflicted misfortunes of his past to become a real and productive ballplayer again. And we have 1,996 RBI.

A big deal? I don't really know. So I asked Albert Pujols, who is 374 RBI behind Rodriguez and 4½ years younger.

"Why would people think RBI is overrated?" he asked. "Besides batting average, that is maybe the best stat you can have on the back of your card. I believe that's what I'm here for.

"Bro, to get 2,000 RBI, that's pretty amazing. How do you win games, besides pitching? Driving runs in."

Without intending to, we drifted into a conversation about Rodriguez, the decisions he – Rodriguez – had made along the way, and how those decisions muddle the numbers Rodriguez will leave behind. Should we celebrate moments we can't be sure of? Without knowing what those moments were built on? Do we settle for the box score and leave it at that?

"I'm fine with him accumulating records," Pujols said. "Did the guy do something wrong in this game? Yes he did. He paid for it. He already got suspended for a year. I think everybody deserves a second chance."

He paused and tried not to smile.

"Or third," he went on. "Whatever you want to call it. Inside him he has a really good heart. I'm not one to throw a rock at somebody. He paid the consequences. Now what he's doing in baseball is great. I'm happy for him."

So, we'll leave it at that. We're tired of pretending.



A-nother A-Rod milestone watch

Posted by: [Mike Zacchio](#) - Posted in [Misc](#) on May 28, 2015

Alex Rodriguez has given Yankee fans plenty of milestones to watch — for better or worse — during his ambiguous 11-year tenure in New York.

There were the headliner milestones like his 500th, 600th and 660th career home runs.

There were the “you-wouldn’t-know-about-it-if-someone-didn’t-tweet-it” milestones like his 1,994th career RBI on Wednesday, which gave him the all-time American League lead.

And now we approach another headlining milestone: 3,000 hits.

Over the next two months, with every game (and certainly with every hit), we’re going to hear about Rodriguez approaching the number in some capacity.

The first there will be the “Oh, by the way, A-Rod is now X hits away,” plug-in comments. Then there will be the, “What are the Yankees going to do when he gets it?” debates. Finally, there will be the “this could be the game” countdown, complete with live cut-ins on national television every pitch during his at-bats when he reaches 2,999... followed by more questions.

Will he do it in his next at-bat? Will he go through a massive slump? Will he do it at home? Will it be a home run like Jeter? How will the fans respond?

The number 3,000 means something, no matter what player is approaching it. But it’s different with Rodriguez, and not just because he’s Alex Rodriguez, the enigma.

With his 3,000th hit, Rodriguez will become one of only three players with that many hits and at least 600 career home runs, joining Hank Aaron and Willie Mays.

Now that Rodriguez is 19 shy of the milestone, the questions are starting to swirl.

During his pregame press conference Wednesday, Yankees manager Joe Girardi was asked if Rodriguez approaching the milestone will be as big a spectacle as

when former Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter — the last player to reach 3,000 — did it in July 2011.

“I sure hope not,” Girardi said. “What you hope is he gets to 2,999 and then it just happens the next at-bat, that it doesn’t carry over and he’s asked about it.”

Jeter — always one with a flair for the dramatic, and one whose entire career seemed to play out like a well-written movie for baseball lovers — did it at Yankee Stadium, and on a home run.

Girardi doesn’t care how it happens, as long as it gets done quickly, for Rodriguez’s sake.

“I don’t care if it’s a bloop hit, an infield hit; just get it out of the way,” he said. “That’s kind of your hope.

Rodriguez has already started thinking about it, but it’s not at the forefront of his priorities.

“You think about it, but right now it’s about wins,” he said after Wednesday’s game. “We desperately needed these wins against a great team.”

Whether Rodriguez does it at home or on the road, during a three-hit game or one where he enters with 2,999, or on a bunt or a home run, when he does it, it will mean something.

And we’ll be watching every step of the way.

Yankees' Alex Rodriguez ties Barry Bonds for 2nd on all-time RBI list

Brendan Kutny | May 28, 2015 at 11:42 PM

OAKLAND, Calif. — **Yankees** slugger Alex Rodriguez is still intent on chasing Barry Bonds for the top spot on the all-time homers list.

But Rodriguez tied caught his buddy another way Thursday.

A-Rod's sacrifice fly in Thursday night's game against the A's at O.co Coliseum made it 3-0 Yankees, and it meant he recorded his 1,996th career RBI, tying Bonds' career mark, which is the second most ever.

The pair trail Hank Aaron, who finished with 2,297.

Rodriguez has 11 homers on the season, giving him 665 for his career, good enough for fourth on the career list. He still trails Babe Ruth (714), Aaron (755) and Bonds (762).

Bonds and Rodriguez have more in common than their steroid pasts. Rodriguez sought the help of Bonds this offseason while he worked to regain his swing after a year away due to a full-season suspension for using performance-enhancing drugs.

A-Rod ties Bonds for 2nd on RBI list

Yanks slugger: It's 'special' to catch friend at 1,996

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | 2:14 AM ET

OAKLAND -- [Alex Rodriguez](#) drove in the 1,996th run of his career on Thursday, tying Barry Bonds for second place on baseball's all-time RBI list, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

Rodriguez lifted a fifth-inning sacrifice fly to center field off Athletics starter [Kendall Graveman](#), driving home [Brett Gardner](#) with the Yankees' third run of the evening in a **5-4 loss**.

Henry Aaron is first on baseball's all-time RBI list with 2,297, according to Elias, the official statistician of Major League Baseball. Rodriguez said that, just as it was meaningful to be mentioned alongside Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig in his recent RBI chase, tying Bonds marked a memorable moment.

"You say the same thing about Gehrig and Ruth, and Barry's the same thing; he's one of the greats," Rodriguez said. "This is kind of special because he's also a friend and I know him very well."

Rodriguez spent part of this past offseason working out with Bonds in Northern California, preparing to return to the diamond after his season-long suspension for performance-enhancing drug use in 2014.

"Barry is a great guy," Rodriguez said. "He's a true professor of the game of baseball. He's one of the great minds out there right now and one of the smartest guys I've ever talked to. He loves the game, is extremely passionate about the game and it was fun for me to work with a professor like Barry, someone who loves the game so much."

Because RBIs became an official Major League statistic in 1920, Elias' tally begins at that date. Due to the uncertain nature of record keeping in the early part of the 20th century, some discrepancies may exist between the stats provided today by different historical data providers.

MLB.com utilizes different statistics than Elias. By MLB.com's count, Rodriguez is now tied with Bonds for third on the all-time RBI list behind Aaron (2,297) and Ruth (2,213).

"He's got a long way to go to catch the next guy, Hammering Hank, but he's passed a lot of guys lately," manager Joe Girardi said.



Hit and Run: A-Rod gets an asterisk on RBI record; Howard to Cardinals?

Jay Jaffe -Thu May. 28, 2015

1. Just because it sounds like a broken record doesn't mean it is

You can be forgiven for rolling your eyes at the news that Alex Rodriguez took over the all-time American League record for runs batted in on Wednesday. Not because it's A-Rod, the black sheep of baseball, or because his drug-tinged past invalidates his considerable career numbers in the eyes of some, or because RBI totals have as much to do with the caliber of one's teammates as they do with skill. No, this particular eye-roll is about a squabble over bookkeeping and what bears the "official" blessing in the eyes of Major League Baseball.

But first, who wants to watch some dingers? Here's Rodriguez's three-run shot off the Royals' Chris Young, his 11th homer of the year, good for fifth in the AL:

<p>Your browser does not support iframes.</p>

Rodriguez's homer ran his season total of RBIs to 26 and his career total to 1,995. According to the Elias Sports Bureau, the official statistician of MLB, that pushes him past Lou Gehrig (1,993) and Babe Ruth (1,992) for the all-time AL lead and the third spot in history behind only Barry Bonds (1,996) and Hank Aaron (2,297). Turn to Baseball-Reference.com's all-time leaderboard, however, and you'll see a much different story:

Not only has Rodriguez not passed Gehrig or Ruth, but he's also behind Cap Anson as well. That's because Elias only recognizes RBIs since the start of the 1920 season, when the statistic became official. However, from 1907 to '19, RBI totals were compiled "unofficially" by sportswriter Ernie Lanigan of the *New York Press* (and other publications later).

Lanigan, the nephew of *The Sporting News* founders Al Spink and Charles Spink, didn't invent the stat, which according to Alan Schwarz's fine book *The Numbers Game* first appeared in a Buffalo newspaper in 1879 and then in the *Chicago Tribune* the following year. However, outcry over the inequity of star players such as Anson and Mike "King" Kelly having differing numbers of chances to drive in runs soon led the paper to banish the stat from its box scores, and similarly led to their banishment again in 1891 after baseball statistics godfather Henry Chadwick re-introduced the stat. It was Lanigan's efforts that brought RBIs back into circulation. Finally in 1920, the two leagues began tracking them.

Fast-forward almost half a century. In the service of putting together the landmark *Macmillan Baseball Encyclopedia* (first published in 1969), statistician David Neft and a research staff of as many as 20 people combed through some 87,000 games worth of box scores and old newspaper accounts of ballgames, which usually gave play-by-play reconstructions of how each run scored.

They also went through scrapbooks of a man named John Tattersall to reconstruct scoring innings and tabulate not only pre-1920 RBIs, but also earned and unearned runs, a distinction that became official in 1912, and saves, a stat that didn't become official until 1969. Tattersall even had box scores and his own day-by-day statistical logs for individual players from the defunct American Association (1882–91) and Union Association (1884). In addition to compiling and verifying the stats, Neft and his team computerized them for the first time. Discrepancies were ironed out via a Special Baseball Records Committee involving officials from the leagues and the BBWAA (that committee has its own controversial history).

Since the publication of “Big Mac,” diligent researchers from the Society for American Baseball Research (founded in 1971) have contributed their time to uncovering other discrepancies, including the RBI totals of Ruth and Gehrig, the hit totals of Cobb and Anson, the identity of individual seasons' actual league leaders, and so on. Squabbles between MLB—which had come to influence *The Baseball Encyclopedia* to the point of preserving inaccuracies instead of correcting them—and these researchers led to the creation of a new encyclopedia, *Total Baseball*, by Pete Palmer and John Thorn. That book used the data archive of Palmer, a radar systems engineer who spent his off hours at the Raytheon Corporation compiling statistics on an IBM mainframe via punch cards. Palmer is also the inventor of On Base Plus Slugging (OPS) and other sabermetric stats; Thorn is now the Official Historian of Major League Baseball. The pair's sabermetric landmark, *The Hidden Game of Baseball*, was reissued this spring by the University of Chicago Press and is well worth picking up for anyone who is interested in the origin of OPS, OPS+, ERA+, linear weights, replacement level and other sabermetric concepts—they didn't all spring from the mind of Bill James.

Long story short: It's Palmer's data, historically vetted by expert researchers, that forms the foundation of the statistics at Baseball-Reference.com, which while clearly the greatest invention since the wheel remains unofficial in the eyes of MLB. The B-Ref data includes not only totals that have been adjusted from the "official" ones but also statistics from the first organized professional baseball league, the National Association, which ran from 1871 to '75, and which Elias and MLB do not recognize as a major league. Anson played in the NA from its inception, which is why his numbers for hits, RBIs and other totals differ greatly from what MLB recognizes, as I noted last year while Derek Jeter climbed the all-time hits leaderboard.

So, what Rodriguez did on Wednesday, while part a fascinating comeback from years of injuries and a full-season PED suspension, doesn't amount to a record-breaking feat. The best available data shows that he hasn't even passed Gehrig, though he will with his next RBI.

2. Patching for Adams

The Cardinals were dealt a difficult blow on Tuesday when Matt Adams suffered a right quadriceps strain while running the bases. The injury is so severe that Adams will require surgery on Friday, and according to general manager John Mozeliak, he will be out three to four months, a timeline that could stretch through the remainder of the regular season.

The 26-year-old Adams emerged as a middle-of-the-lineup threat in 2013–14, hitting a combined .287/.327/.474 with 32 homers and a 119 OPS+, but after a strong April (.304/.338/.493), he had tailed off drastically in May (.187/.228/.267). To date, he has a 77 OPS+ and just four homers in 153 PA. For the moment, righty-swinging platoon partner Mark Reynolds (.253/.321/.404 with three homers and a 97 OPS+) will handle first base chores, but the 31-year-old free swinger's recent track record (.209/.297/.394 with 43 homers, a 91 OPS+ and just 0.3 WAR for three teams in '13 and '14) suggests he's of more value as a long ball threat off the bench than a full-blown replacement.

Both in signing Reynolds as a free agent this winter and in replacing Adams on the roster, the team bypassed Triple A first baseman Xavier Scruggs, a 27-year-old righty who's currently hitting an uneven .212/.355/.474 with eight homers for Memphis, down from last year's .286/.370/.494 with 21 homers. Via the *Baseball America Prospect Handbook 2015*, Scruggs cut his strikeout rate from 32% in 2013 to 21% last year, improving both his conditioning and his defense, not to mention destroying most lefties in his path (.345/.404/.669 in 161 PA last year). Instead, the team called up catcher Ed Easley, a 29-year-old righty swinging a hot bat (.295/.422/.400). Easley has 40 minor league games of first base experience on his resumé, but just five since the start of the '10 season, and none since '12.

At 31–16, with the best record in the league and a 5 1/2-game cushion in the NL Central, the Cardinals have time to sort this out from within the organization, but it wouldn't be a surprise if they make a trade as the July 31 deadline approaches. One name that's been mentioned in connection with the vacancy is that of Ryan Howard, a St. Louis native who is enjoying a minor revival in Philadelphia.

Thanks to a more aggressive approach at the plate when it comes to attacking the first pitch, the 35-year-old Howard already has 10 homers, and even with a dreadful 49/8 strikeout-to-walk ratio, his .256/.298/.519 line is good for a 122 OPS+, his best since 2011, the season that ended with him blowing out his left Achilles tendon. In the three years since, Howard has hit just .233/.309/.412 for a 98 OPS+ and -1.6 WAR while missing roughly a year's worth of games due to injuries.

Even with his restored power, Howard has been right around replacement level (0.1 WAR), but there are numerous obstacles to a trade. He's making \$25 million this year and is owed \$25 million for next year, plus a steep \$10 million buyout for 2017. While the Phillies are believed to be willing to eat the majority of the \$50 million or so remaining, it's unlikely that the Cardinals want to pay the rest of it to a player who makes more sense as some AL team's platoon designated hitter.

What's more, Howard has trade veto rights via the 10-and-5 rule (10 years in the majors, the last five with one team), and an ugly, heartbreaking drama involving the mismanagement of his finances by his Missouri-based family may make a return to St. Louis a less-than-desirable proposition. Howard and his parents and siblings—who allegedly conspired to defraud him—settled out of court last year, but that's not to say the wounds have healed. One can only wonder what the impact of that saga has had on mental state and in turn, his on-field performance.

All of that is to say: Don't hold your breath on the Cardinals and Phillies making such a move.

Yankees hold breath over Alex Rodriguez's tumble

Brendan Kutty | May 29, 2015 at 2:24 AM

OAKLAND, Calif. — There wasn't much smiling in the **Yankees'** clubhouse after they let the A's surge from behind late and beat them, 5-3, at O.co Coliseum.

Except, that is, for when they were talking about Alex Rodriguez's ugly, but effective slide home that gave the Yankees a 2-0 lead in the fourth inning.

"That was not pretty," Rodriguez said.

"I don't want to see him do that too many times," manager Joe Girardi said.

After hitting a leadoff single and moving to second on Mark Teixeira's walk, Rodriguez tried scoring from there on Brian McCann's single to center.

Billy Burns' throw nearly met Rodriguez at the plate, but catcher Josh Phegley missed the tag, and Rodriguez tumbled instead of sliding, reaching back for the plate.

Umpire Ed Hickox initially called Rodriguez out, but A-Rod was adamant that he touched the plate.

The Yankees challenged the call and they won.

Rodriguez said he wasn't actually sure he gotten the plate, but he thought he had. But baseball operation assistant Brett Weber told Girardi that he had seen several camera angles that appeared to show Rodriguez safe, so Girardi called for the replay challenge.

A-Rod safe at home on overturned call

Yankees DH: 'That looked like Shaquille O'Neal coming out of a pick'

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | 2:34 AM ET

OAKLAND -- Yankees designated hitter Alex Rodriguez grazed home plate with his left hand, evading a tag from Athletics catcher Josh Phegley to score from second base on a single in a video-reviewed play Thursday night at the Coliseum.

Rodriguez's athletic play delivered the Yankees' second run in a **5-4 loss** to the A's. A review of two minutes, 45 seconds overturned the initial call by home-plate umpire Ed Hickox, as Rodriguez's left hand was shown to have touched the plate.

"That was not pretty. That looked like Shaquille O'Neal coming out of a pick," Rodriguez said. "I'm glad they got it right."

Rodriguez was waved home on Brian McCann's fourth-inning single to center field. The throw home beat Rodriguez, who dodged Phegley's swipe tag and tumbled over the plate.

Hickox believed that Rodriguez missed the plate and called him out when Phegley applied the tag, but Rodriguez immediately gestured to manager Joe Girardi that he had been safe and the Yankees challenged the call.

"I was confident," Rodriguez said. "When Joe asked me, I said, 'I think so, but I'm not 100 percent.' I thought I felt it with my fingers."

Girardi said that his thoughts watching the play were to hope that Rodriguez would be safe, and also that he would get up without an injury.

"I don't want to see him doing that too many times," Girardi said.

Tanaka likely to start next week

By GEORGE A. KING III

OAKLAND, Calif. — Unless Masahiro Tanaka comes up with a health issue he didn't tell the Yankees about on Wednesday and Thursday, the former ace will start against the Mariners on Tuesday or Wednesday in Seattle.

"He is flying out here tonight," Joe Girardi said of Tanaka joining the Yankees, who fell 5-4 to the putrid A's in the opener of a four-game series at Oco Coliseum on Thursday night. "We will evaluate him [Friday]. [Thursday] he felt fine. We will make sure he is OK. We will have a heart-to-heart talk with him, how he feels about where he is at, and hopefully he can make a start in Seattle."

Having worked three innings for Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre on Wednesday in a second rehab outing, Monday would be Tanaka's next scheduled outing. However, that's Michael Pineda's turn to pitch, and he will get the ball against his former teammate Felix Hernandez.

"It probably won't be Monday," Girardi said of Tanaka's reentry into the rotation. He hasn't faced big league hitters since April 23 because of tendinitis in his right wrist and a minor strain of his right forearm.

Girardi wasn't prepared to say whose turn Tanaka will take, but he did say going to a six-man rotation isn't an option.

"Let's see what happens because there are a lot of things that can happen between now and Tuesday or Wednesday," Girardi said.

Because CC Sabathia started Thursday night against the A's, his next turn would be Tuesday, and Chris Capuano, who starts Friday night, is slated to work Wednesday.

Of the two lefties, Capuano has a better chance of being skipped if there is no physical issue with Sabathia, who started Thursday's action with a 2-6 record and a hefty 5.47 ERA in nine starts. In two starts since coming off the disabled list, Capuano is 0-2 with a 7.36 ERA and has logged a combined 7 1/3 in-

nings.

The Yankees gave Capuano \$5 million to be a starter, but an extended stay on the DL to start the season because of a quadriceps injury and two poor outings have put his spot in the rotation in jeopardy.

If Tanaka pitches Tuesday or Wednesday, he wouldn't be bumping Adam Warren from the rotation. Warren, who is 1-2 with a 2.75 ERA in his past three starts, goes Sunday against the A's and isn't slated to face the Mariners.

"Lately, he has been pitching as well as anybody we have in the rotation," Girardi said of Warren, who made 69 relief appearances and no starts last season.

Girardi said reports of Tanaka's fastball being in the mid-80s Wednesday against Pawtucket weren't accurate.

"Those were splits that didn't have a lot of movement," Girardi said. "His fastball averaged 91.0 [mph]. His fastball in his last major league start averaged 90.9. He is throwing harder now."

Yankees promote Severino

By GEORGE A. KING III

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Yankees' top pitching prospect has been moved from Double-A to Triple-A and might not be done climbing the ladder.

"I have no idea," general manager Brian Cashman said Thursday when asked if Luis Severino, promoted from Trenton to Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, could reach the big leagues this season. "The game tells you."

Severino, 21, was 2-2 with a 3.32 ERA in eight starts for Trenton. In 38 innings the 6-foot, 195-pound right-hander from the Dominican Republic, allowed 32 hits, whiffed 48 and walked 10. Opposing hitters batted .227.

"He earned the right to move up," Cashman said of Severino, who was on the seven-day DL with a cut on his right middle finger.

Severino, who appeared

YANKEES NOTES

in two big-league spring training games, was rated the 23rd-best prospect by MLB and 35th by Baseball America before the season.

In four minor league seasons Severino is 16-11 with a 2.39 ERA. He has fanned 273 and walked 64 in 259 1/3 innings in which he has allowed 208 hits.

► **Slade Heathcott** (tight right quadriceps) was scratched from the lineup and replaced by **Chris Young** in center. Young went 0-for-3 with a walk.

► Manager **Joe Girardi** said right-handed reliever **Chris Martin** will make an appearance for SWB on Saturday. Martin has been on the DL since May 9 because

of right elbow tendinitis.

Girardi also said **Ivan Nova** threw 60 pitches Thursday and is scheduled for one more extended spring training outing.

► **Jacoby Ellsbury** continues to receive treatment for his injured right knee, and Girardi said he doesn't know when the center fielder/leadoff hitter will begin baseball activities.

"It's not a surgical thing. We don't believe it's a 60-day DL thing. We believe it's probably more than 15 [days]. It really depends on how he responds," Girardi said of Ellsbury who is on the 15-day DL and hasn't played since May 19.

► With 2,982 hits, **Alex Rodriguez** needs 18 hits to become the 29th player in history with 3,000.

— Additional reporting by Dan Martin

BASEBALL

Tanaka time soon

He's expected to face M's Tuesday or Wednesday

BY ERIK BOLAND
erik.boland@newsday.com

OAKLAND, Calif. — If all goes according to plan, Masahiro Tanaka will return to the Yankees' rotation Tuesday or Wednesday vs. the Mariners.

"In a perfect world, he'll start in Seattle," Joe Girardi said yesterday before his team started a four-game series against the A's at O.co Coliseum.

Girardi said Tanaka was scheduled to join the club late last night. The Yankees will evaluate him today and make a determination about Seattle.

"Today he felt fine," Girardi said. "We'll make sure he's OK and have a heart-to-heart with him about how he feels."

There is little reason to think Tanaka won't make a start in Seattle, where he would be on a pitch count of 80 to 85.

Tanaka, on the disabled list since April 29 with a right forearm strain and right wrist tendinitis, made his second rehab start Wednesday in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, for Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre. He was not sharp, throwing 62 pitches and allowing three runs, four hits and two walks with four strikeouts while struggling with a mound that needed repair work.

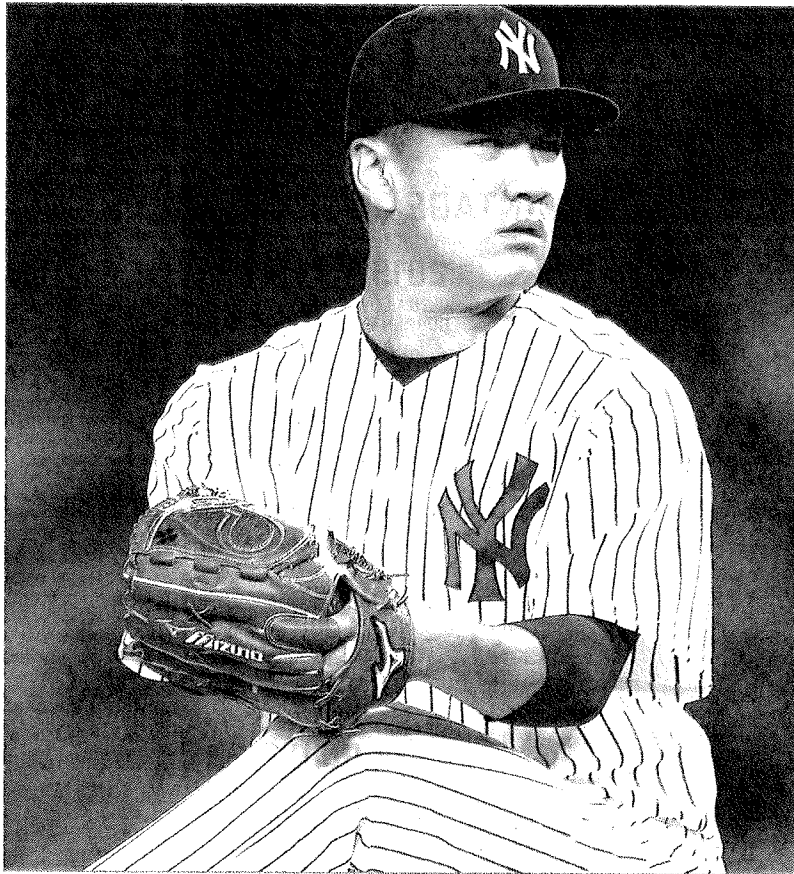
But Girardi said Tanaka's line isn't the focus. "The big thing for us," he said, "is he came out healthy."

Tanaka, 2-1 with a 3.22 ERA in four starts before getting hurt, said Wednesday what he's said throughout the rehab process: His arm feels "absolutely fine."

And, Girardi added, there's this inescapable fact: a big-league pitcher appearing in a minor-league game simply can't duplicate the adrenaline rush of the majors.

"When you send a big-league pitcher, someone who's had a ton of success in Japan and had success last year, to a Triple-A game, you don't always see the same guy that you would see at the big-league level, is the bottom line," Girardi said.

Besides, Girardi said, all the reports he heard about the out-



Masahiro Tanaka appears healthy and likely will be on a pitch count of 80 to 85 against Seattle.

YANKS RESULT
Read about last night's late Yanks-A's game at newsday.com/yankees

Tonight
Yankees at Oakland
TV: YES, 10:05 p.m.
Radio: WFAN (660, 101.9)

ing suggested a pitcher getting healthier. The manager said Tanaka's fastball averaged 91.0 mph and that he peaked at 93.

"His fastball his last big-league start [April 23 in Detroit] was 90.9," Girardi added.

While pitchers at times aren't completely open about how they're feeling — Chase Whitley, for example, hid pain in his right elbow for several starts before finally saying something and then undergoing Tommy

John surgery — Girardi said he has no reason to think Tanaka simply is telling the Yankees what they want to hear.

"He had no issues yesterday," Girardi said. "He said he felt good today, so you have to believe him. And I think if he wasn't throwing 93 and you saw that his slider wasn't sharp, you would think, 'OK, maybe he's not being honest with us.' But with those things, I think you have to believe him."

Girardi said going to a six-man rotation isn't an option and that a decision hasn't been made on who will come out of the rotation. Chris Capuano could be the one bumped for Tanaka's return. He'll start tonight and would be scheduled to pitch Wednesday.

Girardi said Tanaka won't pitch Monday, when Michael Pineda is slated to start. CC Sabathia's fifth day lines up as Tuesday. Even if Sabathia gets an extra day, that would leave Tanaka for Tuesday and Sabathia for Wednesday.

"Let's just see," Girardi said of who will be left out when Tanaka is reinserted into the rotation. "There's a lot of things that can happen between now and Tuesday or Wednesday."

YANKS NOTEBOOK

Ellsbury will need time on DL

BY ERIK BOLAND
erik.boland@newsday.com

OAKLAND, Calif. — Jacoby Ellsbury has been on the DL for just over a week with a right knee sprain and still hasn't progressed beyond daily treatment on the knee.

"There have been no baseball activities," Joe Girardi said last night, adding that the lack of activity has more to do with the way Ellsbury plays. "It really just depends how he responds [to treatment]," he said. "And with the type of player he is, maybe it takes a few days longer than if it was a slow guy that doesn't rely on his legs."

Ellsbury, who went to the DL May 20, leads Yankees regulars in average (.324), on-base percentage (.412) and stolen bases (14). "I didn't really have a ton of expectations," Girardi said of a timetable. "Like I said, it's not a surgical thing. We don't believe it's a 60-day DL thing. We believe it's probably more than 15."

■ **Heathcott scratched**

Rookie Slade Heathcott was in last night's original lineup, in centerfield and batting eighth, but was a late scratch because of a right quadriceps issue. "He's been dealing with it about the last four, five days," Girardi said. "He was a little sore today so [I pulled him]."

■ **Power surge**

The Yankees entered yesterday with 60 homers, second-most in the AL, in 47 games. They did not hit their 60th homer last season until their 75th game, on June 23.

■ **Extra bases**

Chris Martin (elbow tendinitis) is expected to make a rehab appearance with Scranton/Wilkes-Barre tomorrow, Girardi said. . . . Ivan Nova (Tommy John surgery) threw 62 pitches yesterday in an extended spring training game. Girardi said Nova will throw one more extended spring training game and, if there are no setbacks, then could be sent on a rehab assignment.

BASEBALL

Tanaka May Soon Return to Majors

By BILLY WITZ

OAKLAND, Calif. — If Masahiro Tanaka, with his fragile right elbow ligament, seems to be a pitch-by-pitch proposition for the Yankees, then it is not surprising that his return is a halting, step-by-step process as well.

So after Tanaka reported no problems in his rehab start Wednesday for Class AAA Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, the Yankees were flying him here Thursday night for a meeting with Manager Joe Girardi on Friday. If all goes well, Tanaka will join the rotation either Tuesday or Wednesday in Seattle.

"We'll have a heart-to-heart talk with him to feel where he's at, and hopefully he can make a start in Seattle," Girardi said before the Yankees opened a four-game series against the Athletics, who have the worst record in the American League.

Girardi did not say whether the tête-à-tête would involve deep eye contact and probing questions, or whether it might take place on a psychoanalyst's couch, but it probably says much about the Yankees' complicated relationship with Tanaka — the language barrier and the \$155 million investment — that their conversation could not take place

over the phone.

Whatever Girardi asks Tanaka, it will get back to a singular point: How do you feel?

"He had no issues yesterday," Girardi said. "He said he felt good today, so you've got to believe him. And if he wasn't throwing 93 and you saw things and his slider wasn't sharp, you would think, 'O.K., maybe he's not being honest.' But with those things, I think you've got to believe him."

The matter of how much trust the Yankees put in the words of Tanaka, who communicates with the help of a translator, takes on particular resonance after the man who replaced Tanaka in the rotation — Chase Whitley — did not disclose to Girardi or trainers any discomfort in his right elbow until his ligament tore. He is now recovering from Tommy John surgery.

"There's open communication, but it's the nature of the game and the competitiveness that really, to me, helps players be successful," Girardi said. "A lot of times they think, 'Eh, I'm a little sore.'"

Girardi added: "I did it all the time. I remember playing with a broken ankle for two weeks before I knew it was broke. It's just what players do. I think a player doesn't really realize it until it

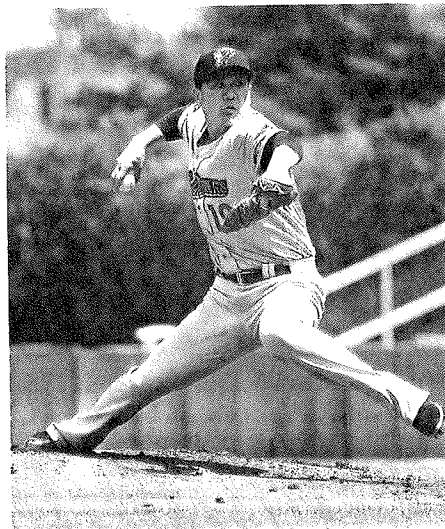
really starts to affect their performance. Chase Whitley's no different than most players. Tanaka's probably no different than most players. It's just us trying to decipher and look for signs."

Girardi conceded that the language barrier presents challenges because the tone of what Tanaka says may not be conveyed through a translator. Some might have seen alarming signs in Tanaka's outing Wednesday, when he gave up four hits, including a home run, and walked four in three innings. He also was unhappy with the condition of the mound.

But Girardi said it is tricky to read much into the performance of an established pitcher like Tanaka working against hitters he does not know well. He added that Tanaka's average velocity of 91 miles per hour was virtually the same as it was in his final start, a 2-1 victory over Detroit on April 23.

What is not open for interpretation is that since July 9 of last season, nearly 11 months ago, the Yankees have gotten just six starts from Tanaka, who went on the disabled list April 27.

For a team looking to distinguish itself among the middling inhabitants of American League East, a pitcher of Tanaka's stand-



CHARLES KRUPA/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Masahiro Tanaka made a rehabilitation start with Class AAA Scranton/Wilkes-Barre on Wednesday in Pawtucket, R.I.

ing would be a nice card to play with some regularity.

When Tanaka does return, someone will depart from the starting rotation. That means

that Chris Capuano, who is due to start Friday, and Adam Warren, who will pitch Sunday, may have one last chance to state their cases.

Concerns about pitchers' openness about their health.

Warren has been strong in his last three starts, pitching into the seventh inning in each one and allowing six earned runs over that stretch. But Warren would fortify the bullpen, having excelled in the seventh-inning role the last two seasons.

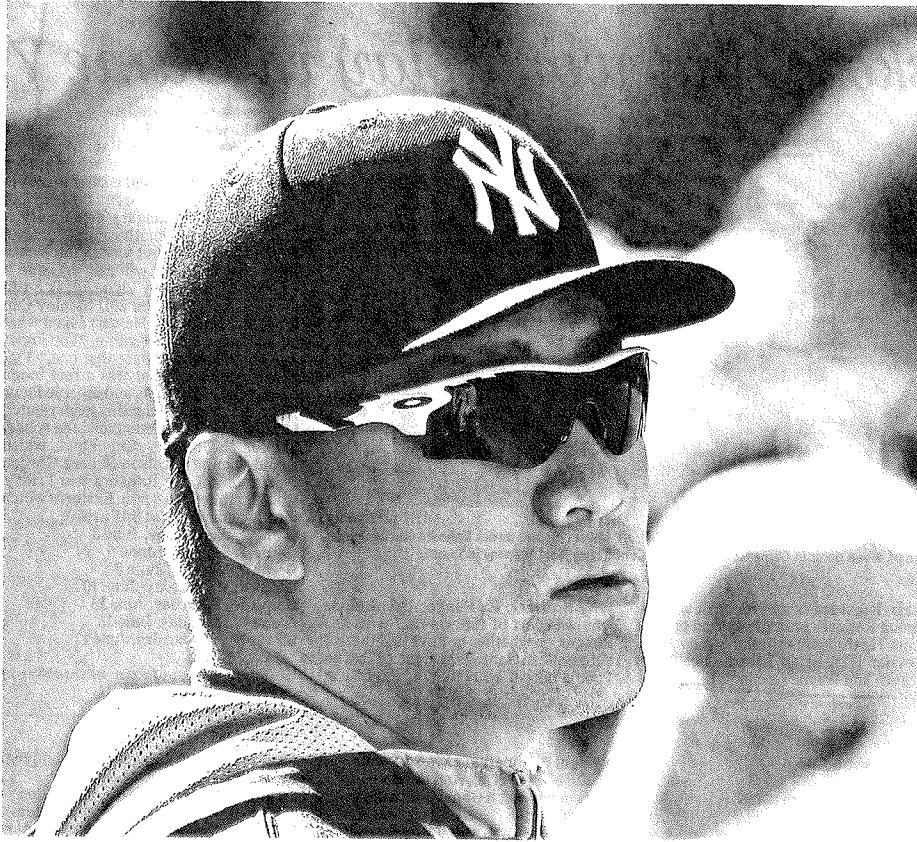
Capuano is 0-2 with a 7.36 earned run average in his two starts since coming off the disabled list.

Tanaka is not the only pitcher on the mend. Ivan Nova, who is recovering from Tommy John surgery, threw more than 60 pitches in an extended spring league game in Tampa, Fla. Chris Martin, who has been on the disabled list since May 9 with soreness in his forearm, is expected to throw in a rehabilitation game Saturday.

But Tanaka is the one who could make the biggest difference for the Yankees.

INSIDE PITCH

JACOBY ELLSBURY (strained knee) has not yet resumed baseball activities after being placed on the disabled list May 20. JOE GIRARDI said he expected Ellsbury to be out for at least a month.



Masahiro Tanaka of the Yankees looks on from the dugout in the ninth inning against the Texas Rangers on May 23 at Yankee Stadium. Tanaka is expected to start in Seattle either Tuesday or Wednesday. GETTY IMAGES

Tanaka expected to return next week

Yankees' ace could make start in Seattle

CHAD JENNINGS
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OAKLAND, Calif. — Masahiro Tanaka's last rehab start was not particularly long or particularly good, but the Yankees have decided it was enough to rejoin the big league rotation.

Having missed exactly a month with a forearm strain and wrist tendonitis, Tanaka flew to the West Coast on Thursday and — barring any unexpected setbacks or concerns — he will start for the Yankees either Tuesday or Wednesday in Seattle.

"You want him to feel good, number one," manager Joe Girardi said. "Number two, you want him to feel comfortable with his stuff, that he feels that he's ready to go. You don't want someone going out there if they don't quite feel that they're ready to go. In a perfect world, he would start somewhere in Seattle."

In the previous week, Tanaka made two Triple-A rehab starts. His first spanned three scoreless innings. His second, on Wednesday, lasted three innings with three runs on four hits. He

walked two, struck out four and allowing a home run to young Red Sox center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr.

Girardi said Tanaka's fastball topped out at 93 and averaged 91 mph, basically the exact same as in his last major league start.

"The big thing is we have to know how he feels," Girardi said. "... He had no issues yesterday. He said he felt good today. So you've got to believe him. And I think if he wasn't throwing 93, and you saw things where his slider wasn't sharp, you'd think: OK, maybe he's not being honest with us. But with those things, I think you have to believe him."

The Yankees have been especially cautious with Tanaka ever since discovering a slight tear in his elbow ligament in the middle of last season. He progressed slowly through spring training, was given extra rest early this season, and he went on the disabled list after an MRI revealed a very minor strain in his forearm on April 28.

Just two weeks ago, the Yankees saw Chase Whitley — the young starter who replaced Tanaka in the rotation — leave a game in the second inning and finally admitted to having felt pain in his elbow for weeks. Whitley, it turned out, required Tommy John surgery, the same procedure the Yankees are trying to avoid with

Tanaka.

They're choosing to trust Tanaka when he says he feels strong and healthy.

"I think there's open communication," Girardi said. "But it's the nature of the game and the competitiveness that helps players be successful that a lot of times they think, 'I'm just a little sore.'"

"I did it all the time. I remember playing with a broken ankle for two weeks before I knew it was broke. It's just, it's part of what players do. I think a player doesn't really realize it until it really starts to affect their performance. Chase Whitley's no different than most players, and Tanaka's probably no different than most players. It's just, us trying to decipher and look for signs."

Yankee clippings: Reliever Chris Martin is scheduled to start a Triple-A rehab assignment Saturday. He's out with elbow tendonitis. ... Ivan Nova, working his way back from Tommy John surgery, pitched in extended spring training Thursday. He'll pitch in extended spring one more time before beginning a rehab assignment.



Yankees' Masahiro Tanaka likely to start Tuesday or Wednesday

Molly Geary - Thu May. 28, 2015

New York Yankees pitcher Masahiro Tanaka will start either next Tuesday or Wednesday as long as he feels well, manager Joe Girardi told reporters on Thursday.

Tanaka has not pitched at the MLB level since April 23. The Yankees placed him on the 15-day disabled list on April 28 with tendonitis in his right wrist and a right forearm strain.

The 26-year-old has made two rehab starts at Triple A Scranton Wilkes-Barr, giving up three earned runs in six innings.

Girardi said Tanaka is flying out west on Thursday night and will have a pitch count of 80 in his first start back with the team.

The Yankees are beginning a four-game series in Oakland on Thursday before playing the Mariners in Seattle starting on Monday.

New York is 25–22 on the season.



Masahiro Tanaka Expected To Start For Yankees Next Week In Seattle

Ace Right-Hander Reports No Problems The Day After A 62-Pitch Rehab Start

May 28, 2015 9:15 PM

NEW YORK (CBSNewYork) — All right, let's try this again.

Having made strides in his recovery from an arm problem, ace Masahiro Tanaka appears to be on pace to start for the Yankees against the Mariners in Seattle on either Tuesday or Wednesday, WFAN's Sweeny Murti reported Thursday night.

Pitching in a rehab start for Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre on Wednesday, Tanaka, who has been out since April 23 with right forearm soreness and wrist tendinitis, allowed three earned runs and four hits over three innings against Pawtucket. Despite struggling, the Japanese right-hander got through the 62-pitch outing without any physical setbacks.

"My arm is absolutely fine," Tanaka told the New York Post through an interpreter. "It's just that I was missing some spots today. You always have the good and the bad. You have to fight through the bad times and try to go about your business."

Yankees manager Joe Girardi told reporters that Tanaka reported feeling fine on Thursday and was en route to Oakland. The plan is for pitcher and manager to have a discussion and if Girardi likes what he hears he will let Tanaka start during the team's next series in Seattle.

If Tanaka is given the green light, the Yankees will then decide who comes out of the rotation, Murti reported.

Tanaka, who has been pitching all season with a partially torn ulnar-collateral ligament in his right elbow, an injury that cost him seven weeks of the 2014 season, is 2-1 with a 3.22 ERA in four starts this year for the Yankees.

Despite a recent free fall in which they lost 10 of 11, the Yankees (25-22) are back in first place in the AL East, thanks to a three-game sweep of defending AL champion Kansas City earlier this week.



Masahiro Tanaka expected to start next week for Yankees

Wallace Matthews, ESPNNewYork.com – 5.29.15

OAKLAND, Calif. -- After an absence of nearly five weeks, Masahiro Tanaka was set to rejoin the New York Yankees in Oakland on Thursday night and is likely to make a start next week when the Yankees travel to Seattle for a three-game series against the Mariners, according to manager Joe Girardi.

Tanaka, who last pitched in the major leagues on April 23 and has been on the disabled list since April 29 with tendinitis in his right wrist and a strain of the right forearm, is likely to start either Tuesday or Wednesday, Girardi said.

Masahiro Tanaka will be on a pitch count in his first start back of between 80 to 90 pitches, and will be given an extra day between starts as often as possible. *Leon Halip/Getty Images)*

"We'll have a heart-to-heart talk with him, how he feels about where he's at," Girardi said. "You don't want someone going out there if they don't quite feel that they're ready to go. In a perfect world, he would start somewhere in Seattle."

Tanaka threw his second rehab start for the Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders on Wednesday, allowing three earned runs on four hits, including a home run, in three innings against the Boston Red Sox affiliate in Pawtucket.

"His slider was really good, he didn't throw a ton of splits," Girardi said of Tanaka's outing. "He made a few mistakes with a fastball and a split. But the big thing for us is that he came out healthy."

Girardi attributed Tanaka's struggles Wednesday to unfamiliarity with the minor league lineup he was facing.

"When you send a big-league pitcher, someone who has had a ton of success in Japan and had success here last year, to a Triple-A game, you don't always see the same guy that you would see at the big-league level," he said. "They don't prepare the same exactly because they don't have all the scouting reports and the video tape. The big thing is we have to know how he feels."

Girardi said that according to reports he had gotten, Tanaka came out of Wednesday's outing feeling fine. Tanaka reported pain in his wrist after throwing a bullpen session four days after his last start. A subsequent MRI revealed tendinitis and the forearm strain, which the Yankees have said was asymptomatic.

But it is obvious the Yankees are treading lightly with Tanaka, the \$155 million Japanese standout whose rookie season in MLB was cut short last July when he suffered a partially torn ulnar collateral ligament during a start against the Indians in Cleveland.

The Yankees opted not to pursue the usual course of action with such an injury -- Tommy John surgery -- in favor of a non-surgical protocol that kept him off the mound until the last week of the season.

Girardi said Tanaka -- who threw 62 pitches on Wednesday -- would be on a pitch count in his first start back of between 80 to 90 pitches, and he will be given an extra day between starts as often as possible.

The manager also acknowledged that players have a tendency to downplay injuries and overstate their fitness out of a competitive desire to be out on the field. Still, he said there was little Tanaka could say in his meeting with the Yankees that was likely to derail plans to send him back out to the mound next week.

"He said he felt good today, so you've got to believe him," Girardi said. "And I think if he wasn't throwing 93, and you saw things where his slider wasn't sharp, you'd think: OK, maybe he's not being honest with us. But with those things, I think you have to believe him."

Tanaka was 2-1 with a 3.22 ERA at the time of his injury, and a successful return to the mound could provide the Yankees rotation a lift after their recent skid of 10 losses in 11 games before their three-game sweep of the Kansas City Royals at home.

"It will be nice to have him back," Girardi said. "The one thing that you hope during the course of the season is that you have your players most of the time. We've lost two starters and a reliever, but knock on wood, we're getting healthier."

If Tanaka is reinstated to the roster, the Yankees will have to demote a starter; the likeliest candidates are Adam Warren, who has performed well as a starter his season but pitched effectively out of the bullpen last season, or Chris Capuano, who is 0-2 with a 7.36 ERA in two starts since returning from a quad strain suffered in spring training that cost him the first six weeks of the season.

Yankees Expecting to Activate Masahiro Tanaka

‘In a perfect world, he would start somewhere in Seattle,’ says Girardi

Daniel Barbarisi - May 28, 2015 8:07 p.m. ET

OAKLAND, Calif.—The Yankees are getting their ace back.

After a month on the shelf dealing with forearm and wrist problems, Masahiro Tanaka is expected to be activated in time to make his next start, most likely against the Seattle Mariners on Tuesday or Wednesday, manager Joe Girardi said.

“In a perfect world, he would start somewhere in Seattle,” Girardi said Thursday.

Tanaka flew to the West Coast on Thursday night after a Wednesday rehab start for the Yankees’ Triple-A Scranton affiliate. Unless something goes awry in the coming days, he will be activated and return to the rotation.

Tanaka’s health has been the most uncertain factor surrounding these Yankees. Last season, he suffered a partial tear of the ulnar collateral ligament in his pitching elbow, and chose to rehabilitate and rest it rather than undergo Tommy John surgery to repair it. As a result, Tanaka is a slightly different pitcher this year—throwing more sinking fastballs and fewer hard, straight fastballs—and the Yankees are treating him with the utmost care.

When Tanaka complained of discomfort in his wrist several late last month, he underwent scans of the entire arm area. They detected a strain in the forearm as well. Out of an abundance of caution, the Yankees shut him down.

Tanaka, 26, was one of the best pitchers in baseball before the elbow injury took him out of action in July 2014, and he has, at times, shown flashes of that brilliance this season. But just as often, he has imploded.

His first two starts of the season were ugly, his next two excellent, leaving him with a decent 3.22 ERA. But he is letting fewer than one batter reach base per inning, and he appears to be getting stronger as the season goes on. His velocity was a concern during spring training, but Girardi made a point of noting that Tanaka has been throwing just as hard, if not harder, during his rehab assignment than at any point during the season.

“His fastball, if you want to know, averaged ninety-one point zero,” Girardi said, emphasizing each syllable. “His fastball in his last big-league start, since people love this stuff, averaged ninety point nine. He hit 93 and averaged 91. So he’s throwing harder.”

Even if he is strong, he still lacks stamina. Tanaka threw just over 60 pitches in his last rehab start, so he will be held to a low pitch count when he return—likely around 80 pitches.

Tanaka has an ERA of 4.50 and six strikeouts in six innings of work in his two rehab starts with the Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders. Photo: Charles Krupa/Associated Press

Tanaka represents a significant upgrade over the likeliest candidate to be replaced, lefty Chris Capuano, who has a 7.36 ERA in two starts since coming off the disabled list himself. Girardi could also send Adam Warren, a successful reliever the past two seasons, back to the bullpen, but Warren has pitched so well in his past three outings that it would be hard to jettison him now.

“Lately [Warren’s] been pitching as well as anyone we’ve got in the rotation,” Girardi said.

More reinforcements, and more decisions, are coming. Starting pitcher Ivan Nova’s return is also looming, while reliever Chris Martin is on track to be activated soon.

“Knock on wood, we’re getting healthier,” Girardi said. “We’ve just got to keep the guys here healthy.”

That is the thorny issue with Tanaka: Whenever he complains of any type of pain above and beyond normal soreness, the Yankees are likely call an army of doctors and encase him in Bubble Wrap until any hint of a problem is gone. That may protect him in the long term—the Yankees made a \$175 million investment to put Tanaka in pinstripes—but it also limits his effectiveness if he can’t be counted on to make roughly 30 starts a season.

For now, the Yankees are happy to have Tanaka back, and who can blame them? They should enjoy it while it lasts. With the Yankees protecting him to the fullest, it will always be a matter of time until the next problem comes.

Yankees narrow down Masahiro Tanaka's potential return

Brendan Kutty | May 28, 2015 at 8:34 PM, updated May 28, 2015 at 9:04 PM

OAKLAND, Calif. — Yankees manager Joe Girardi said it's likely **Masahiro Tanaka will return from the disabled list** and start in Seattle either Tuesday or Wednesday.

Here's all we know about the Tanaka as of Thursday:

1.) Decision time: Tanaka was scheduled to fly into Oakland Thursday night. On Friday, Girardi said, he'll speak with Tanaka and they'll all decide whether Tanaka will come off the 15-day DL (strained right forearm, right wrist tendonitis). If Girardi likes what he hears from Tanaka, they'll decide which game he starts next week against the Mariners.

2.) Tanaka says he's healthy: That's what Girardi said, anyway. Tanaka said he felt fine after **Wednesday's rehabilitation start at Triple-A in Pawtucket**, the Red Sox's affiliate, and that he didn't report any pain Thursday.

3.) 80: That's how many pitches Tanaka would likely throw in his next start, Girardi said.

4.) Another decision: Girardi will have to decide who comes out of the rotation when Tanaka jumps back in. But when asked whether Chris Capuano or Adam Warren would get the boot, Girardi said he didn't know.

"There's a lot of things that could happen between now and Tuesday and Wednesday," Girardi said.

But he didn't deny that Warren's recent impressive performances might make it harder to bounce him from the rotation.

"Lately he's been pitching as well as anybody we've got in the rotation," Girardi said. "So absolutely."

Tanaka could start for Yankees next week

Following second rehab outing, righty meeting club in California, might get call in Seattle

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | May 28th, 2015

OAKLAND -- Masahiro Tanaka's next start could come at the big league level, Yankees manager Joe Girardi said on Thursday.

Tanaka is en route to meet the club following his second Minor League rehabilitation start on Wednesday at Pawtucket for Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, and the right-hander could be slotted to start on Tuesday or Wednesday against the Mariners in Seattle.

"He's flying here tonight. We'll evaluate him tomorrow," Girardi said. "Today he felt fine; we'll make sure he's OK. We'll have a heart-to-heart talk with him, how he feels about where he's at. Hopefully he can make a start in Seattle."

Tanaka, 26, has been on the disabled list since April 27 with tendinitis in his right wrist and a strained forearm. He threw 62 pitches in Wednesday's start, permitting three earned runs and four hits over three innings, and he reported no physical issues.

Girardi said that the Yankees' reports indicated that Tanaka's slider was good, and that he did not throw many splitters and made some mistakes with his fastball and split against Pawtucket. Girardi said that Tanaka could be expected to throw about 80 pitches against the Mariners.

"You want him to feel good, No. 1," Girardi said. "No. 2, you want him to feel comfortable with his stuff, that he feels that he's ready to go. You don't want someone going out there if they don't quite feel that they're ready to go. In a perfect world, he would start somewhere in Seattle."

In other injury updates, Girardi said that right-hander [Chris Martin](#) (right elbow tendinitis) threw in the bullpen on Wednesday and will join Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre on Saturday for a rehab game.

Right-hander [Ivan Nova](#) (Tommy John surgery) threw in an extended spring training game on Thursday in Tampa, Fla., and Girardi said that Nova will probably have one more extended spring outing before beginning a rehab assignment.

"Knock on wood, we're getting healthier," Girardi said. "We just have to keep the guys here healthy."

Yankees great Andy Pettitte working on CC Sabathia's confidence

Brendan Kutry | May 28, 2015 at 8:55 AM, updated May 28, 2015 at 9:24 AM

OAKLAND, Calif. — The impact Andy Pettitte has had on CC Sabathia's pitching style the last few years is no secret. As his fastball velocity plummeted, Sabathia even tried to emulate the cut fastball that Pettitte used to overcome the late-career cooling of his own heater.

But lately, Pettitte has tried to do less work on Sabathia's form and more with his confidence, the retired five-time World Series champion told NJ Advance Media recently.

"More than anything," Pettitte said, "I've been talking to him about being positive."

That's understandable. It's been a rough season for Sabathia, who will square off against the A's Kendall Graveman at the O.co Coliseum **Thursday night**.

Despite his ugly 5.47 ERA, Sabathia's performance has resembled an EKG reading over his nine starts.

At times, he's mirrored Pettitte, hitting spots with enough movement on his pitches to strike out hitters even with a fastball topping out in the low 90-mph range. But just as often, Sabathia's control has wavered, and he's left the ball over the plate for hitters to mash.

Sabathia hasn't been happy with himself, and he voiced his frustration after falling to 0-5 May 6. Though manager Joe Girardi told reporters he believed Sabathia had pitched well enough to deserve a win, Sabathia disagreed at the time. "I'm just good enough to lose right now," he said.

But perhaps that moment of catharsis relieved Sabathia, who looked much improved in his next two starts, winning both. The latter appearance was the kind of seven-inning, **one-run gem against the reigning American League champion Royals** that the **Yankees** had allowed themselves to wish from Sabathia at the start of the season.

Then, as quickly things appeared to turn around for Sabathia, **they fell apart**. On May 23, Sabathia turned in his worst start since 2009, lasting just 2 1/3 innings while coughing up six runs on seven hits and a walk.

After taking the loss, his sixth, Sabathia spoke about his command once again being off.

Pettitte said it's just a matter of keeping the right mindset for the former Cy Young winner.

"I've been trying to encourage him, to say, 'Buddy, sometimes the numbers don't quite show how good you are and sometimes you can talk yourself into a little bit a rut,'" Pettitte said.

Pettitte added, "I know this is a tough stretch, but he's got too many weapons to struggle. I think over the course of a season, if he just sticks with it and mentally stays where he needs to be, then he'll get out of this."

CC regrets pitches to Burns, Lawrie

Given three-run cushion, Yankees lefty's struggles at Coliseum continue

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | 3:06 AM ET

OAKLAND -- When CC Sabathia walked off the mound at the end of the third inning, having rung up back-to-back strikeouts to extricate himself from a bases-loaded, one-out jam, the Yankees left-hander wanted to believe that it would be a turning point.

It was an impressive display, but it wound up representing another tease as Sabathia was tagged with his seventh loss of the season, handed the decision on the wrong end of the **Yankees' 5-4 loss** to the A's at the Coliseum.

"There was no reason not to believe [it was a turning point]," Sabathia said. "I threw the ball well. Now I've just got to tighten up on a couple of pitches and get the ball to the back of our bullpen, which is the strength of our team."

Sabathia was unaware that the Yankees did not have Dellin Betances, Andrew Miller or Justin Wilson available to close out the contest, but any save situation was wiped out by a pair of homers, and those were the pitches that he said would make it difficult to sleep.

Billy Burns nearly scraped the top of the left-field wall with a solo homer in the fifth and Brett Lawrie pounced on a Sabathia changeup for a two-run, game-tying shot in the sixth.

"Just up and down the middle," Sabathia said. "He put a good swing on it. I'd thrown him a couple of them. He saw them pretty good and put a good swing."

With the bullpen short, manager Joe Girardi tried to squeeze an extra inning out of Sabathia in the seventh, but he surrendered a leadoff single to Josh Phegley and walked No. 9 hitter Mark Canha on a close 3-1 pitch, forcing Girardi to call upon right-hander David Carpenter.

"I had to make a change, but he was pitching really well, and it just kind of got away from him," Girardi said.

A product of nearby Vallejo, Calif., who attended A's home games as a youth, Sabathia fell to 4-7 with a 5.32 ERA in 15 career starts at the Coliseum.

"It's been 15 years now; I've got a lot of starts here," Sabathia said. "I think it's still fun for my mom and everybody to come out, but it's just another start for me now."

The Record

Just like old times for healthy, slimmer Teixeira

By PETE CALDERA- May 29, 2015 Last updated: Friday, May 29, 2015, 1:21 AM

Mark Teixeira had managed the ache in his right wrist long enough that it was hard to remember what a free-and-easy swing felt like.

As the Yankees reported to camp this year, questions about Teixeira's offensive decline played in the background while Alex Rodriguez's presence took center stage. But with each swing, Teixeira felt a personal turnaround coming.

"I came into spring training feeling better than I had in years, so I'm not surprised with my performance," Teixeira said of his productive first two months. "This off-season, my health really turned around and the wrist got better."

Two years removed from surgery to repair his wrist's tendon sheath, Teixeira says he's finally having fun on the diamond again.

"I didn't have any fun the last two years, battling through the wrist thing," Teixeira said. "Being able to play baseball healthy again is a lot of fun."

"I feel very blessed to be able to go out there and play every single day and not have to worry about every swing hurting, which it did the last couple of years. It's been nice."

To anyone who'd listen, Teixeira credited his new trainer and new diet – embracing a gluten-free lifestyle – for the pep in his step. Even A-Rod took part in kibitzing about Teixeira's buckwheat pancake and pressed-juice breakfasts. Only, Teixeira and Rodriguez have lately reversed their downward trends, reforming into one of the league's more potent middle-of-the-lineup duos.

"It's great to be hitting 3-4 with Teix. We have a lot of history together," A-Rod said. "It's good to get on base with Teix swinging the bat so well."

Heading into Friday's series opener at Oakland, Teixeira was second in the AL with 14 home runs and tied for fourth in RBI with 35. Both Teixeira and A-Rod were among the league's top 10 in slugging percentage.

"When we're healthy and in the lineup we can do some damage," Teixeira said.

And at age 35, the switch-hitting first baseman – whose scoops and reaction times around the bag are still Gold Glove worthy – sees the potential to approach a 30-homer, 100-RBI season again.

"I know how to play this game. I've been doing it a long time," Teixeira said. "I know if I'm healthy, I'll be able to produce."

Teixeira had averaged 37 home runs, 114 RBI and 157 games played during his first three Yankees seasons, 2009-2011. But left wrist and left calf issues limited him to 451 at-bats in 2012. And on an early March day in 2013 in Arizona, swinging off a tee with Team USA at the World Baseball Classic, Teixeira's right wrist rebelled.

After playing just 15 games in 2013, Teixeira struggled to a .212 average in 123 games last season, with 22 homers and 62 RBI.

If that was an indication of his own baseball mortality, well, Teixeira didn't need the reminder.

"Every player in here, whether you're 22 or 42, you're one hit-by-pitch, one weird slide away from ending your season," Teixeira said. "That's just the way it is, so you don't worry about it."

"You go every single day, you play hard and you hope for the best. Sometimes you get banged up and sometimes you've got to play through things. But everyone goes through that."

As far as taking precautions, Teixeira is careful about his wrist maintenance.

"I ice it every day more out of precaution, just like pitchers ice their shoulders after a game. Because I don't want anything to creep up on me," Teixeira said. "But I've been just very thankful for the health this year."



Slade Heathcott a late scratch from New York Yankees lineup

Wallace Matthews, ESPNNewYork.com – 5.28.15

OAKLAND -- New York Yankees rookie centerfielder Slade Heathcott was a late scratch from the Thursday night's lineup with a sore right quad, according to a tweet by Meredith Marakovits of the YES Network. Heathcott had been slated to bat eighth in the lineup for the opener of a three-game series against the Oakland Athletics.

Heathcott is hitting .353 with a home run and three RBI in six games since being called up from Triple-A Scranton to replace Jacoby Ellsbury, who is on the disabled list with a right knee sprain. He was replaced in the Yankees lineup on Thursday by Chris Young. No further details were immediately available.

Yankees' Slade Heathcott hurt, pulled from start

Brendan Kutny | May 28, 2015 at 9:05 PM, updated May 28, 2015 at 9:31 PM

OAKLAND, Calif. — Slade Heathcott's hot start will take at least a brief stop.

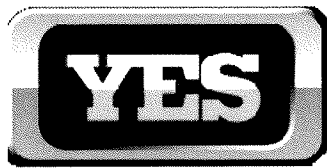
The **Yankees'** rookie center fielder was **slated to start and bat eighth** in **Thursday's game against the A's at O.co Coliseum**, but he was pulled about an hour before first pitch with a tight right quadriceps.

Fellow reserve outfielder Chris Young was dropped into his spot.

Heathcott went 1-for-4 with a hit in Wednesday's 4-2 win over the Royals at Yankee Stadium. He didn't take pre game batting practice, but instead walked around and chatted with teammates while they took their swings.

Since getting called up two weeks ago, Heathcott is 6-for-17 (.353) with a homer, a double and three RBI.

He was given his first major league shot after the Yankees put Jacoby Ellsbury on the 15-day disabled list with a left knee strain. The team still **doesn't know when Ellsbury will return**. Manager Joe Girardi told reporters Thursday that Ellsbury was still receiving treatment on the knee, but hadn't started baseball activities.



Are Slade Heathcott and Jacob Lindgren the first taste of the next Yankees core crop?

By Lou DiPietro - 05/28/2015 11:32 AM ET

BRONX, N.Y. - Last Thursday, Slade Heathcott was still basking in the glow of making his major-league debut as a pinch-runner and Jacob Lindgren was at Triple-A, selecting a new number for the day to accommodate the rehabbing Masahiro Tanaka.

Seven days later, as the Yankees head to Oakland for their first of two west coast trips, both are bona fide major-leaguers, one carrying a .353 average as Jacoby Ellsbury's nearly full-time replacement and the other with two strong innings against an AL powerhouse under his belt.

In the former case, that's a bit of a surprise, but not really for manager Joe Girardi.

"I don't think you expect someone to hit close to .400, but what we saw in Spring Training was impressive, and we thought he'd come up and contribute," the skipper said of Heathcott. "He's focused and prepared every day, and knows what he needs to do.

Heathcott hasn't started against the lefties the Yankees have faced over the last week, but with righties lined up to pitch for Oakland in at least the next two games, he could get an extended look, and Girardi is comfortable with where his new center fielder is coming from if that's the case.

"Obviously you're going to go day-by-day, and the thing about Slade facing all of these pitchers is that he's never seen them before," Girardi said. "But, so far, he's been patient and he's swung at good pitches. He's capable of handling when it comes to pitches in the zone, and I think he's done a nice job of being selective."

As for Lindgren, bullpen management is one of the toughest parts of a manager's job, and with four lefties in the relief corps right now, it's hard to predict when any of them will get an extended look - but in the one he got of Lindgren on Monday, Girardi was very pleased.

"I'd say after the double play ball, was able to lock it in there," Girardi said of the southpaw's debut outing, "and he looked comfortable."

Whether or not these two are short-term assets or long-term pieces this season, they're impressing in the chance they've gotten, and perhaps unlike in years past, Girardi thinks there are many more in the pipeline that could do the same if given the opportunity.

"We talked about what we saw in Spring Training from young players, and we've seen it from them," Girardi said. "You can talk about the collection of young outfielders who played really

well this spring, or some of the catchers we've had, but you also look at guys like (Eric) Jagielo and (Greg) Bird down in Trenton who have played extremely well...I think the system has been deep for a while, but it's been at the lower levels; now, these lower level kids are getting to the upper levels, and I think you'll start to see contributions from them."

The skipper also admitted, too, that he has been impressed by much more than the on-field performance of the developing crop of future pinstripers.

"Those guys, (Aaron) Judge, (Rob) Refsnyder, (Luis) Severino...I was impressed by all of them (on the field) this spring), but I think I was more impressed with how they went about their business," he said. "Obviously they played well, but the way they held each other accountable, pulled for each other and pushed each other - you don't always see that. Many of these guys are competing for a position, but they were great at really sticking together, and that was impressive to see."

As it relates to the here and now, Brian McCann said after Wednesday's win to sweep the Royals that "when you're winning, everything is better." So far, so good for the farm's two newest crops, but whether it's them or anyone else, the skipper knows winning is a good elixir.

"You want to see your young players come up and have success and feel like they're contributing," Girardi said. "Not put a ton of pressure on themselves and not looking over their shoulder and wondering if they're going to play the next day, or that sort of thing."

Again, so far, so good, if you ask Heathcott.

"It's an amazing blessing just to be here, but everyone in here is here to win. We want to play together, but we play this game to win, and I love seeing guys succeed and teammates playing well," he said. "When I step across those lines, it's the same game I've played my entire life; obviously it's on a higher scale, but I remind myself every at-bat to make sure I'm playing the same game I've been playing."

Heathcott scratched with sore quad

Yankees center fielder hoping to return soon

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | 2:28 AM ET

OAKLAND -- Yankees rookie outfielder Slade Heathcott was scratched from Thursday's lineup against the Athletics due to a sore right quadriceps, and is hopeful that he can return to the diamond quickly.

Heathcott was replaced in center field by Chris Young, who batted eighth and went 0-for-3 with a walk in the Yankees' **5-4 loss** to Oakland.

"I felt it a few days ago, just kind of tightened up," Heathcott said. "It's been very easily manageable. I came in today just a little more tender, and we just decided that giving it a day or two here would be better than four weeks."

Manager Joe Girardi said that Heathcott may have aggravated the injury last Friday, when he legged out a double in his first big league plate appearance.

Heathcott's first MLB hit

5/22/15: Slade Heathcott lines a double off Colby Lewis for the first hit of his Major League career

"I think he's battled it in Triple-A a little bit, and battled it in Spring Training a little bit," Girardi said. "Part of it could have to do with the surgeries he's had on his knee, all the different things that you go through. We'll see how he is tomorrow."

Heathcott is hitting .353 (6-for-17) with one home run and three RBIs in six big league games.

"I don't think it's very serious," Heathcott said. "I've had it a couple times this offseason, and it hadn't been an issue whatsoever. Just take it day by day and see how it goes."

The reason David Carpenter is flummoxing the Yankees

Brendan Kuty | May 29, 2015 at 7:00 AM, updated May 29, 2015 at 7:07 AM

OAKLAND, Calif. — Alex Rodriguez has officially been replaced as the **Yankees'** biggest mystery.

That distinction has gone to David Carpenter.

As reliable as Carpenter had been for the Braves the last two seasons before the Yankees acquired him via trade this offseason, he's been almost as unreliable in 2015.

In 18 innings spread over 20 games, the 29-year-old righty has a 5.00 ERA. And things didn't change at all for Carpenter in the **Yankees' 5-3 loss to the A's at O.co Coliseum Thursday night.**

In fact, they might have gotten worse.

Carpenter let both of the runners he inherited from starting pitcher CC Sabathia with the score tied at 3-all cross the plate in the seventh inning. The first run scored after Carpenter loaded the bases and then issued a full-count walk Ben Zobrist. The next came in when Billy Butler knocked a long sacrifice fly to center field to cement the final score.

After the game, manager Joe Girardi said he didn't know what's causing Carpenter's troubles.

"It's hard to say," Girardi said.

And nobody was taking it harder than Carpenter. He mentioned his new role as a sixth- and seventh-inning reliever something to which he needed to adjust. Carpenter was a set-up man for the Braves.

"It's a new team, it's a new way of being used. Other than that, it's just trying to go out and execute," Carpenter said. "That's been part of the problem. I haven't been going out and executing. You can only work so much. You can only throw so many pitches a day. And that's what I've been trying to do. I've been trying to make thing better, at least be useful around here."

Carpenter said his problems were due to flaws in his mechanics. But, he said, he wasn't even sure if it's that his pitch selection is off.

"It's just hard to tell," he said. "I try to go in there and be aggressive with what I've got that day and I try to go out there and get people out. So it's not so much whether it's this pitch, that pitch, whatever. You look a couple of the balls I've give-up the past couple of times out haven't exactly been squared up. ... Right now, the way things are going, I'm frustrated. I'm not happy about how I'm performing right now. And I don't like letting guys down. That's the thing that upsets me the post, not so much about getting numbers or anything like that. Just letting guys down that went out there and busted their butt."

Catcher Brian McCann, Carpenter's pal from their time in Atlanta, said he believed Carpenter will turn it around.

"It's about location and he's got a great arm," McCann said. "He's got two really good pitches. It's going to be about getting the fastball located and the slider off that. He's got good movement on his pitches. It's just a matter of pitching ahead in the counts."

Sweeny: Yankees' Infield Defense Behind Sabathia Has Left A Lot To Be Desired

Veteran Left-Hander Hasn't Helped The Situation With His Own Fielding, Either

By Sweeny Murti - May 28, 2015 2:15 PM

OAKLAND, Calif. (WFAN) — It's no secret CC Sabathia hasn't been good this season.

But according to some interesting nuggets provided by the research team at MLB Network, his problems have not been completely about his pitching and the Yankees' hitting.

"The Yankees defense has made plays on just 78.5 percent of groundballs behind CC Sabathia. The league average made-play rate is 86.1 percent on ground balls. Sabathia's middle infielders have a combined 71.0 percent success rate (22 of 31 opportunities). Sabathia has not helped himself, making plays on just three of seven ground balls that were possible for him to make."

While it seems Sabathia has tried to do what he is best capable of these days — getting ground ball outs — he has not been successful at turning these into actual outs, and as you can see he's partly to blame, too.

When Sabathia strung together a couple wins earlier this month it didn't show us that he was "back" so to speak. It just showed us that he has the ability to still get some outs.

A former teammate of Sabathia's told me a few weeks ago that the veteran left-hander needs to locate his fastball inside more and open up the outer half for his off-speed pitches. That's a formula he can use to get deeper into ball games even if he's barely breaking 90 on the radar gun. Andy Pettitte pitched much the same way late in his career and did it quite successfully. Sabathia did that well in his two wins before getting hammered by Texas his last time out.

Of course there is indeed pressure to sure up the Yankees' infield defense. It's been a bad first two months on the left side with Chase Headley and Didi Gregorius. Those two are essential to Sabathia's success and turning around those terrible ground ball numbers.

Sabathia will be on the mound Thursday night in the series opener in Oakland, which marks the start of the Yankees' seven-game road trip.

West Coast opportunity for hard-to-predict Yankees

Posted by: [Chad Jennings](#) - Posted in [Misc](#) on May 28, 2015

First West Coast trip of the year, and I officially have no clue what to expect these next seven days.

In theory, this is a golden opportunity to really pick up some momentum. The Athletics have been the worst team in the American League, and the Yankees get to play four games against them. Sonny Gray is really good, but the Yankees won't face Scott Kazmir, and this series should be an opportunity to beat up on a lesser opponent.

Of course, we saw what happened when the Yankees had a chance to do that against Texas.

After Oakland, it's a three-game series in Seattle, where the Mariners have finally gotten to .500 after a disappointing start to the season. Felix Hernandez is incredible, and Nelson Cruz is a monster, but Robinson Cano has struggled, and Taijuan Walker as a 7.00-plus ERA. The Mariners have won five of their past six, so maybe this timing isn't the greatest — Seattle could be hitting its stride just as the Yankees come to town — but that's still not a daunting series for a Yankees team that just swept the Royals.

Really, no series should be daunting for a team that just swept the Royals. But, of course, I think we're all still trying to wrap our heads around just how good (or bad) the Yankees really are at this point. It's clearly a team-wide situation — losing three in a row to Texas and then sweeping Kansas City really defined this season, didn't it? — but it extends to individuals as well. Consider these Yankees:

STOCK RISING

Carlos Beltran — Joe Girardi shows absolute faith in his established veterans, and sometimes it pays off. So far this month, it's paid off with Beltran, who had two hits yesterday and has hit .316/.329/.519 in the month of May. Yes, his right field defense hasn't been great, but if he hits like that, I think it's a worthwhile tradeoff, especially with defensive replacements available for the late innings.

Adam Warren — Just when it seemed Warren was pitching his way into an inevitable return to the bullpen, he seems to have found his footing as a big league starter. Warren's pitched into the seventh inning his past three starts — something he'd never done before two weeks ago — and his start on Tuesday was a legitimate gem. Masahiro Tanaka seems close to coming off the disabled list, and Warren's spot in the rotation might be more secure than Chris Capuano's.

Slade Heathcott — Opportunity has presented itself, and so far Heathcott has taken advantage. Granted, it's only 17 at-bats, so let's hold off on declaring he's a definite big league regular going forward. For the time being, though, he's been a strong replacement while Jacoby Ellsbury

is on the disabled list. He's filled the void nicely. What happens when Ellsbury gets healthy is anyone's guess, but Heathcott was ready when the Yankees needed him. And they need that to continue at least a little while longer.

STOCK FALLING

Stephen Drew – When the Yankees' offense exploded on Monday, Drew had a three-run home run that served as a reminder that he's at least shown some decent pop this season. Problem is, that home run was his first since April 21, and it was only his second hit since May 20. In the month of April, Drew hit for a sub-.200 batting average, but he still slugged .419, so he was far from an offensive zero. In May, though, he's hit .159/.207/.244, and in the past seven games he's hit .087/.087/.217.

Non-Betances/Miller relievers — That one-two punch in the eighth and ninth innings remains dominant, but the rest of the Yankees bullpen has been a mess. Chasen Shreve, Branden Pinder and Jacob Lindgren have pitched well, but not in high-leverage situations. Esmil Rogers, who was terrific as a long man early in the season, has a 2.05 WHIP in the month of May. David Carpenter, who seemed destined for a seventh-inning role, has allowed a .371 opponents' batting average his past 10 outings. Justin Wilson, who emerged as a go-to lefty, has allowed two earned runs in three of his past nine appearances. Wilson's generally been fine, but Carpenter and Rogers have left the Yankees in real need for a reliable right-hander.

Chris Young – Maybe the extra playing time has left him exposed, but for whatever reason, Young has hit just .149/.184/.255 in the month of May. That's after hitting .305/.369/.644 in the month of April. Ultimately, Young's numbers against lefties remain strong — 1.145 OPS vs. LHP — but he just can't hit right-handers, and any early season thought that he might be an everyday player again has surely been squashed. He has a role to play, but he has to stick to his strength.

STABLE PERFORMANCE

Mark Teixeira/Alex Rodriguez — Approaching the end of May, Teixeira has 14 homers and a .941 OPS, and Rodriguez has 11 homers and a .940 OPS. They've been terrific, and with exactly 152 at-bats for each of them, it no longer feels like a fluky start to the season. Clearly these guys have some productive at-bats left in the tank. Staying strong and healthy through the end of the season could be a challenge, but it's time to stop wondering whether they can still hit. Clearly they can.

Dellin Betances/Andrew Miller — First week and a half, Betances was off to a rocky start and Miller was in an unfamiliar role. There was reason to be uncertain about each of them. Almost two months later, that cause for concern has disappeared. They're not red hot. They're just really good. And even if they can't keep quite this pace all season, they could take a step back and still be an excellent combination closing out ballgames in the late innings.

Brian McCann – He was a little better in April than he has been in May, and he's been slightly better this season than he was last season, but the general idea has become pretty consistent with McCann: He'll still hit some home runs, he won't get on base much, and a good portion of his value will come from his ability to handle the pitching staff and direct a game from behind the

plate. He's a productive player, but those regular All-Star appearances of his mid-20s seem long gone.

STILL UNPREDICTABLE

Didi Gregorius — Offensively, I think Gregorius has set a reasonable expectation. He can hit right-handers a little bit, can't really hit lefties at all, and he's basically what you'd expect out of a defense-first shortstop who hits ninth in the order. He's on the roster for his glove, first and foremost. Problem is, his glove has been wildly unpredictable. Gregorius can make some brilliant plays, but he's also prone to some boneheaded plays. Blame it on youth, I guess. And the Yankees really don't have a strong alternative in the system.

CC Sabathia/Michael Pineda — In back-to-back wins earlier this month, Sabathia went 14 innings with four earned runs and seemed to have found something. Then he couldn't get through the third inning last time out. After that 16-strikeout masterpiece two-and-a-half weeks ago, he pitched back-to-back duds before firing another gem on Wednesday. Clearly there's more reason to be optimistic about Pineda than Sabathia, but each one has been erratic lately.

The guys who never play: In theory, the Yankees have a readily available offensive upgrade at second base. Problem is, Jose Pirela has hit just .200/.200/.233 since coming off the disabled list. His OPS is actually significantly worse than either Drew or Gregorius. But is that because of limited at-bats? Is lack of playing time also to blame for John Ryan Murphy's .222/.286/.361 and Garrett Jones' .235/.264/.353. For the first time in a long time, it seems, Girardi has a chance to keep a consistent lineup on the field. He's stuck with that, even though it's meant significantly marginalizing the bench players.

Pregame notes: “I think you have to believe him”

Posted by: [Chad Jennings](#) - Posted in [Misc](#) on May 28, 2015

It's been one month since Masahiro Tanaka went on the disabled list. He's made two minor league rehab starts, and his most recent was not particularly long or particularly impressive, but the Yankees have decided it was enough. Tanaka is flying to the West Coast tonight, and barring any unforeseen setback or cause for concern, the Yankees plan to have their ace back in the rotation next week.

“You want him to feel good, number one,” manager Joe Girardi said. “Number two, you want him to feel comfortable with his stuff, that he feels that he's ready to go. You don't want someone going out there if they don't quite feel that they're ready to go. In a perfect world, he would start somewhere in Seattle.”

Girardi said the plan is to have Tanaka rejoin the rotation either Tuesday or Wednesday. After throwing 62 pitches last night — when he allowed three runs on four hits and two walks through three Triple-A innings — Tanaka will likely be limited to around 80 pitches in his first start back in the big leagues.

“The big thing is we have to know how he feels,” Girardi said. “... He had no issues yesterday. He said he felt good today, so you've got to believe him. And I think if he wasn't throwing 93, and you saw things where his slider wasn't sharp, you'd think, OK, maybe he's not being honest with us. But with those things, I think you have to believe him.”

Any number of factors could have contributed to last night's less-than-impressive rehab start. It was a minor league game, so there wasn't much video or scouting information to study. The mound was apparently a bit of a problem. He threw some splits that didn't have much movement, and some of those were hit hard.

But Girardi said Tanaka's fastball topped out at 93 mph and sat at 91, which is basically the exact same as his final big league start (actually, Girardi said Tanaka's fastball averaged 90.9 mph in his last major league outing). The Yankees were also happy with the movement on his slider, which they took to be a good sign. Tanaka said he felt healthy, and the Yankees are choosing to believe him.

Girardi said he'll have a face-to-face conversation with Tanaka, presumably tomorrow.

“Today he felt fine,” Girardi said. “We'll make sure he's OK. We'll have a heart-to-heart talk with him, how he feels about where he's at. Hopefully he can make a start in Seattle.”

—

- Not a ton of information to report on Slade Heathcott. He's been scratched with a tight right quad, and Chris Young has replaced him both in center field and in the No. 8 spot in the lineup. I'm assuming we'll have more either during the game or immediately after when Girardi speaks to the media again.

- Ivan Nova threw 60-plus pitches in extended spring training today. Girardi said Nova will make one more extended spring training start and then will likely begin an official rehab assignment.
- Chris Martin threw yesterday and will begin a Triple-A rehab assignment on Saturday.
- Nothing new on Jacoby Ellsbury. Strictly getting medical treatment. Hasn't started baseball activities. Nothing has changed about his uncertain timetable. "It's not a surgical thing and we don't believe it's a 60-day DL thing," Girardi said. "We believe it's probably more than 15, but it really depends on how he responds. With the type of player he is, maybe it takes a few days longer than if it was a slow guy that didn't rely on his legs."
- Girardi was very clear that the Yankees will not go to a six-man rotation when Tanaka comes off the disabled list. Stands to reason that either Adam Warren or Chris Capuano will come out of the rotation to make room for him. Capuano is pitching tomorrow; Warren on Sunday.
- My guess: Capuano will go into the bullpen, and Warren will stay in the rotation. The timing lines up so that Capuano should be available for long relief behind Tanaka either Tuesday or Wednesday, something Warren wouldn't be able to do. Plus, Warren's been really good lately. "Lately he's been pitching as well as anybody we have the rotation," Girardi said.
- Josh Norris reported this morning that top pitching prospect Luis Severino has been promoted to Triple-A. Severino has been very good in Double-A this season, and he put up particularly good numbers in his past two starts after returning from a blister issue. Donnie Collins took a look at the possibilities for Severino's Triple-A debut.
- CC Sabathia is trying to get back on track after a rough start last time out. He'd pitched well in his two starts before that. "I didn't think he had great location with his slider was the big thing (in the last start)," Girardi said. "And I think his slider has been a pretty effective pitch for him. I think he's thrown it to both sides of the plate. That's an important pitch, so I've got a good feeling about tonight."

Postgame notes: “A day or two here would be better than four weeks”

Posted by: [Chad Jennings](#) - Posted in [Misc](#) on May 29, 2015

We’ll get to the game in just a bit. First, here’s what’s going on with Slade Heathcott:

The quad tightness that knocked him out of tonight’s lineup was not new or unfamiliar. Heathcott said he’d been dealing with it off and on since the offseason. It’s never been a serious issue, and he doesn’t think it’s a serious issue now, but he might miss a few days because of it.

“It’s been very easily manageable,” Heathcott said. “Came in today just a little more tender, and we just decided that giving it a day or two here would be better than four weeks.”

Heathcott said the quad was mostly an offseason issue that hadn’t really popped up since the beginning of spring training, but Joe Girardi said it had been at least a mild issue during spring training, during the Triple-A season and for a few days since Heathcott got to the big leagues. Girardi even speculated that Heathcott’s first double in his first big league start might have sparked the latest flare up.

“He’s been battling this for five or six days, I think it is,” Girardi said. “I don’t know if he did it on his first double. It’s possible he did it then. I think he’s battled it in Triple-A a little bit, and battled it in spring training a little bit. Part of it could have to do with the surgeries he’s had on his knee. All the different things that you go through. We’ll see how he is tomorrow.”

The Yankees face nothing but right-handed starters the next three days, but Heathcott might have to miss a few of those games.

“It’s not where I want to be, but I can’t start doubting the plan now,” he said. “I’ve always believed that everything happens for a reason, this has got to be the way it is, and just go from here. ... Maybe just one of those things where I realize what I need to do, maintain it a little better.”

• Might have been a much different game had the Yankees been playing with a full bullpen, but Girardi said he did not have Andrew Miller, Dellin Betances or Justin Wilson available. If those guys were in the pen, it’s not a sure thing CC Sabathia would have gone out for the seventh inning, and it’s doubtful David Carpenter would have been called in with two on and none out. “It’s hard to say,” Girardi said. “(Sabathia) pitched pretty well up to that point. It could have been different.”

• Speaking of Sabathia, he was pitching a good game until that two-out, two-run homer in the sixth. Even in that inning he’d done a nice job to get two quick outs after a leadoff double. He had a chance to get out of the inning but threw a bad changeup that Brett Lawrie hit for a game-

tying home run. "Just up and down the middle," Sabathia said. "He put a good swing on it. I'd thrown him a couple of them. He saw them pretty good and put a good swing."

- Girardi on Sabathia: "He had a changeup that cut. He gives up the leadoff double. Does a tremendous job of getting to where he wants to get with two outs and the guy still on third base. And the changeup cut. That's the ball Lawrie hit out. Next guy gets a hit in the hole the following inning, then he walks the next guy, and I had to make a change. But he was, he was pitching really well, and it just kind of got away from him."
- Before that sixth inning, Sabathia seemed to be heading toward his third strong start in his past four outings. "I felt like we did a good job of moving the ball in and out," he said. "... Threw the ball well, like I said, now just got to tighten up on a couple of pitches and get the ball to the back of our bullpen which is the strength of our team."
- Carpenter's having a bad year, and he certainly knows it. "At this point right now, I know it's not mechanical," he said. "It's (possibly) pitch selection. Could be that. Just hard to tell. I try to go in there and be aggressive with what I've got that day and try to get people out. It's not so much whether it's this pitch, that pitch, whatever. ... I'm frustrated. I'm not happy about how I'm performing right now. I don't like letting guys down. That's the thing that upsets me the most, not so much about numbers or anything like that, just letting guys down. They went out there and busted their butt."
- Nifty play by Alex Rodriguez to score a run in the fourth inning. His diving, tumbling move to avoid a tag at the plate resulted in a run that might have been key had the Yankees not let the game fall apart. "That was not pretty," Rodriguez said. "That looked like Shaquille O'Neal coming out of a pick. ... I was confident (I had touched the plate). When Joe asked me, I said, 'I think so, but I'm not 100 percent.' I thought I felt it with my fingers."
- Brian McCann called Rodriguez "nimble" and Girardi said he was only hoping Rodriguez would "be safe and get back up."
- Another milestone for Rodriguez as he tied Barry Bonds for second place on baseball's all-time RBI list (of course, that list doesn't count a whole bunch of Babe Ruth's RBIs). "You say the same thing about Gehrig and Ruth, and Barry's the same thing; he's one of the greats," Rodriguez said. "This is kind of special because he's also a friend and I know him very well."
- Big game for McCann who had three hits including his first road home run of the season. He's reached base three times in three straight games, and he has three home runs and 10 RBI in his past six games. "Balls have been falling," McCann said. "I feel like I've been swinging the bat well all year. Numbers – especially numbers today, I don't think you can really judge a player off his average anymore, especially if you're left-handed and don't run well."
- Carlos Beltran's 15-game hitting streak ended.
- Final word goes to Rodriguez: "On any given day, you have to come ready to play every day because any team can beat anybody. We proved that last week; we beat one of the best teams in baseball in Kansas City and lost nine out of 10. It's just important to come out every day mentally tough and play to win."

The Record

Klapisch: Yankees, Mets have been easy on the eyes

By BOB KLAPISCH - May 28, 2015, 11:57 PM Last updated: Thursday, May 28, 2015, 11:57 PM

Wednesday afternoon was hardly a seminal moment for either the Yankees or Mets, although you could argue that a sweep of the Royals proved just how dangerous the Bombers can be. And that the Mets, who finished cleaning the Phillies' clocks, clearly understand the way to a .500 season (and beyond) is by showing no mercy to the meek.

We'll see if those maxims hold up throughout the summer. For now, it's worth noting that both teams drew formidable crowds on a nondescript day: middle of the week, 1 p.m. start while school is still in session, and no compelling gate attraction in either borough.

Matt Harvey wasn't pitching and the Royals, although reigning American League champs, hardly stir the Yankee community like, say, the Red Sox back in the day. Yet, more than 32,000 flocked to the Bronx and even more surprisingly, the Mets pulled in excess of 24,000.

What's it mean? For one, baseball is alive and well in greater New York, despite all the forecasts of the sport's demise nationwide. These are hardly the best Yankees and Mets teams of the last decade, but they've given fans enough reasons to get in the car or subway and actually buy a ticket.

This is still Yankee country; the facts are not in dispute. They still lead the American League in attendance, and rank fourth overall at just under 40,000 per game. That's a pleasant surprise to Yankee officials, who for the first time in two decades, are marketing a team without any of its original "Core Four." Is it possible Alex Rodriguez is single-handedly keeping the Yankees afloat at the gate?

But here's an even better indication of the rising tide. The Mets are in the top 10 in attendance in the majors; only the Padres have gained more fans in the National League since 2014. Harvey is part of the reason, of course, and the club's 11-game winning streak in April helped change the conversation, too. But even after cooling off in May, the Mets still seem interesting enough to watch, whether in person or on TV.

Last month, SNY trumpeted their gains against the YES Network: The Mets drew 47 percent more viewers in April, which coupled with the Yankees' 21 percent drop, made the race as close as it's been in the nine years the Mets have been on SNY.

Of course, the Mets were on fire in April, and there was plenty of curiosity about them coming out of spring training. That clearly boosted ratings. And the Yankees, streaky as they are, were just awful in the first homestand. They lost 10 of 11 in May, then proceeded to sweep the Royals. Go figure.

Now that we're past the season's quarter mark, it's clearer both teams will be relevant. The Yankees are lucky enough to live in the homogenous AL East, where even that awful slump didn't hurt them. And the Mets can always count on the Phillies and Marlins to dress their

wounds. In other words, it's hard to imagine either local team going off the grid. Or playing to empty stadiums. This might not be the golden era of baseball in greater New York, but it'll do for now.

NEWS ITEM: Alex Rodriguez and his not-so-authentic RBI record.

We've done our share of A-Rod bashing in this space and questioned whether his career home run total is legitimate. If you consider A-Rod's pursuit of 700 home runs fraudulent, given his confessed use of PEDs, have at it. He brought this controversy on himself, even though he seems genuinely contrite.

But let's also be fair to A-Rod while pointing out his coronation as the American League's all-time RBI leader is also phony. It has nothing to do with steroids.

Rodriguez passed Lou Gehrig for the top spot on Wednesday, but the real leader was, and still is, Babe Ruth.

So why doesn't the Bambino appear atop the official list? Because runs batted in weren't an official statistic until 1920, and it's possible Ruth had as many as 225 RBI before then. No one knows for sure. Keeping stats involved plenty of guesswork a century ago and as Fox Sports' Rob Neyer pointed out, some of the estimates – and mistakes – were made after 1920, not just before.

That leaves open the possibility that plenty of the great achievements – like career strikeouts and base hits – could actually be wrong. The first accounting wasn't complete until the 1960s, when the Macmillan Baseball Encyclopedia relied mostly on day-to-day logs that were already 40 to 50 years old. There were countless errors in those logs.

None of this is meant to diminish what A-Rod did Wednesday – hitting a three-run homer that helped the Yankees finish off a sweep of the Royals and passing Gehrig in the process. But it's worth remembering that not every statistic can necessarily stand up to closer scrutiny. Who knows, someday Ruth's RBI total might be revised and A-Rod might be stripped of his title. And it wouldn't even be his fault.

NEWS ITEM: Mets go to six-man rotation.

Hey, we like it, even if Harvey doesn't. Ideally, giving the starters extra rest will allow them to get deeper into games, and reduce pressure on the set-up men – at least until Bobby Parnell and Jenrry Mejia and Vic Black return.

The Mets have a formidable closer in Jeurys Familia, but they need two or three more arms like his. Lengthening the rotation is an interesting work-around, definitely worth watching.

5 Yankees things to know today: Injury updates

Brendan Kutty | May 29, 2015 at 5:07 AM, updated May 29, 2015 at 5:16 AM

OAKLAND, Calif. — Here are five things you need to know about the **Yankees** Friday:

1. Broadcast info: The Yankees (25-23) will face the A's (18-32) at 10:05 p.m. at O.co Coliseum. See it on the YES Network. Hear it on WFAN 660 AM/101.9 FM. Follow @brendankutynj for updates.

2. Starting pitchers: Yankees lefty Chris Capuano (0-2, 7.36 ERA) will face A's righty Sonny Gray (5-2, 1.77 ERA).

3. Heathcott update: Yankees rookie outfielder Slade Heathcott was scratched from his start in center field before Thursday's 5-3 loss to the A's due to a tight right quad. After the game, Heathcott said he didn't think the injury was serious. He said the tightness has nagged him now and then since early spring training. "I don't think it's very serious," he said. "We could give it a day or two instead of four weeks."

4. Other injuries: Righty reliever Chris Martin (elbow tendonitis) will make a rehabilitation appearance with Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Saturday, according to manager Joe Girardi. Martin has been on the DL since May 9. ... Ivan Nova (Tommy John rehab) threw 60 pitches in an extended spring training start Thursday, Girardi said, and the righty will make one more start there before starting his 30-day minor-league rehab tour to build up his arm.

5. Today in Yankees history: On May 29, 1997, the Yankees acquired Hideki Irabu from the Padres. San Diego had initially purchased Irabu's contract, but he refused to play for the team, saying he only wanted to pitch for the Yankees. He went 29-20 during his Yankees tenure, which might have been highlighted by the disparaging remarks late owner George Steinbrenner made of Irabu while he was still with the team.

Everlasting glove: The story behind Yankees players and their mitts

Ryan Hatch | May 29, 2015 at 6:01 AM, updated May 29, 2015 at 7:13 AM

NEW YORK — The **Yankees** acquired shortstop **Didi Gregorius** in the offseason for his glove.

A career .237 hitter, the 25-year-old does not hit for power (15 home runs in 871 plate appearances; two this year) but plays above average in the field: through Thursday, *Fangraphs* rates him as the American League's fourth-best defensive shortstop this season if defined by UZR.

His glove is his paycheck. This is why he takes good care of it.

Gregorius's glove, a bright yellow Mizuno that literally sparkles under the sun and stadium lights, is cared and planned for perhaps more than any other piece of equipment he uses. That means in warm-ups and batting practice, he does not dare bring the yellow glove to the field.

Instead, Gregorius sports a different Mizuno, a dark blue one, that he is breaking in to someday become his game-day glove.

Or, "gamer," in baseball-speak.

"Mizuno, always Mizuno," Gregorius said recently. "Different color, same size."

Gregorius said he usually uses one glove for an entire season, the back-up moving into the starting role the next year. So in 2016, expect to see Gregorius's blue glove on game day.

Many position players on the Yankees have similar glove routines.

(Be sure to check out the awesome gallery above of the Yankees' gloves by **NJ Advance Media** photographer **Bill Perlman**.)

First baseman **Mark Teixeira** has two gloves — both Rawlings, the model he has used since 2005 — and will likely abandon his current glove around mid-season when the other is ready. He, too, breaks it in during batting practice and said one glove lasts around a year.

How does the glove spend its retirement?

"I usually give it away," Teixeira said.

Donating gloves isn't uncommon among the Yankees.

Chase Headley, who has used a Wilson A2000 glove at third base since playing in the San Diego Padres minor leagues, said the only mitt he has hung on to is the one he won a Gold Glove with in 2012, the others typically signed and donated.

He says one glove will last a season, maybe longer.

"Two [years] max," Headley said. "I don't like messing with it, or doing a whole bunch of stuff to break it in really quick. I just like to use it ... and then it'll look like this."

Headley held the two gloves, next to one another, one visibly newer, but on its way to one day becoming a big leaguer. The strings weaved throughout, Headley said, are usually the first to go.

"If you really take care of a glove, it'll last a while," he said. "But the laces are what holds the shape of it. It gets floppy. If you put in new laces, it'll be all right."

Like much of the game of baseball, successfully breaking in a glove takes patience.

Yankees' center fielder Jacoby Ellsbury keeps two gloves as well — a gamer and backup, like everyone else — but his current glove has been with him five or six years, dating back to when he played with the Red Sox, he said.

His backup, which looks almost brand new, has been on deck for quite a while, patiently waiting to start its official big league clock.

"It could last a while, I don't know," Ellsbury said when asked when the current one will finally meet its maker. But it makes sense, since outfielder gloves experience much less wear and tear staying mostly out of the dirt. (**Ellsbury's disabled list stints** are perhaps adding to its life, too.)

Catcher **Brian McCann's** glove, which spends plenty of time in the dirt, is thicker than any others on the field but that is because it takes more abuse than any one else's, catching 95-mph fastballs.

Like most of the infielders, his only lasts about a year. McCann said he hangs on to most of the gloves he has used throughout his career since breaking into the big leagues in 2005. About a dozen are laying around at home.

He sticks to Rawlings or Under Armour. To break them in, he catches bullpens and uses it during batting practice, too.

With so much leather to soften and mold, that must take longer than other players' gloves?

"Nah," he said. "Month and a half, maybe."

Naturally.

Capuano, Yanks out to even series against A's

By Trevor Hass / MLB.com | 1:50 AM ET

A fully healthy Sonny Gray will return to the mound at the Coliseum on Friday for the second game of a four-game set against the Yankees, after the A's right-hander took a sharp grounder off his right ankle in his last start. Gray leads the American League with a 1.77 ERA, most recently carrying the A's to a 7-2 win over the Rays.

Yankees starter Chris Capuano may be pitching to keep his spot in the rotation, with Masahiro Tanaka possibly returning from the disabled list next week. Capuano has struggled in both of his starts, unable to make it through the fifth inning in either one.

Entering Friday, the A's have won 10 of 13 over the Yankees, taking the season series each of the past two years.

Three things to know about this game:

- Gray's ERA is the third-lowest by an A's pitcher after 10 starts in the designated hitter era. The right-hander lost his only career start against the Yankees, surrendering three earned runs in six innings last June 13.
- Opponents are batting .343 against Capuano this year, compared to a .267 mark in his previous 10 seasons. He's 1-1 with a 3.68 ERA in four games (one start) against the A's.
- Yankees catcher Brian McCann has homered in three consecutive games. He has at least one RBI in each of his past six games, equaling the longest streak of his career.

Report: Yankees Promote Phenom Pitching Prospect Severino To Triple-A

21-Year-Old Right-Hander Using Nasty Arsenal To Quickly Climb Rungs Of Organization

May 28, 2015 12:59 PM

NEW YORK (CBSNewYork) — His pitching style has drawn comparisons to a young Pedro Martinez. Now the world will see what Luis Severino can do at the last stop before “the show.”

The Yankees reportedly promoted their top prospect to Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre on Thursday, continuing the 21-year-old right-hander’s quick rise through the organization.

Severino had been 2-2 with a 3.32 ERA in eight starts for Double-A Trenton this season, and while those numbers aren’t spectacular, the following are awfully impressive: 48 strikeouts, a 1.11 WHIP and a .227 average against in 38 innings.

The same can be said for Severino’s short minor league career. Since being signed out of the Dominican Republic in 2012, he is 16-11 with a 2.39 ERA, 1.05 WHIP, .218 average against and 273 strikeouts in 56 appearances, including 54 starts, spanning 259 2/3 innings.

“(Severino) challenges people. He’s not overwhelmed by the situation,” Yankees manager Joe Girardi said back during spring training. “I mean, obviously you can see the stuff is there. It’s easy to get excited about that, but the approach is really good, too.”

Known for his control and a fastball that spends a lot of time in the upper 90s, Severino struck out nine over five innings and got the win in Trenton’s 9-3 victory over Akron on Tuesday.

Prior to the Yankees’ 4-2 win over Kansas City on Wednesday, Girardi was asked about the plethora of solid prospects in the minors, specifically Severino, outfielder Aaron Judge and second baseman Rob Refsnyder, who are ranked Nos. 1, 2 and 5, respectively, in the Yankees’ system by MLB.com.

“I was impressed by all these kids,” Girardi said, referring to the long looks each got back in February and March. “I think I was probably more impressed with the way they went about their business.

“Obviously they played well, but the way they went about their business and the way that they held each other accountable and pulled for each other and pushed each other, you don’t always see that,” he added.

Yankees reportedly move top prospect Luis Severino closer to majors

Brendan Kutty | May 28, 2015 at 12:30 PM, updated May 28, 2015 at 12:53 PM

OAKLAND, Calif. — The **Yankees'** top pitching prospect has reportedly moved a step away from the majors.

Righty **Luis Severino** has been promoted from Double-A Trenton to Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, according to Baseball America's Josh Norris.

Neither minor league team, nor the Yankees, had immediately released information confirming the move.

Severino was 2-2 with a 3.32 ERA in eight starts at Double-A. In his last start, Severino struck out a career-high nine hitters over five innings while allowing two runs, two walks and three hits.

He missed a little bit of time this season due to a **minor injury on one of the fingers on his throwing hand.**

Severino, 21, impressed Yankees manager Joe Girardi and pitching coach Larry Rothschild during his first major-league spring training this year.

"He challenges people," the manager said in early March. "He's not overwhelmed by the situation. I know he walked a guy today, but he kept throwing strike after strike, and put a tough at-bat on him.

"I really liked his approach. I mean, obviously you can see the stuff is there. It's easy to get excited about that. But the approach is really good too."

The Yankees haven't been afraid to reward young pitchers so far this season. Promising lefty reliever Jacob Lindgren, the team's top overall pick in 2014, was called up last week.

Luis Severino has been promoted to Triple-A. **#Yankees**

— Josh Norris (@jnorris427) **May 28, 2015**

Luis Severino on fast track to Yankees? History says maybe

Brendan Kuty | May 28, 2015 at 2:18 PM, updated May 28, 2015 at 2:44 PM

OAKLAND, Calif. — It's impossible to say whether the **Yankees** will move Luis Severino to the majors in 2015. So much could still happen.

But after reports Thursday that they promoted their top pitching prospect from Double-A Trenton to Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, Severino's Bronx debut doesn't seem too far away.

First, about Severino: The 21-year-old righty's superb 2014 earned him the-next-big-thing status. The Dominican Republic native dominated hitters for Low-A Charleston, High-A Tampa and Trenton, going a combined 6-5 with a 2.47 ERA. He also earned a spot in last year's All-Star Futures Game.

All that got the attention of owner Hal Steinbrenner, who said in the offseason that he'd like to see Severino make an impact in pinstripes this season.

Severino didn't wilt in the face of his new expectations. He garnered more praise at his first major-league spring training, especially from manager Joe Girardi, **who said he liked Severino's approach and that he challenged hitters**. And Severino has gone 3-2 with a 3.32 ERA at Trenton this season, during which he spent a short time on the disabled list with a pitching-hand finger injury.

That brings us to now.

The Yankees have lots of decisions to make regarding their rotation. Three of its five spots are secure. Michael Pineda, CC Sabathia and Nathan Eovaldi aren't going anywhere.

But it's hard to envision Adam Warren or Chris Capuano sticking much longer. **When Masahiro Tanaka returns** soon from the disabled list, he'll step in for either Warren or Capuano. And then when Ivan Nova comes back in either late June or early July from his Tommy John surgery rehabilitation program, Nova will take the next spot.

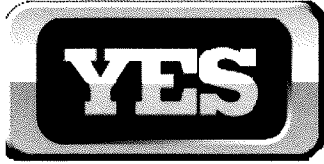
That doesn't leave a ton of room for Severino, who will reportedly be pitching at Triple-A with Bryan Mitchell, another righty ready to step into the big-league rotation if necessary.

But considering the fragile state of the Yankees' rotation, seeing if Severino can hold up against more experienced Triple-A competition makes sense if the organization is strongly considering using him at some point this year.

There's certainly a precedent for a quick-promotion scenario for Severino. When Phil Hughes was one of the hottest pitching prospects in the game in 2007, he made just five Triple-A starts before earning his first big-league promotion. The caveat: The Yankees rotation at the time had been hit hard with injuries.

It was just about the same story for top prospect Ian Kennedy that year, too. Kennedy started that season in High-A, but rolled through there and Trenton and got just six Scranton starts before his major-league debut. Except Kennedy's situation was a little different, considering he was called up Sept. 1, the first day rosters expand from 25 players to 40.

So, could Severino be on the fast track to the majors? History says maybe.



Report: New York Yankees promote RHP Luis Severino to Triple-A

By Lou DiPietro - 05/28/2015 1:14 PM ET

Top New York Yankees prospect Luis Severino is reportedly now just one step away from the Majors, as *Baseball America's* Josh Norris Tweeted Thursday morning that the team has promoted the 21-year-old right-hander from Double-A Trenton to Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre.

Neither the Yankees nor either of their affiliates have yet confirmed the move, although the Thunder, who will play a doubleheader against Akron, could do so in their daily game release later in the day.

Severino, considered by most outlets as not only the top pitching prospect but also the No. 1 overall prospect in the system, has spent the entire year with Trenton, going 2-2 with a 3.32 ERA in eight starts for the Thunder. He has missed some time due to blisters, but in his last start Tuesday, the righty was dominant, striking out nine over five innings and retiring 11 of the last 12 batters he faced after a short rain delay.

A breakout 2014 season, one where he went 6-5 with a 2.47 ERA in 24 starts over three levels of the system, earned Severino a non-roster invite to camp this spring, and he impressed team brass both in workouts and in his two Grapefruit League outings.

"He challenges people, and he's not overwhelmed by the situation," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said back in March. "I mean, obviously, you can see the stuff is there, and it's easy to get excited about that, but his approach is really good, too."

Kay finds data, and solace, in scorebook

Yanks voice relies on records kept in-game as part of increasingly rare practice

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | May 28th, 2015

While the Yankees and the Red Sox engaged in another memorable battle on the evening of April 10, spanning 19 innings in the longest game played at the current Yankee Stadium, there was a much lesser drama taking place outside the white lines.

In the YES Network booth, play-by-play announcer Michael Kay scrambled to make quick additions to the thick battle-scarred scorebook that serves as his constant companion during each broadcast, as [Garrett Jones'](#) flyout to end the 15th inning marked the last of his available white space.

"I could have turned it to another page, but I refused to do that," Kay said. "I said, 'What am I going to do? Who knows how long this game is going to go?' So I grabbed some index cards, used those to keep it going and we got through the game."

Kay scored the entirety of the Yankees' 19-inning game vs. Boston on April 10.

Once sold in every big league ballpark, scorecards have become something of a lost art -- or at least a niche hobby -- among fans, who now enjoy a multitude of high-tech avenues to keep track of a game's progress in real time. For many of those who make their living in the game, it remains a necessity.

Those backward Ks, L-8s and E-3s can reconstruct the details of any evening at the stadium, be it minutes or months later. On the YES Network set in Stamford, Conn., the night of April 10, analyst Jack Curry was also making hasty additions to his book, supplementing the allotted space with scraps of paper.

"It's almost like you're studying for a test, and keeping score is doing the studying," Curry said. "I've always been a big advocate of keeping score, since I was probably 8 years old. I've always loved to keep score; it's in my blood."

Curry said that scoring helps him follow patterns and trends in a given game. For example, CC Sabathia may have recorded seven ground-ball outs in his first three innings, a suggestion that his two-seam fastball or changeup is on point that day. Curry will typically add the final pitch -- i.e., "slider" -- of each at-bat in small print.

"I'm not saying it has to look impeccable; I just want to know every pitch. That has come in handy," Curry said. "There are times in the fourth inning where I'll be like, 'What's this guy doing so well?' And you'll go through it and every out a guy has gotten has been on one or two pitches. There's a theme there."

Scorecards used to be more prevalent in the seats, but there are still die-hards who swear by keeping an independent account. One is Michael Schwartz, who started scoring as a Friday plan ticket-holder during the Yankees' late-1990s dynasty and developed his own scorebook. He calls his book "an organized diary" of the games he attends.

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"There are lots of intricacies in scoring methods, but if you can recall the events of the game, it has served its purpose," Schwartz said. "When Mariano Rivera retired last year, I started digging through my old scorebooks and was surprised at how detailed they were. I remember a guy fell down the stairs at in the upper deck and we had the notation 'human tumbleweed' in the margin. Great stuff!"

Kay said that he begins filling in his book the moment the batting orders appear on Twitter -- on one recent afternoon, he did so while multitasking on his radio show. The lineups are supplemented with batter-vs.-pitcher trends cribbed from the game notes; if Brett Gardner is 3-for-9 lifetime with a double and a homer vs. the Rangers' Colby Lewis, that could prove helpful during the broadcast.

Kay said that he seems to keep more details than he did as a beat reporter, including a chart of defensive positioning that is more essential than ever. The increasing number of shifts has created a new challenge for play-by-play announcers, with infielders sometimes changing spots pitch to pitch.

"Shifts are the most evil thing I've ever seen," Kay said. "You can't even score anymore, because a 5-3 could be a ball hit to the right side. I end up saying, 'Ground ball to the right side,' because this schematic doesn't mean anything to me. They should outlaw it; that's what they should do. It's terrible."

While scoring the game may be essential for a play-by-play announcer, it is not necessarily so for a color commentator, particularly one who sees the game at a deeper level than 6-4-3 and F-9. That's the case for Paul O'Neill, who said he prefers to react to the game as he did during his playing days.

"When I came up here and did my first game, I just didn't have a book," O'Neill said. "I didn't know that you did that, to tell you the truth. Now every once in a while, I have to peek over at Michael's, but it's more natural for me to watch the game and talk about it than to keep score. It's kind of like a fan's point of view."

John Flaherty agrees. The former catcher started his analyst career by scribbling in a notebook before transitioning into scoring, but he acknowledges that his personal record keeping won't win any awards, especially compared to those produced by Kay and former outfielder Ken Singleton.

"Kenny and Michael, you can't even compare; theirs are meticulous," Flaherty said. "When they say, 'I need Wite-Out to fix something,' I'm like, 'Are you kidding? My Wite-Out is to cross it out and write it in another box somewhere.'"

Flaherty said that he mostly tries to track walks, strikeouts and well-struck balls. He will circle strikeouts so he can add them quickly, and the rest operates on an independent language that may be difficult for anyone else to understand.

"I try to document each at-bat as far as the fly ball, hit a ball hard, base hit, just give me a little more information instead of 7, 8, 9," Flaherty said. "I want to look back and be able to say, 'He hit that ball well.'"

Others stick with what has worked with them for decades; in lieu of scoring, former pitchers David Cone and Al Leiter prefer to fill in the pitching charts that they used during their playing days, allowing quick analysis of pitch selection and workload.

None of the books is likely to wind up in the Hall of Fame or the Smithsonian, so they are often relegated to closets or garages by the end of the campaign, replaced each spring with a fresh spiral-bound stack. Kay and Curry say they could dig out their books from the 2009 World Series championship season if necessary, not that they've ever felt any need to refer back to them.

"It's somewhere in my garage," Kay said. "My 6-month-old son will probably look at it some day -- and then he'll throw it out."

Yankee Stadium Dimensions Cramping New York City FC's Style

New York City FC plays on the smallest field allowed by international rules thanks to park's dimensions. Is it affecting their performance on the field?

Ryan Wallerson - May 28, 2015 8:47 p.m. ET

Early in the first half of New York City FC's March 28 home match against Sporting Kansas City, Kansas City defender Matt Besler launched a throw-in from the right sideline of the Yankee Stadium pitch. The ball sailed all the way into the NYCFC goalmouth, where Ike Opara outjumped NYCFC defender Kwame Watson-Siriboe and headed it into the goal.

NYCFC won the possession battle in that match by a ratio of nearly 2 to 1, and outshot Kansas City 13-9, but Kansas City left the Bronx with a 1-0 victory thanks to Besler's heave and Opara's header. "It was not a surprise to us," NYCFC coach Jason Kreis said of the goal afterward. "The throw-in was inch perfect and ended up in the back of the net."

It was the first time that the dimensions of the field at Yankee Stadium had directly affected the outcome of a game. But it wouldn't be the last. NYCFC's pitch measures 110 yards long by 70 yards wide—the smallest field in all of Major League Soccer, and the smallest allowed by FIFA's international guidelines.

Some elements of a soccer field are standardized—the 18-yard penalty box and the 10-yard center circle, for example. But the dimensions of the field itself can vary, like in baseball. Besides NYCFC, D.C. United and the Portland Timbers are the only MLS teams that play on fields as short as 110 yards. Only NYCFC and the Houston Dynamo play on fields as narrow as 70 yards. The Los Angeles Galaxy plays on the league's biggest field, 120x80. At the beginning of every season, each team must submit its dimensions to the league and then maintain them all season.

In NYCFC's case, the tight confines are the result of a stopgap stadium situation, with Yankee Stadium playing host to the team only temporarily. In the lead-up to this inaugural season for NYCFC, much attention was focused on whether a quality playing surface could be built in a space regularly swapped between soccer pitch and a baseball field. After five home games—the sixth is scheduled for Saturday against the Houston Dynamo—players have said that the pitch quality doesn't affect the game.

But the smaller dimensions are a different story.

If Kansas City's rare goal from a throw-in wasn't much of a surprise to NYCFC, it was even less of one to Kansas City. "We definitely trained for it. We practiced on a field that was 68 yards this week," Besler said after the match. "We were heavy on set pieces on the narrower pitch, so we were prepared coming in."

‘I like playing through the middle a lot, but it’s a smaller field so it is more difficult to do that. If there are more options out wide, then that’s where we have to go.’

—NYCFC midfielder Mix Diskerud

Opara, in particular, came to Yankee Stadium intent on turning set pieces from the sides of the smaller field into scoring chances.

“We run two different long-throw plays,” he said. “This field is so narrow we were able to run my favorite, which is going up to attack the field, as opposed to more indirect flicks and tricks. It was fortunate for us that the field is the size it was, and we are able to take advantage.”

Statistically, NYCFC has played well at home thus far, allowing more than one goal in just one game. But it hasn’t translated into victories. During its current four-game home winless streak, NYCFC has completed a higher percentage of passes than its opponents have. It has put more shots on goal, won more corner kicks and more tackles than its opponents. The team is clearly learning to perform on the smaller field.

“You want to keep it wide because it’s a narrow field and you don’t want to congest the middle of the field because it becomes very tough to keep possession,” said midfielder Mix Diskerud. “I like playing through the middle a lot, but it’s a smaller field so it is more difficult to do that. If there are more options out wide, then that’s where we have to go.”

Mastering the snug angles and the quicker decisions that a smaller field requires should also help when the team leaves New York to play on the MLS’s larger fields.

ENLARGE

“If you can play on a small field you can play on any field, so a lot of those teams that are going to come here used to playing on a larger field can’t keep possession the same way we can, because we are accustomed to it,” said NYCFC goalkeeper Josh Saunders, who noticed the effect of playing on a smaller field when he trained with Manchester City, NYCFC’s sister team, before the season. “With Man City, I saw them training on the smallest fields possible, and it’s so hard to play on that area and space. But once you take it on to a bigger field, you become such a better player.”

Kreis, who coached Real Salt Lake from 2007 to 2013, prefers a possession and attack-based style of play—one that was easier to execute on Salt Lake’s field, with its 30 additional feet of length. But it can be difficult to manage when defenders are always closer to the ball than they would be on a larger field. Kreis has played down the Yankee Stadium effect on NYCFC’s wins and losses, but seems to know that the pitch, in this case, is a little off.

“It’s not a factor—certainly not an excuse,” he said after NYCFC’s loss to Kansas City. “This is our pitch, and we need to execute on it.”

Montreal appeals to MLB for regular-season games

The mayor of Montreal has asked Major League Baseball Commissioner **Rob Manfred** to consider playing three or four regular-season games in the city next year.

Mayor **Denis Coderre** met with commissioner Manfred in New York on Thursday. Coderre says six or seven teams have expressed an interest in playing there in 2016.

Montreal had the Expos from 1969 through 2004. The team then moved to Washington and became the Nationals.

A pair of exhibition games in Montreal between the Blue Jays and Reds in early April drew a total of more than 96,000 fans to Olympic Stadium.

"He's open to it," Coderre said. "I showed that we have a clear strategy and that the fans are there. We can fill the (Olympic Stadium). Now the next step is to get regular-season games here. If we can fill the stadium in April, imagine in June or July."

• Eduardo Rodriguez, 22, threw 7 $\frac{2}{3}$ scoreless innings to become the youngest **Red Sox** start-

SPORTSWIRE

er to win in his major-league debut on the road since 1967, and Boston beat the Rangers, 5-1, to spoil Josh Hamilton's first home game back in Texas.

• Chris Sale struck out 12 over 7 $\frac{2}{3}$ shutout innings to lead the **White Sox** to a 3-2 victory over the host **Orioles**, who rebounded to win the second game, 6-3, in a doubleheader caused by rioting in Baltimore last month.

SABRES HIRE BYLSMA

The Buffalo Sabres have hired **Dan Bylsma** to become their next coach. The hiring was announced Thursday, after the former Pittsburgh Penguins coach spent a second consecutive day meeting with Sabres owners **Terry** and **Kim Pegula** and general manager **Tim Murray** in Buffalo. Bylsma, who won the Stanley Cup with the Sidney Crosby-led Penguins in 2009, takes over a franchise coming off consecutive last-place finishes and attempting to rebuild with youth.

BRONCOS' CLADY TEARS ACL

Broncos left tackle **Ryan Clady** has torn his left ACL and will likely miss the season, leaving Denver to search for someone to protect **Peyton Manning's** blind side.

BOWDITCH LEADS BYRON NELSON

Steven Bowditch matched his career best with an 8-under 62 in the first round of the AT&T Byron Nelson in Irving, Tex., leaving **Jordan Spieth** seven strokes back. **Jimmy Walker** was second after a 64. Spieth opened with a birdie but missed two short chances late and settled for a 69.

THE METS are slowly in the process of rebuilding their bullpen, just with the people they had in the first place.

They imagined a power righty quartet of Jeurys Familia, Jenrry Mejia, Vic Black and Bobby Parnell being joined by the late-spring lefty acquisitions, Jerry Blevins and Alex Torres. But only Familia and Torres have remained available to the Mets during the first quarter of this season.

However, after incurring 532 DL days lost so far (third in the majors, the most in the NL), the Mets are sensing a momentum shift toward healing and getting many of their key cogs back.

Assistant general manager John Ricco, for example, stuck to the organizational theme that no matter how ominous David Wright's lower-back ailment might sound, the Mets believe he will rehab and return.

First, though, Travis d'Arnaud could be back in a few days, and Dilson Herrera will follow in June. But it is the bullpen that could receive the largest boost with Black and Parnell both currently on rehab stints. Blevins is further back, perhaps returning in July from a fractured forearm.

The most intriguing return, though, is from someone not injured. Without a rainout, Mejia can return July 7 from his 80-game suspension for testing positive for an anabolic steroid.

Mejia is allowed to prepare in the minors before that date, and Ricco said the club hoped to have him ready to pitch in the majors the day he is eligible to return. Mejia is currently throwing at the Mets' Dominican academy. Ricco said the plan is to bring Mejia to Port St. Lucie in early June and have him begin pitching for affiliates around the third week of that month.

Under the best circumstances, the Mets could have three power righty relievers with closer experience (Familia, Mejia and Parnell)

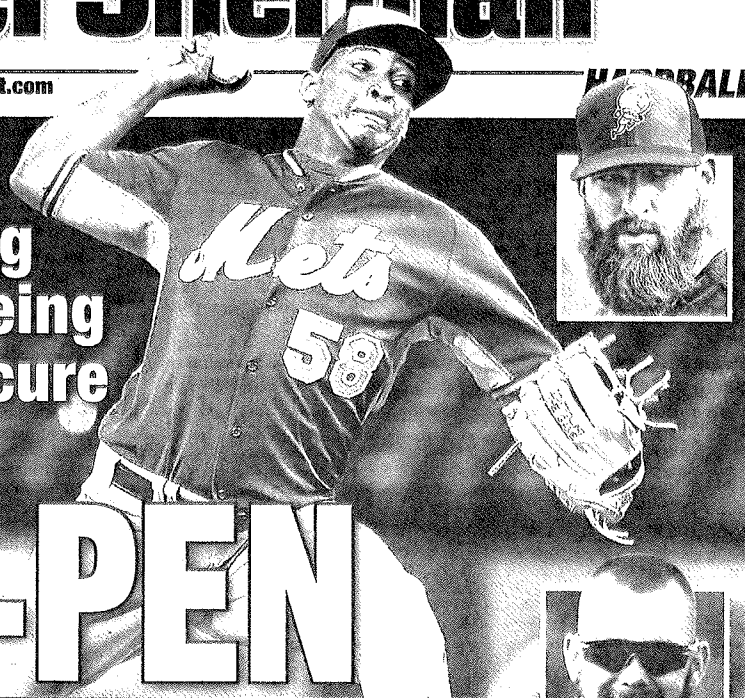


Joel Sherman

joel.sherman@nypost.com

Mets bank on returning relievers being enough to cure their ills

EPI-PEN



PENDING APPROVAL: The Mets eagerly await the returns of Jenrry Mejia, Bobby Parnell (above right) and Vic Black (right), among others, to form a potent bullpen the Mets thought they'd have to begin the season.

as part of the end game. It isn't Dellin Betances/Andrew Miller, but it could be good.

However, there is a lot of fragility here. Parnell's fastball has not yet returned to its pre-Tommy John surgery heights. Black must prove he can stay healthy and consistent. And Mejia will have to show he was not a lab creation. Familia has done wonderfully stepping in as

the closer. But he has no history of doing that for a full season.

The Mets have some numbers to throw at this with the dependable Carlos Torres, plus Erik Goedel and Hansel Robles offering positive first glimpses. Rafael Montero is part of the group of currently DL-ed Mets moving in a better direction, so he is a pen option as well. The wild card is whether the

Mets would use Steve Matz in relief to finish his 2015 innings cap in the way, for example, the Royals did with 2014 first-round pick Brandon Finnegan last year, though their long-term plan was to return him to start. The Mets are quite familiar with how Adam Wainwright was deployed in 2006 before becoming an ace starter.

It is vital the Mets are able to

solve this internally because the growing sense is they are going to have to use resources — prospects and finances — to add a bat between now and July 31.

With so many of their relievers — including Mejia — due back by early July, the Mets should get a better feel whether they will need to go find a bullpen arm, too.

Yanks' Jones expendable — until he's not

WHAT HAS been positive for the Yankees — the good health of **Carlos Beltran**, **Alex Rodriguez** and **Mark Teixeira** — has been lousy for **Garrett Jones**. The Yankees obtained him along with **Nate Eovaldi** because the odds they would lose one (or more) of that fragile trio was strong, and Jones had the potential to fill in at first, right or DH.

We mention this now because Jones sticks out as a trade candidate for the Cardinals now that they have lost their lefty first baseman, **Matt Adams**, perhaps for the rest of the season with a torn quad. They have righty-slugging **Matt Reynolds**

but could use a lefty complement. At the top of the food chain is St. Louis native **Ryan Howard**, who has had a Phillies rebirth over the last 30 games, hitting .291 with nine homers and a .949 OPS.

Philadelphia has let it be known it will eat a substantial portion of Howard's contract — he is still owed roughly \$19 million this year, \$25 million next year and \$10 million in a buyout of the \$23 million option he has for 2017. However, Adams is due back next year, so Howard might not work.

Jones is in his walk year. He would be unlikely to cost much in a prospect return,

and he only has approximately \$3 million due him. It is possible Jones' poor hitting this year (one homer, .617 OPS) is because of his inconsistent play. The Yanks, as constituted, are probably better served having a righty hitter who could play second and the outfield, such as **Rob Refsnyder**, on the roster than Jones.

But that is as presently constituted. The Yankees probably could endure the loss of Beltran or A-Rod with internal solutions. However, they tried to play last year without a true backup first baseman, and that was a calamity. Teixeira has been healthy and pro-

ductive, but if he were to go down, could the Yanks survive with A-Rod there or with **Chase Headley** at first and **Stephen Drew/Jose Pirela** at third?

The Yankees had hoped first-base prospect **Greg Bird** could get on a fast track, but he hasn't played for three weeks due to a right shoulder injury and is in Tampa rehabbing.

Thus, unless it was worth their while, are the Yankees best served holding Jones for the same reason they obtained him — that it is unlikely they will get through the season with full health from a few of their more fragile veterans?

L.A. Still adding depth

THE Dodgers are learning what the Yankees have known for a while: No matter the payroll, you can't solve all problems. The Dodgers have an MLB-record payroll of roughly \$275 million. Yet season-ending injuries to **Brandon McCarthy** and **Hyun-jin Ryu** have left them concerned about rotation quality and depth.

Their trade of **Juan Uribe** to the Braves was designed to address some of this. Yes, they wanted to save a little money in the flip of Uribe for **Alberto Callaspo**, plus thin the third-base herd with both **Justin Turner** and **Alexander Guerrero** outperforming Uribe and Cuban import **Hector Oh-**

vera about a month away from joining the team.

But as big a deal as anything for the Dodgers was to add lefties **Eric Stults** and **Ian Thomas** for rotation inventory. Still, that was merely about depth. With what the Dodgers have spent already this year, they are one of the more likely clubs to add a significant starter before the July 31 non-waiver trade deadline, to join **Clayton Kershaw** and **Zack Greinke**. And since Greinke is likely to opt out of his contract after this season, the Dodgers could even be willing to take on a pitcher with years left on his contract, such as Philadelphia's **Cole Hamels**.

AP: NY Post: Charles Weinberg; ANTONY J. CAUSI

CHASE FOR THE CUP

Game 7s involving New York's sports teams date all the way back to 1926, yet our baseball, basketball and hockey teams hold a below .500 record in 74 elimination games (72 actual games, two between Rangers-Devils):

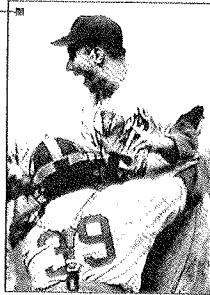
36-38
486

NEW YORK'S SEVEN BEST GAME 7s

1955 WORLD SERIES

Dodgers 2, Yankees 0

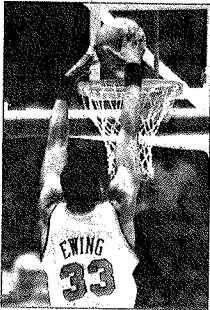
Next Year finally arrives in Brooklyn, less than two years before the Dodgers would abandon the borough. Johnny Podres' arm and Sandy Amoros' glove bring the Bums their only East Coast championship in seven tries against the Yankees.



1970 NBA FINALS

Knicks 113, Lakers 99

Hobbling captain Willis Reed only makes two baskets but they are an emotional lift; Clyde Frazier takes over from there, and his 36 points and 19 assists carry the Knicks to their first title.



1985 WORLD SERIES

Mets 8, Red Sox 5

Though not as epic as the Game 6 that precedes it, the Mets spot the Red Sox three runs and need a dramatic rally in the sixth inning, as Ray Knight's go-ahead homer in the seventh finally muffles the Sox.



1994 EASTERN CONF. FINALS

Rangers 2, Devils 1 (2OT)

After all the ghosts and goblins of 54 years conspire to help the Devils tie the game just before the end of regulation, Stephane Matteau's wraparound beats Martin Brodeur and sets off a forever celebration at the Garden.



1994 EASTERN CONF. FINALS

Knicks 94, Pacers 90

Patrick Ewing dunks a John Starks miss with 26.9 seconds left, holds his breath as Reggie Miller can't get a good look, then climbs on the scorer's table in his signature game (24 points, 22 rebounds) as a pro.



1994 STANLEY CUP FINALS

Rangers 3, Canucks 2

The famous sign says it all: "Now I Can Die in Peace." The Rangers had a chance to wrap the series in five, but if the wait was going to end at all it seemed right that it should end in a Game 7.

2003 AL CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES

Yankees 6, Red Sox 5 (11)

Trailing Pedro Martinez by three runs with five outs to go, the Yankees engineer one of the truly remarkable comebacks of all time, capped by Aaron Boone taking Tim Lincecum deep in the bottom of the 11th.

Anthony J. Causi; AP (3)

Home game italicized

Mets 1-3

- 1973 WS Lost
- * 1986 WS Won
- 1988 NLCS Lost
- 2006 NLCS Lost

Yankees 6-7

- 1926 WS Lost
- 1947 WS Won
- 1952 WS Won
- * 1955 WS Lost
- 1956 WS Won
- 1957 WS Lost
- 1958 WS Won
- 1960 WS Lost
- 1962 WS Won
- 1964 WS Lost
- 2001 WS Lost
- * 2003 ALCS Won
- 2004 ALCS Lost

Knicks 7-8

- 1951 Finals Lost
- 1952 Finals Lost
- 1970 DSF Won
- * 1970 Finals Won
- 1971 ECF Lost
- 1973 ECF Won
- 1974 ECSF Won
- 1984 ECSF Lost
- 1992 ECSF Lost
- 1994 ECSF Won
- * 1994 ECF Won
- 1994 Finals Lost
- 1995 ECSF Lost
- 1997 ECSF Lost
- 2000 ECSF Won

Nets 3-3

- 1970 ABA ECSF Lost
- 1972 ABA ECF Won
- 1976 ABA SF Won
- 2004 ECSF Lost
- 2013 ECQF Lost
- 2014 ECQF Won

Rangers 8-5

- 1939 SF Lost
- 1950 Finals Lost
- 1971 SF Lost
- 1974 SF Lost
- 1992 DSF Won
- * 1994 ECF Won
- * 1994 Finals Won
- 2009 ECQF Lost
- 2012 ECQF Won
- 2012 ECSF Won
- 2013 ECQF Won
- 2014 ECQF Won
- 2015 ECSF Won

Islanders 3-5

- 1975 QF Won
- 1975 SF Lost
- 1978 QF Lost
- 1987 DSF Won
- 1987 DF Lost
- 1993 DF Won
- 2002 ECQF Lost
- 2015 ECQF Lost

Devils 7-7

- 1988 DF Won
- 1988 SF Lost
- 1991 DSF Lost
- 1992 DSF Lost
- 1994 ECQF Won
- * 1994 ECF Lost
- * 1999 ECQF Lost
- 2000 ECF Won
- 2001 ECSF Won
- 2001 Finals Lost
- 2003 ECF Won
- 2003 Finals Won
- 2009 ECQF Lost
- 2012 ECQF Won

- Mike Vaccaro

Baseball Isn't Always A Simple Joy For the Mayor

Being a Red Sox Fan Creates Complications

By MATT FLEGENHEIMER

The trouble began in Milwaukee, after the first ballgame that Mayor Bill de Blasio found time for during a Midwest swing to discuss income inequality — but before the second.

It followed him back home, where tabloids were unsympathetic to the gentle protestations of the mayor, a known Red Sox fan. (“De Blasio: New Yorkers Are Too Mean to Me at Baseball Games,” one headline read.)

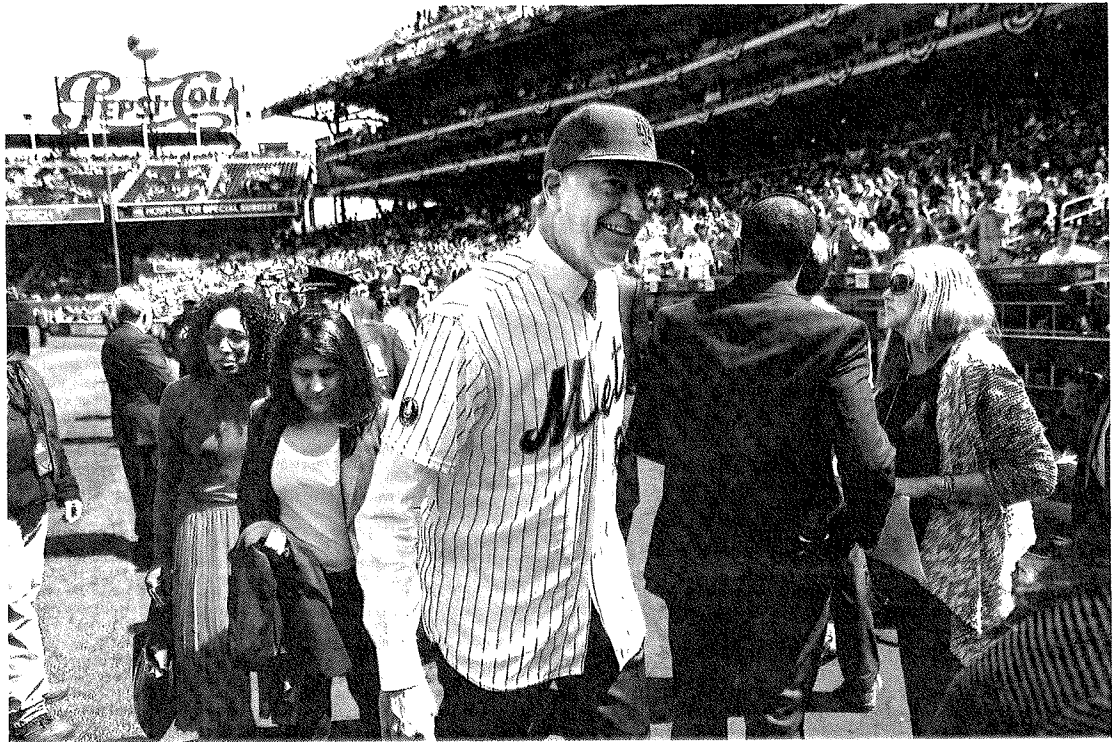
And it led him, at last, to a recent gathering in his City Hall office for that rarest of civic treasures: a mayoral correction, if not an apology, concerning middle fingers, New York City baseball fans and whether the latter had truly flashed the former at their elected leader.

“I actually don’t remember, specifically, getting the finger,” he said in an interview, contradicting playful comments he had made to assembled Wisconsinites in a bid to flatter their ballpark etiquette. “I took some poetic license.”

Governing New York City as an avowed Boston fan, with roots in Massachusetts, always promised to be complicated, despite the cool distance the mayor has kept from Yankee Stadium. He has been there once since taking office, aides said.

For a soccer game.

The mayor has described his dedication to the currently middling sluggers of Fenway Park as “quasi-religious,” and he has made no attempt to conceal his affections in an administration stocked with fellow New Englanders.



CHANG W. LEE/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Mayor Bill de Blasio before the opening day game this year between the New York Mets and the Philadelphia Phillies at Citi Field in Queens. He was booed.

“That shows his bad judgment,” Randy Levine, president of the Yankees and a deputy mayor under Rudolph W. Giuliani, said of Mr. de Blasio’s baseball loyalties, “but nobody’s perfect in life.”

Yet if the mayor’s preferences have at times earned him scorn, his passion for the national pastime has maintained an unusual hold on his life in public and in private, informing his management philosophy, dribbling into the lexicon of daily meetings and, occasionally, keep-

ing him awake well beyond the unofficial mayoral bedtime.

Mr. de Blasio has invoked the film “Field of Dreams” while describing his municipal identification program (“if you build it, they will come”) and has likened his administration to the “Moneyball”-minded Oakland Athletics, baseball’s foremost modern example of overcoming financial inequality.

He has for a decade lamented leaving an underperforming 8-year-old in at

pitcher while managing a Little League playoff game — he appraised the boy as “disastrous” in an interview with The Associated Press last year about his coaching experience — and remains “troubled” by his struggles at first base during a softball game last year against the City Council.

He has smiled through boos during visits to Citi Field for Mets games, though allies pointed out that New York fans are not shy about jeering even

their own underperforming players. (This analogy was, perhaps, ill considered.)

He has taken extracurricular ballpark trips to Pittsburgh and Milwaukee, whose hometown Brewers recently sent the mayor a care package of sausages. (Despite two visits to the stadium, including an unscheduled post-speech jaunt that saw him arrive during the eighth inning of a game, Mr. de Blasio

Continued on Page A20

Continued



Baseball Isn't Always A Simple Joy For de Blasio

From Page A18

had missed out on the local delicacy.)

And when the Yankees and Red Sox duelled for 19 innings last month, the mayor was among the die-hards who stayed up, stirring inside Gracie Mansion for a game that ended after 2 a.m. The next morning, he admitted to being "a little groggy" at his first public appearance: Little League opening day in Prospect Park in Brooklyn.

"Baseball," the mayor said, "is a running soundtrack in my mind."

For city officials, this is a mixed blessing. There are the asides to aides and the discreet searches for box scores. References to the sport are occasionally lost on staff members. "Fans appreciate it," Mr. de Blasio said. "Nonfans roll their eyes a little."

Then there are the Yankees fans.

"I've waited over 20 years, almost my entire adult life, for a Democratic mayor," complained Ruben Diaz Jr., the Bronx borough president. "For him to be a Boston Red Sox fan? Come on."

Council members say the mayor has been an eager foil, often placing bets with colleagues during his time as a councilman. When the Red Sox reached the World Series in 2004, a losing wager with Mr. de Blasio compelled one member at the time, Erik Martin Dilan of Brooklyn, to wear a Red Sox cap and deliver a paean to Boston before his peers.

Mr. de Blasio has argued that true fans appreciate his unwillingness to shift allegiances, though he has found a kinship of sorts with the Mets, another rival of the Yankees.

A sport maintains an unusual hold on a mayor's life in public and in private.

Seated inside his City Hall office for an interview last month, the mayor wore a customized "de Blasio" Mets jersey and matching hat, clutching a baseball that had been a party favor at a bar mitzvah he had attended. The appeal of this wardrobe was uncertain; there were no cameras around.

At turns, the mayor exchanged nonsensical hand signals with his senior adviser, Phil Walzak — like a third base coach telling a player to bunt — and boasted about acquiring Mr. Walzak from a rival administration "for a shortstop and cash considerations."

He tried to name the starting lineup for the 1966 Red Sox and got six of the players right. (The mayor did not get credit for third baseman Joe Foy, whom he seemed to mistake for an entertainer, Eddie Foy.)

At one point, Mr. de Blasio wondered aloud what an aide, who sat in on the interview, must have been thinking.

"She's like, 'What are these boys doing?'" he said. "How does this gender have any responsibility?"

The aide, Elana Leopold, stayed silent.

Nearly every mayor has had a favored athletic pursuit. For David N. Dinkins, it was tennis. Michael R. Bloomberg preferred golf.

Mr. Giuliani's Yankees fandom veered into obsession, cresting when he insisted that a one-eyed, one-toothed septuagenarian named Freddy — considered the team's unofficial mascot and good luck charm — fly to Arizona with his signature frying pan and noise-making spoon during the 2001 World Series.

Mr. Giuliani's image dots the new Yankee Stadium, amid photographs of on-field triumphs and championship celebrations.

Though Mr. de Blasio joked during a recent subway ride with Senator Chuck Schumer of New York that even the bleacher seats at Yankee Stadium were overpriced — a characterization that Mr. Levine, the team president, disputed — the mayor professed "tremendous respect" for several uncontroversial pinstriped luminaries: Yogi Berra, Lou Gehrig, Derek Jeter and Mariano Rivera.

Mr. de Blasio has said he plans to attend a Yankees game soon. The team has extended a standing invitation.

"He told me he's brave," Mr. Levine said, anticipating a Bronx cheer. "He'll take the pounding."

Books of The Times. Weekdays.

With Fans in Royals' Stadium Abuzz, Their Broadcast Isn't Ho-Hum

For most of the 17 years that Ryan Lefebvre has called Kansas City Royals games, the team was predictably lousy. But their unexpectedly fast ascent to play in

RICHARD SANDOMIR

TV SPORTS

last year's World Series and their 28-18 start this season have added a missing dimension. "The feel in the ballpark is different," he said Tuesday at Yankee Stadium before the second game of a three-game series, which was ultimately swept by the Yankees. "Fred White, who preceded me and broadcast the games during the glory years, used to say when you're broadcasting in front of a sellout crowd, it's like playing with an orchestra."

He added, "The buzz of the crowd adds so much to the broadcast."

The Royals are drawing more fans to Kauffman Stadium (up 57 percent, to an average of 31,815 a game). And larger audiences are watching the games on Fox Sports Kansas City: The number of households watching has more than doubled, to 113,000 a game.

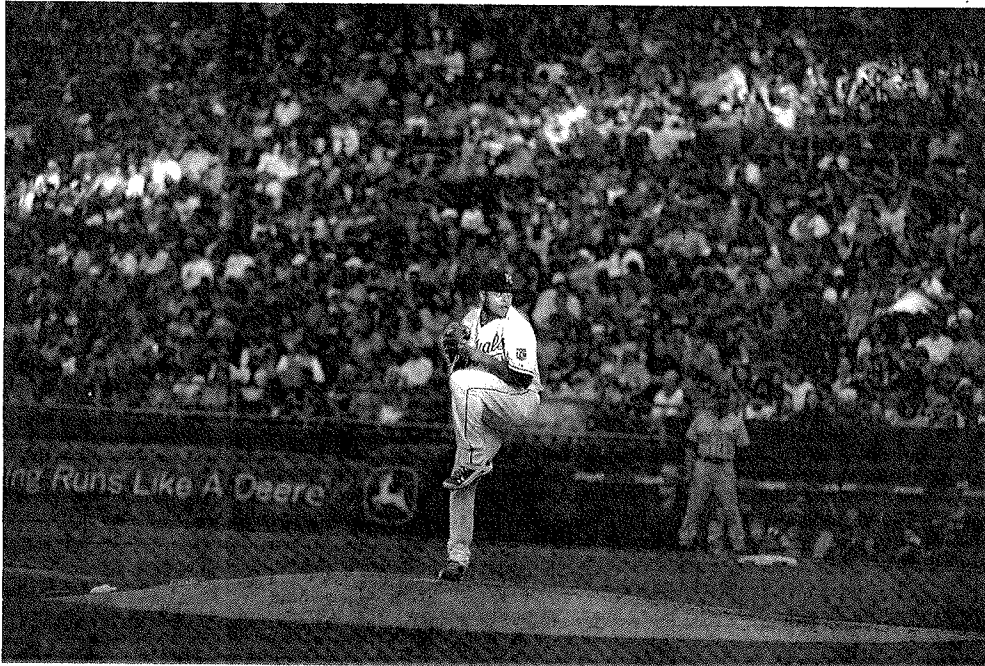
At the same point of the season five years ago, only 28,000 were watching.

But now, the Royals' ratings are ranked No. 1 in baseball, although the size of the Kansas City market means that its viewership is ranked lower.

The Yankees are headed, to a degree, in the opposite direction. Yes, they are in first place in the underwhelming American League East, where their record was a so-so 25-22 entering Thursday night's game at Oakland. Fans are not following the current roster as they have with other more successful and charismatic ones. So far this season, attendance is down just over 1 percent and household viewing on YES Network has fallen 19 percent, to 197,000 a game.

The Royals' substantial leaps in ticket sales and viewing suggest the existence of simmering

Email: sandor@nytimes.com



Edinson Volquez at Kauffman Stadium, where attendance averages 31,815 a game. The Royals' 28-18 start has excited fans.

ED ZURGA/GETTY IMAGES

demand among fans bidding their time for a renaissance team. They waited 29 years for the Royals to reach the postseason before they lost to the San Francisco Giants in the World Series. Now satisfied, they could push attendance to the highest in team history — more than in the glory years in the 1970s and 1980s — if current levels hold.

And they are fueling ratings that regularly beat competitors in prime time.

"Of course, winning leads to higher ratings, but this is about more than just winning," said Jack Donovan, the general manager of Fox Sports Kansas City.

"It's a collection of players who are an entertaining and charismatic bunch."

Advertising rates for the games rose based on last year's success but do not reflect the jump in viewers this season because commercial time was largely sold before opening day. "Customers who negotiated with us in March are getting exceptionally good deals," Donovan said. "Those who chose not to missed an extraordinary buying opportunity."

The Royals could be nearing a financial epiphany over the next few years, especially if they stay a winning team and if the market

Local TV coverage is energized by the roar of the crowd.

for live sports events remains hot. Their deal with Fox Sports Kansas City expires after the 2019 season, and they are likely to receive considerably more than the reported \$20 million annual rights fee they are currently receiving. "We have not begun those conversations yet," Donovan said.

Announcers for perennially

bad teams usually find ways to maintain their interest and avoid cynicism. Longevity, even with a bad team, is part of the formula for making a broadcaster beloved in local markets. When the Seattle Mariners played in their first postseason in 1995 after a largely dismal franchise history, their announcer Dave Niehaus told me, "I've never suffered, never been depressed."

To him, the Pacific Northwest was Valhalla. Why be anywhere else?

Similarly, Lefebvre and Denny Matthews, the Royals' radio announcer since their inception in 1969, said they were never over-

whelmed by the team's dour. "It was kind of a dead time," Matthews said on Tuesday. "My tack was that I always go to the ballpark and hope that both teams play well. Then you have a good broadcast. That doesn't always work out. Sometimes one team plays well. Sometimes neither of them do. In bad times you might win 60 or 70 games and some of them will be good broadcasts. I never let a team record bring me down."

Still, he conceded, it feels different inside the stadium when a team wins. "There's more enthusiasm," he said. "You can feel stadium vibrating."

Lefebvre, whose father, Jim, was the 1965 National League rookie of the year, said it was easier to call a winning team. "You can call, 'Ball one, strike one; game and there'll be pats on the back about how great I was because I was delivering good news," he said. Describing the Royals' losing seasons, he admitted he was educational.

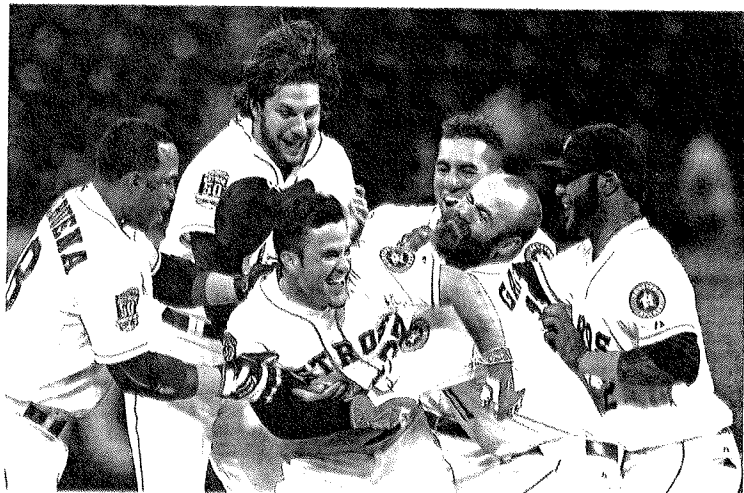
"I had to learn more about players," he said. "What they were working on with coaches. What players needed to do to make them better so it might come to fruition right before our eyes. I went deeper, learning more about the game from a coaching and player development perspective. I've been lucky to have managers and general managers who let me fill the information without revealing secrets."

He added: "I never considered leaving because of wins or losses. In my little world, all those losses made me a better broadcaster. Denny and Fred used to talk to me about the mid-'70s 1980s and how this town will fall in love with this team if it wins again. A part of me wanted to do that."

Thanks to players like center fielder Lorenzo Cain, Lefebvre getting his wish.

"Everybody," Cain said in the Royals' clubhouse, "is loving baseball now."

USA Today
5.29



THOMAS B. SHEA, USA TODAY SPORTS

Astros players have had plenty to celebrate, including a game-winning hit by Jose Altuve, center, last month. "I knew we were going to get to this point," Altuve says.

ASTROS ENJOYING U-TURN SEASON

After years of misery, team on top of AL

Jake Lourim
@JakeLourim
USA TODAY Sports

BALTIMORE During spring training, Houston Astros general manager Jeff Luhnow gathered his 2015 club and asked Jose Altuve, Jason Castro and Marwin Gonzalez to stand up.

Only those three had been with the team since spring training in 2012. Luhnow's first as GM. The group weathered back-to-back 100-loss seasons and 92 more defeats in 2014, as the front office rebuilt from the ground up.

This offseason, Luhnow brought in a group of players to, along with the rising minor leaguers in the organization, help contend for a playoff spot.

"My message to them was, 'We've done enough work now where you guys are going to get enough help this year,'" Luhnow said this week in Baltimore.

What the holdovers and the newcomers have done is something even optimistic Luhnow might not have imagined.

As they kick off a seven-game homestand today, the Astros have the American League's best record at 30-18.

Luhnow said he thought when his team finally got good, it would happen quickly. And an organization that endured six consecutive losing seasons, including a third 100-loss season in 2011, is being rewarded for its faith.

The Astros were halfway through a franchise-worst 111-loss season in 2013 when Altuve, their All-Star second baseman, signed a contract extension through 2019.

"I've always been a very positive mind," said Altuve, the AL batting champion in 2014. "So I knew. I knew we were going to get to this point. I knew the effort of the front office and the players put together, some day it was going to be good like it is right now."

Yet teams don't turn 100-loss seasons into a .625 winning percentage overnight. Sure, there are tangible reasons for the turn-

around, from a revamped bullpen rising from last in the AL to second in ERA to prospects emerging to new blood coming from winning teams and raising expectations to fit their new potential.

PLAYING A KIDS' GAME

Dallas Keuchel, the ace of the pitching staff, strolled into the Astros' clubhouse in Baltimore on Monday around 10:35 a.m. "Sup, guys?" he said casually, a smile sneaking through his bushy beard. He was scheduled to start the 1:35 game.

First baseman Chris Carter accidentally bumped Gonzalez, and Gonzalez playfully feigned injury. Backup catcher Hank Conger suddenly broke into his batting stance in the middle of the room.

Relief pitcher Joe Thatcher walked by and narrowly avoided Conger's moving bat. When he realized what almost happened, he burst into laughter.

The scene is typical of a winning team, perhaps a bit slap-happy after arriving the night before for a day game.

"We ultimately play a kids' game for a living," Keuchel said Tuesday. "We never take that for granted. But there is a business side to it, and when you don't win, there's a lot of changes."

There was lots of losing in Luhnow's first three years; change followed. Of the 25 players on the active roster, 11 are new this season. They regularly use everyone on their roster, yet have a stable of top prospects in the upper minor leagues, including No. 1 overall picks Carlos Correa (2012) and Mark Appel (2013).

When the group first gathered in spring training, Castro said it was the first time the Astros thought they might be out of the woods. They didn't care that most preseason projections had them fourth or fifth in the AL West.

"They're external expectations," manager A.J. Hinch said. "I think our guys are very focused on a day-to-day basis on trying to win. We do believe that our best is good enough to win."

The Astros have been stockpiling young talent for years. But on their roster, the Astros have only one player younger than 24 — 21-year-old starter Lance McCullers

— and four younger than 25.

"We're not as young as people want us to be," Hinch said Wednesday. "We're going to be younger."

They've patiently kept players like Correa — who is flourishing at Class AAA Fresno — growing in the minor leagues, instead finding success with players who have gained years of experience in their organization or somewhere else.

Keuchel took his lumps in his first two years with the Astros, when he went 9-18 with a 5.20 ERA. But Houston gave him his chance. Last season he rewarded them with a 2.93 ERA in 29 starts. Now 27, he is 6-1 and ranks and fourth in the AL in ERA (1.98).

"That wouldn't happen on a regular team," Keuchel said. "You wouldn't get multiple opportunities."

The Astros' patience and persistence has paid off, though again not in the conventional way. Their roster construction has produced statistical extremes.

Despite ranking 28th of 30 big-league teams in batting average and second in strikeouts entering Thursday, they were tied for fifth in runs, largely because of a major league-leading 66 home runs.

"We play complete games, I guess that's the best way to describe it," Hinch said. "They give us 27 outs. We maximize them."

Five players — Evan Gattis, Carter, Colby Rasmus, Luis Valbuena and George Springer — have at least seven home runs, yet each is hitting less than .240.

While skeptics note that they likely won't keep up their home run pace, the Astros counter that they aren't likely to continue slumping in the batting average category, either.

"Obviously we've been able to sustain it up until this point," said reliever Chad Qualls, who was on the 2005 NL champion Astros and made stops with seven other teams before returning last year. "These young guys are only going to get better. I don't think Springer's going to hit .200 his whole career. I don't think Gattis is going to hit .200. I don't think Carter's going to hit .160. And yet, we're still winning games."



Let's play two: Baseball would be better with a split season

Ken Rosenthal – 5.29.15

Commissioner Rob Manfred is open-minded to any suggestion that would make baseball better, so here's another idea for him to consider:

A split season.

Yes, you read that right – and hold off on your “No! Stop! Leave the game alone!” tweets until you at least read the rest of the column. (Actually, have at me now if you must – but at least throw me a bone and continue reading!)

A split season – two halves of 81 games each – would improve the game in two notable ways, creating September-like urgency throughout the season and giving teams that stink in the first half the chance to start anew in the second.

We're talking greater excitement, increased fan interest and yes, potentially higher ratings for networks such as FOX. We are *not* talking about abandoning the tradition of the sport.

The 162-game season (or 154-game season, if baseball returns to that number) is part of what makes the game special. Yet, it would be possible to reward the best teams of both halves *and* the best over 162.

Here is one possibility, preserving the current postseason structure:

- * The AL and NL teams with the best overall records in each half would qualify for at least the wild-card game.

- * The division winners after 162 games would qualify for the Division Series.

- * If either wild-card qualifier won its division, the team with the next-best record over 162 games would go to the wild-card game.

The All-Star Game would take place at the halfway point. Baseball, at the one time of year when it stands nearly alone on the sporting landscape, could provide a white-hot pennant race instead of simply a gussied-up exhibition.

Remember how former commissioner Bud Selig used to talk about “hope and faith” for low-revenue clubs when pushing competitive balance? The split season would be an extension of that philosophy. Many low-revenue teams cannot sustain success over 162 games. But over 81? Different story.

Two such clubs, the Brewers and Athletics, might have won their respective first halves last season (the Athletics held on for a wild-card spot, anyway). Two more upstarts, the Astros and Twins, would stand a chance for the best overall record after 81 games this year.

And that is just one concept.

Baseball could get creative and devise formats that would reward more than one team in each league per half. The sport just would need to guard against penalizing a club that did not win either half but finished with the best overall record in its division (something that might have happened to the Cardinals last season).

Better minds than mine could figure it out. In fact, better minds than mine would *need* to figure it out, because one very large obstacle stands in the way of enacting a split season:

Scheduling.

Good luck trying to achieve the proper balance between home and road games, division and non-division games. Good luck creating an even distribution of off-days, accounting for postponements and addressing tie-breaker possibilities. Then again, when is the schedule ever fair, anyway?

I'll tell you one thing that would need to go: interleague play. Selig introduced that novelty to boost attendance. The split season, though, would protect the sport against erosion by spurring greater interest.

Think about it: *Two* trade deadlines likely would be necessary, leading to greater action and more complex decision-making. Would a team such as the Marlins sell knowing it could try again in the second half? Or would it stand pat or even buy to load up for another shot?

Again, better minds than mine would need to forecast any unintended consequences. Maybe baseball would be better off eliminating the deadline, eliminating the August waiver period (please!) and eliminating September roster expansion (double please!). True, deadlines spur activity, but the A.J. Prellers of the world seem quite comfortable wheeling and dealing year-round.

A split season would carry two other potential benefits:

- * Teams would be in better position to recover from early injuries.

The Marlins, Rangers, Athletics and Padres, to cite just a few examples, all anticipate the returns of multiple injured players. Such clubs might be in better position to compete in the second half than they were in the first half.

- * Teams might be less inclined to keep top prospects in the minors for service-time considerations.

Each game, in theory, would carry greater weight, so teams would have more incentive to go with their best.

Consider the Astros and shortstop Carlos Correa. Granted, the team holds the best record in the AL, and Correa is developing on a reasonable track at Triple-A. But would the 'Stros be as inclined to wait on him if they were trying to steal the overall first-half crown?

The split season is not foreign to baseball; it is employed by every minor league except the Triple-A International and Pacific Coast League and Double-A Eastern League. Most players were accustomed to it once; they could grow accustomed to it again.

I'm certain many fans would oppose the idea on principle, just as they initially opposed many of Selig's innovations. But as Manfred moves forward, the split season should be part of any discussion about the sport's future.

What is the downside in at least talking about it?

SportsBusiness Daily

Five MLB Teams Participating In Season-Long Delta SkyMiles Program

By Terry Lefton, Editor-at-Large - Published May 28, 2015|

Delta is tying together five of its MLB team sponsorships for a season-long, baseball-themed frequency/loyalty platform. The Delta Dugout program, expanded from two to five MLB teams this year, will run June 1-Sept. 3 and will work in conjunction with the carrier's SkyMiles program. Delta Dugout offers SkyMiles customers unique experiences with the Braves, Mets, Tigers, Twins and Yankees. Top prizes include suites, trips to the field for batting practice, signed merchandise, game tickets and Delta gift certificates. Players signed to support the promotion are Baseball HOFer-elect John Smoltz, former Yankees P Mariano Rivera, Mets P Matt Harvey, Tigers P David Price and Twins 3B Trevor Plouffe. They will do in-stadium ads and media tours for Delta. Other support includes traditional, digital and social media, and in-stadium "Delta Days." Octagon developed the strategy and programming concepts that revised the approach Delta had taken in previous years. MKG handles event production and design.

SportsBusiness Daily

MLB Attendance Flat After Two Months; Royals Seeing 54% Increase At Kauffman Stadium

Published May 28, 2015

MLB attendance is flat after nearly two months of the '15 season, with teams averaging 21,195 fans per game. The Royals are seeing a league-best 54% gain in home attendance, with the club now averaging 31,815 fans per game. Other AL clubs seeing strong gains are the Mariners (+33%), Indians (+15%) and A's (+13%). However, some AL clubs are seeing sharp drops at the gate. The Rays are down 21%, while the Rangers are down 20%. Listed below is team-by-team attendance for the AL through May 26, with comparisons to the same period last year. See tomorrow's issue for NL team figures (*THE DAILY*).



Pitchers shouldn't be allowed to use foreign substances -- period

Matthew Trueblood – 5.28.15

It's becoming an annual thing. Last week, Will Smith and Brian Matusz were ejected and suspended for applying foreign substances to the ball (really, for being found with foreign substances on their bodies while on the mound), touching off what's fast becoming a hopelessly convoluted conversation.

Last year, of course, it was Michael Pineda making the headlines. In 2013, Clay Buchholz came under fire. In 2012, Joel Peralta's ejection from a game against his former team led to Joe Maddon and Davey Johnson yelling at each other, first on the field, then through the media. (That incident, if nothing else, brought us the phrase "□□weird wuss."□□)

Each time it happens, we rehash the same arguments, which could easily boil down to a bullet-point list but tend to be couched in anecdotes, ballplayer quotes and summarized histories of doctoring the ball. Since I did all of that in the first paragraph, though, I have a chance to simply deliver that list of bullets:

- * Every pitcher in the league, or some astoundingly high percentage of them, uses foreign substances on the baseball.
- * Most of them use it primarily for the grip, to reliably get the action they expect on the ball, not to doctor the ball into some air dance that stretches the limits of physics.
- * Because of the relatively lax enforcement of the rules prohibiting use of these substances, it's become an open secret among teams. Only when the violation goes beyond evident and into the realm of blatant is it considered couth to ask an umpire to inspect an opposing pitcher.
- * Batters want pitchers to use what they need to grip the ball well, within reason, the better to protect against errant pitches shattering the ear flaps of their batting helmets.

* The rule against substances has become such a farce as to pass out of utility, and MLB should simply rewrite the rules to permit a broader spectrum of grip enhancers for pitchers.

I might be sensing more unanimity than there is on this issue, but it sure feels like that concluding bullet matches the general sentiment. (An informal Twitter poll brought me five votes in favor of relaxing or abolishing foreign-substance rules and just one in favor of maintaining them.) Given the ubiquity of the practice, people are reticent to vilify players for breaking the rules that regulate it.

That's great. We should certainly avoid undue castigation. Using pine tar, sunscreen or another illegal substance to grip the ball does not make a player a black-hearted cheater. Nor does scuffing or cutting the ball make a pitcher a bad guy. Whatever he can get away with, he need not feel shame for trying. The culture of American sports permits competitors to cheat. (We should talk about whether that's a good thing, I guess. But not today.) The legitimacy of a game doesn't hinge on everyone playing by the rules.

It does, however, hinge on everyone being held to the rules as closely as logistics and fairness allow. That's where those who want to wash their hands of this problem lose me. If reasonable steps aren't taken to make sure rules are enforced, the game gets worse. Scandal erupts. Players get unfair, uneven treatment from the media. Teams look for the right chances to create an advantage. Unnecessary drama builds, centered not on the game, but on the childish code of conduct that governs those who play it.

My objections to letting foreign substances go run deeper, though. For one thing, the fact that hitters support the right of pitchers to use them is as misleading as it is backward. Hitters have teammates to protect. It wouldn't go over that well on one side of a clubhouse if the other spent its time bemoaning the use of foreign substances, so hitters give the quote their pitchers will appreciate, because they don't realize what's really going on. And that's the second thing: I can't believe hitters can't see what's really going on. It's grating, the smugness with which pitchers dismiss the use of these substances as ways to get a better grip. They're just trying to get a surer grip on their breaking ball, and to avoid letting a fastball fly a little too early, beaming a guy. It's for the hitter's own good, you see. No one wants a guy who can't get a grip throwing 95 at them.

You know something? If a pitcher can't get a grip, he ain't throwing 95. If he can't properly grip a breaking ball, he's going to stick to his fastball. Finger strength, touch, manipulation of the hand itself throughout a delivery: These are skills that separate good pitchers from bad ones. They're part of the art of pitching, and if a pitcher can't achieve that without using a grip aid, that's a failing we deserve to see on display.

Getting a grip isn't just getting a grip, is what I'm saying. Pitchers want you to think it is, and many people are lapping that up, but getting an unnaturally comfortable grip allows pitchers to do unnatural things, things that exceed their real talent level, both in terms of raw stuff and in terms of command. It's a difference of degree, not a difference of kind, but it's still a difference.

Like a 550-foot Mark McGwire home run, a three-foot break on an 88-mph Pineda slider is a farce. It's fun to watch, but only if you're able to utterly turn off the part of your brain that says, "□□This guy shouldn't be able to do that."□□ And lest you doubt that Pineda (or countless others; I'm just working within the realm of what we know for sure) got something real out of the pine tar he was using last April, consider this:

Every time a pitcher takes the mound, be it the first inning or the ninth, the home-plate umpire should walk to the mound as the ball goes around the horn after the final warmup toss. He should do a cursory inspection of the pitcher, checking his glove, his arms, the bill of his cap. I'm not talking about frisking anyone, but a thorough visual check should take place every half-inning. And if the umpire sees something suspicious, he should follow up on it. Just as is the case now, any pitcher found with an illegal substance on the mound, or any teammate caught aiding the pitcher in applying such a substance to the ball, should be immediately ejected and suspended.

By the way, hold your outrage about the suspension for doctoring the ball being longer than that for throwing at a batter or punching someone during a brawl. This overlooks an obvious, crucial difference in the kind of violation involved: The extracurricular stuff is extracurricular. It's shameful and stupid and often dangerous, but it doesn't imperil the competitive integrity of the game on the field even a little. That gives players a bit of a shield from discipline. When the game itself is the victim of an infraction, suspensions get longer. So it is that corked bats draw the same penalty foreign substances do. So it is that performance-enhancing drugs draw a longer one, and so it is that betting on baseball draws the longest one possible. Again, cheating is part of the United States' sporting culture. It's not a defect of personal character to flout the rules. It's a defect of institutional character to ignore them, or to selectively enforce them.

Pitchers don't need pine tar and sunscreen on the ball in order to pitch well, and if they do, they don't deserve to pitch well. We need a stronger enforcement system for the rules in place to stop them from using those substances, not a way around the rules that everyone can simply feel better about.



Wednesday's power rankings

David Schoenfield, 5.28.15

1. Bryce Harper, Washington Nationals: No words, just tweets as Harper hit his 18th home run in the Nationals' 3-0 win over the Cubs:

2. Max Scherzer, Nationals: Scherzer matched up against Jon Lester, giving us \$365 million worth of pitching talent, more than the annual gross domestic product of the Federated States of Micronesia. Scherzer made mincemeat of the strikeout-prone Cubs, fanning 13 in seven innings. He has won his past five starts, lowered his ERA to 1.51 and is finding the National League very much to his liking. Compared to 2014, Scherzer's batting average allowed is down 39 points, his OPS allowed is down 145 points, his K rate is up 2.5 percent, and his walk rate is down 3.4 percent.

One simple thing he's doing: Throwing more pitches in the strike zone, 4 percent more often than he did last season. Of course, it's not quite that simple. He has thrown more pitches in the upper half of the strike zone, 6 percent more often than he did in 2014. As you might expect, that means he's throwing more fastballs. The chart shows how his pitches break down.

So more fastballs and slider, fewer changeups and curveballs, and thus fewer walks. And it hasn't hurt him yet in other areas. I don't know if it's a slight change in mindset or a reflection of weaker NL lineups, but it's clearly an approach that is working.

After starting 7-13, the Nationals have gone 21-6. That stretch started with what Nationals fans will refer to as "The Uggla Game," the dramatic 13-12 win over the Braves. In this 27-game stretch, the Nationals lead the majors in runs per game and are eighth in runs allowed per game. It's also right about the time Harper heated up.

3. Felix Hernandez, Seattle Mariners: In what may turn out to be the best pitchers' duel of the season, Hernandez locked up with Chris Archer of the Tampa Bay Rays for eight scoreless innings. Archer had fanned 12 and thrown just 94 pitches, but manager Kevin Cash removed his right-hander for closer Brad Boxberger. Mistake. For the second straight game, Boxberger gave up the game-losing home run. After walking Seth Smith and Robinson Cano, Nelson Cruz swatted a 1-0 fastball into the fish tank in center field. Meanwhile, Felix completed a 101-pitch shutout. Archer ended up with a game score of 90, Hernandez with 86. Last year, there was no game where both starters recorded at least an 85 or higher.

4. Steals of home! OK, a double steal isn't quite as cool as a straight steal, but Jimmy Paredes stole home as the back of the double steal for the Baltimore Orioles in their 5-4 win over the Astros. Good enough!

5. Alex Rodriguez, New York Yankees: He hit a three-run homer to pass Lou Gehrig on the all-time RBI list. (Depending on the source, Rodriguez either passed Gehrig or is tied with him at 1,995 RBIs. Either way, that's a lot of RBIs.) The Yankees also completed a three-game sweep of the Royals with the 4-2 win, limiting them to four runs in the three games. Andrew Marchand writes that Rodriguez has become the leader of the Yankees.

Oh, and the Minnesota Twins are now tied with the Royals for first place in the AL Central after beating the Red Sox.



Nine trade options the Cards could explore to replace Adams

Buster Olney – 5.28.15

The injury happened as Matt Adams rounded first base Tuesday night, and while it was immediately apparent that he was hurt, the severity of his injury is shocking: Adams will have surgery Friday and could miss the rest of the season. From St. Louis Post-Dispatch reporter Derrick Goold's piece:

For the moment, anyway, the Cardinals have recalled Triple-A Memphis' hottest hitter, catcher Ed Easley, who was hitting .295 overall and .340 for May. The righthanded-hitting Easley was hitting .432 against left-handed pitching ...

Right-handed-hitting veteran Mark Reynolds, a 31 year old who has had seven straight 20-homer seasons as a third baseman or first baseman, will play first base on a regular basis while Adams is out. Reynolds, hitting .250 with three homers and 12 RBIs before Wednesday night, wouldn't be backed up by anybody in particular, although catchers Yadier Molina and Tony Cruz have played there, as has Easley. Infielders Pete Kozma and Matt Carpenter also have taken a turn at the bag there, and first baseman Xavier Scruggs, who has had four consecutive 20-homer seasons in the minors, is available at Memphis and was up for a couple of days earlier this month.

The Cardinals usually find solutions from within, mostly relying on their farm system. It's also worth remembering that of all the teams in baseball, there is probably less pressure on St. Louis and the San Francisco Giants to make big, bold moves, because of the consistent success of those franchises. The bottom line: If the Cardinals don't make the playoffs this year, Busch Stadium will still be filled home game after home game next season and their games will continue to be must-watch.

Still, St. Louis general manager John Mozeliak is thorough, and presumably he'll consider the options outside of the organization ... such as these:

Ryan Howard is hitting .256 this season with 10 homers and a .519 slugging percentage. *AP Photo/Jeff Roberson*

Ryan Howard, 1B, Philadelphia Phillies: He has had a resurgence this season and certainly would augment the Cardinals' power, especially against right-handed pitchers (he has an .868 OPS against them in 2015). Howard is from the St. Louis area, and given that the Phillies have indicated to the baseball world that they would be willing to eat a ton of money to move him, there could be a deal to be made here -- if the Cardinals are interested, that is. Howard is making \$25 million this year, will make \$25 million next year and has a \$10 million buyout on a 2017

option. It's hard to imagine St. Louis or any other team trading for Howard unless the Phillies assumed something in the range of 70-90 percent of that money owed to him.

Ben Zobrist, 2B/SS/OF, Oakland Athletics: The perception of other teams is that the A's want to take a shot and see if they can climb back to relevance with Zobrist back in action, but as of this morning, the A's are 17-32 and 13 1/2 games out of first place. It might be fish-or-cut-bait time soon for Oakland.

Zobrist isn't a big power hitter, and that would make him an imperfect fit for the Cardinals, but his versatility would give Cardinals manager Mike Matheny and Mozeliak a lot of flexibility and lineup protection to react to a changing context (e.g. if Adams comes back sooner than expected or there's an injury at another infield position). Zobrist, a free agent in the fall, has played just 17 games at first base in his career, but given his acumen, he'd be a good bet to figure out the details of playing the position.

Aramis Ramirez, 3B, Milwaukee Brewers: Ramirez is nearing his 37th birthday and the end of his career, and assuming Milwaukee would eat almost all of his remaining salary, the Cardinals could think about dealing for him and either play him at third and shift Matt Carpenter to first, or perhaps just play Ramirez at first. Ramirez is a right-handed hitter, like Reynolds, so he wouldn't really provide a different look, and maybe his production this year -- he has a .290 on-base percentage -- would scare the Cardinals away.

Adam Lind, 1B, Brewers: If the Cardinals believe Adams' injury will keep him out through September, maybe they'd be more apt to explore this possibility. Lind, who turns 32 in July, is really good against right-handed pitching and could platoon with Reynolds, and he has an \$8 million option for next season.

Daniel Nava, OF/1B, Boston Red Sox: He has really struggled this season in sporadic opportunities, batting just .159 in 27 games. It may be that Boston would want to keep him and hope for a bounce-back, given its own lack of left-handed hitting. But the Red Sox just acquired the left-handed-hitting Carlos Peguero, they have a surplus of outfielders, and Nava really isn't part of the long-term plan anyway. Nava could play first base and the outfield for the Cardinals.

Ike Davis, 1B, A's: If Oakland sells, Davis might be another candidate; he has a .775 OPS, and could be a complement to Reynolds.

Garrett Jones, 1B/OF, New York Yankees: The surprising re-emergence of Alex Rodriguez this season has limited Jones' opportunities -- he has one homer and a .235 average in 53 at-bats - - and when Jacoby Ellsbury returns from the disabled list, Slade Heathcott might be a better fit for the Yankees' roster than Jones.

Daniel Murphy, 2B/3B, New York Mets: He's a solid, professional hitter, and while he plays both second and third, his best spot might be at first base, for now anyway. The reality that he's headed for free agency in the fall might nudge the Mets toward a move, though the uncertainty of not knowing when David Wright will return might make them more conservative.

Travis Ishikawa, 1B/OF, Giants: The veteran Ishikawa, who has not played in the big leagues this season, was just taken off the Giants' 40-man roster. The Cardinals are familiar with his work.

Managers Ron Roenicke and Mike Redmond have been fired, and presumably there will be more managers fired in the months ahead, along with some general managers. But unless a completely untenable situation develops, through some sort of legal situation or an outright revolt of others in an organization, the notion of advocating for the firing of any manager in a column has always been kind of disgusting to me, for one very simple reason: The managers are almost never singularly responsible for failure.

Take Bryan Price of the Reds, for example. There is a lot of conversation going on about his standing these days given the mediocre play of the team. But suggesting that firing Price might be a good thing is to convey that he is responsible for the Reds' showing, which is completely ridiculous and disingenuous. Look, Price may or may not be the perfect manager for the Reds. Maybe there is a better managerial fit with somebody like Barry Larkin, or maybe not.

But if you placed the reasons for the Reds' struggles into some sort of pie chart, his would be among the smallest portions. A root problem for the Reds is the payroll management; there's a top-heavy investment, for a club with a modest payroll, in a small number of players such as Joey Votto, Homer Bailey, Brandon Phillips and Jay Bruce. The Reds, like the Phillies, put off some tough decisions too long and probably made some poor choices, and probably none of that falls within Price's purview.

The buck stops with Bob Castellini, the team's owner, general manager Walt Jocketty and others. Castellini is well within his rights to dictate decisions, to veto the suggestions of his front office and to make changes. But for anyone in the media to point a finger at Price is like calling out a branch manager for the failings of corporate headquarters. In this era, most managers hold far less power than ever before.

The Reds are slogging toward a fire sale, writes Paul Daugherty. The Reds held a team meeting after its latest loss.

Along the same lines: Bob Brookover writes that while Ruben Amaro's comment was dumb, Amaro himself is not and that some of his moves were pushed by his bosses.

USA Today 5.29

FOR THE RECORD

DEALS

Baseball

► American League

Baltimore Orioles: Recalled P Tyler Wilson from Norfolk (AAA).

Boston Red Sox: Recalled P Eduardo Rodriguez and P Robbie Ross Jr. from Pawtucket (AAA). Optioned P Heath Hembree to Pawtucket. Designated IF Jeff Bianchi for assignment. Placed OF/1B Daniel Nava on the 15-day DL.

Chicago White Sox: Recalled P Daniel Webb and P Chris Beck from Charlotte (AAA). Optioned P Scott Carroll to Charlotte.

Cleveland Indians: Selected the contract of OF Jerry Sands and recalled P Austin Adams from Columbus (AAA). Placed IF Carlos Santana on the paternity list. Placed P Scott Atchison on the 15-day DL.

Los Angeles Angels: Selected the contract OF Alfredo Marte from Salt Lake (AAA). Placed OF Collin Cowgill on the 15-Day DL. Designated OF Marc Krauss for assignment.

Toronto Blue Jays: Optioned P Scott Copeland to Buffalo (AAA).