



**New York Yankees Clips
Saturday, May 30, 2015**

insider

BY MARK FEINSAND

Tanaka back for Yanks on Wednesday

OAKLAND — It's official: Wednesday will be Tanaka time at Safeco Field. Masahiro Tanaka will make his long-awaited return from the disabled list against the Mariners, throwing 80-85 pitches in his first big-league start since April 23.

Tanaka has been out with wrist tendinitis and a mild forearm strain, but the ace convinced Joe Girardi Friday that those issues are behind him and he's ready to come back and help the Yankees. "I wanted to make sure he felt good, that he felt he was ready to go," Girardi said. "He felt good about it."

"I want to make the best out of it," Tanaka said through his translator. "I'll try to go out there and do my best."

Tanaka will be starting on Chris Capuano's scheduled day, and while the veteran lefty is expected to lose his spot in the rotation, Girardi warned not to read too much into anything.

"A lot can happen between now and Wednesday, and I don't want any of our players ever looking over their shoulders about spots," Girardi said. "Everyone knew he was coming back, so it's no surprise."

"We'll put him in Wednesday, and then we'll have to make some decisions after that."

SLADE SHUT DOWN

The impressive start to Slade Heathcott's career has been put on hold after an MRI revealed a Grade 2 strain of his right quad on Friday. Heathcott, who will be reevaluated next week by team physician Dr. Chris Ahmad, will be placed on the disabled list Saturday.

"I was surprised by the diagnosis," Heathcott said. "I thought it was something that was manageable, just a little bit more sore."

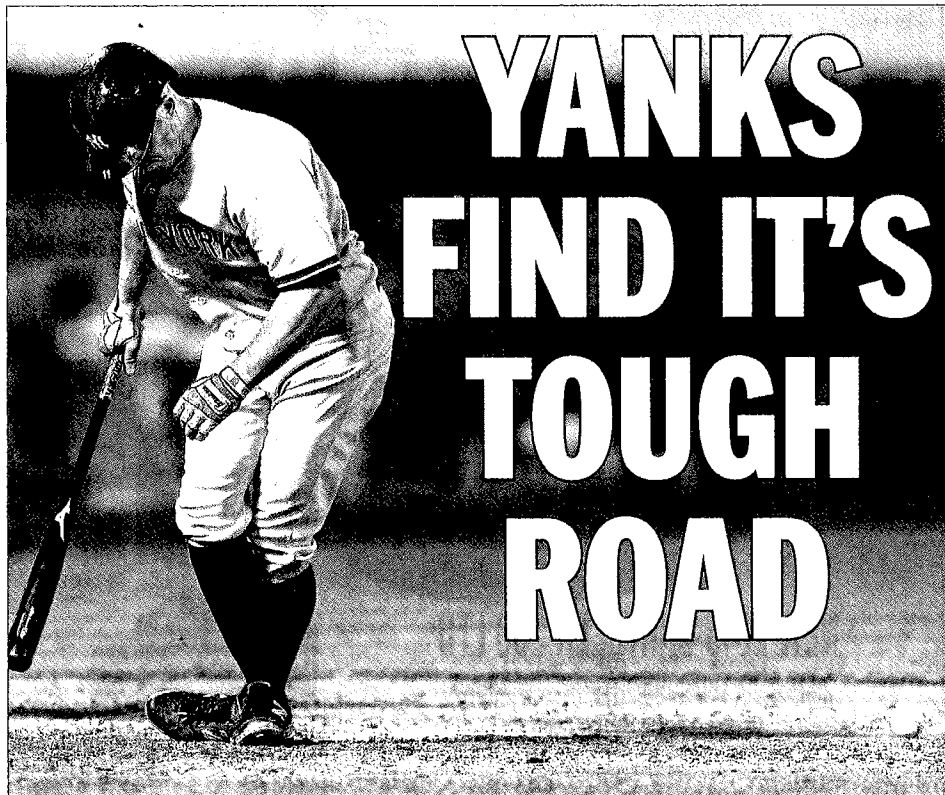
Girardi said he expects Heathcott to miss at least a month. Ramon Flores will be called up from Triple-A to take Heathcott's place. Flores was hitting .294/.389/.425 with four homers and 15 RBI in 42 games at Triple-A this season. He hit .239 with two homers and eight RBI this spring for the Yankees. Girardi could opt to move Brett Gardner to center field, as Flores is primarily a left fielder. Flores will likely split action with Chris Young.

For those hoping to see Aaron Judge come up from Double-A, Girardi said the top prospect's name didn't come up when the Yankees were exploring their options.

"It'd be a pretty steep jump, but there's players who go from Double-A to the big leagues," Girardi said. "But usually they've been in Double-A for a year or so. And he's basically also been a right fielder."

NEXT GAME

Saturday, 10:05 p.m., at A's; Nathan Eovaldi (4-1, 4.27) vs. Jesse Hahn (2-4, 3.69); TV: YES



It's quiet night at plate for Brett Gardner and Bombers, who get little going against Oakland starter Sonny Gray. PHOTO BY AP

YANKS FIND IT'S TOUGH ROAD

Drop second 2nd in Oakland to start trip

BY MARK FEINSAND
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

OAKLAND — Call it a case of role reversal. One team looks like a first-place squad, the other like a last-place club.

The basement-dwelling Athletics defeated the first-place Yankees for the second straight night as Sonny Gray pitched the home team to a 6-2 win on Friday in front of 23,540 at the Coliseum.

Gray (6-2) held the Yankees to two runs on four hits over eight innings, making Oakland's four-run third inning stand up. Gray walked two and struck out five.

Chris Capuano (0-3) allowed all four of those runs, one of which was unearned due to Chase Headley's 11th error of the season — the most of any third baseman in the majors.

Brian McCann homered for the fourth straight game, but his fifth-inning shot was the Yankees' lone offensive highlight. Brett Gardner drove in the other run on a groundout in the sixth.

Brett Lawrie provided some insurance for Oakland in the eighth with a two-run homer to left off rookie Jacob Lindgren.

The Yankees — losers of 11 of their last 12 at the Coliseum — will try to avoid losing their third straight game as the series continues Saturday night. Nathan Eovaldi starts for the Yankees against righthander Jesse Hahn.

Gray, one of the league's best pitchers this season, went 3-0 with a 1.98 ERA in April and had gone 2-2 with a 1.52 ERA through his first five starts in May while allowing one earned run or fewer in seven

of his first 10 starts entering Friday.

"The kid's got great stuff," Joe Girardi said. "He didn't make a lot of mistakes."

Capuano stranded the bases loaded in the second inning to keep the game scoreless, but it didn't remain that way for very long.

Oakland broke out against the lefty in the third inning, starting the rally with a double to left by Billy Burns and a Marcus Semien single to left, which put runners on the corners with nobody out.

Ben Zobrist hit a grounder to third base that appeared to hit the lip of the grass, zipping through Headley's legs to score the game's first run.

"It changes a lot of things," Girardi said of Headley's error. "The extra out hurt us. It opened up an opportunity for them."

Billy Butler followed with an RBI double to left field, then Stephen Vogt doubled to right, bringing two more runs home for a 4-0 Athletics lead.

That lead felt a lot bigger thanks to Gray, who dominated the Yankees through the early innings. Gray walked Gardner to open the game, later erasing him on Alex Rodriguez's inning-ending double play. Gray would go on to retire 11 in a row, facing the minimum 12 hitters through the first four frames.

McCann ended Gray's no-hitter and shutout with one swing in the fifth, drilling a leadoff home run to center on an 0-2 slider. It was McCann's second road homer of the season, both coming here in the past two nights.

The home run also marked the fourth straight game in which McCann has gone deep, making him only the second Yankees catcher since 1957 to accomplish that feat. The other? Mike Stanley in 1993.

Gray was unfazed by the home run, retiring the next three Yankees.

Capuano settled down after his horrific fourth, breezing through the next two innings.

The Yankees trimmed the lead to two runs in the sixth, using a Didi Gregorius double and a Gray wild pitch to set up Gardner's RBI groundout.

Capuano got the first out in the sixth to make it 10 out of 11 batters, but Girardi pulled him after 89 pitches, bringing in Esmil Rogers. Capuano was charged with four runs on six hits and two walks, striking out four.

Rogers held Oakland in check with 1.2 scoreless innings, giving the Yankees a chance for a late comeback.

They actually mounted what could be considered a rally in the eighth, putting the tying runs on base as Gregorius drew a two-out walk and Gardner singled to right.

But Gray got Headley to ground out to first base on his 101st pitch.

After Lawrie's homer in the bottom of the eighth made it a four-run game, the Yankees put runners on the corners in the ninth against Fernando Rodriguez, but Tyler Clippard came out of the bullpen with two out and got Stephen Drew to pop out to end it.

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YANKEES	2

HELD CAP'TIVE

Chris mediocre, Yanks fall again

By GEORGE A. KING III

OAKLAND, Calif. — Until further notice, the Yankees have returned to the outfit that smelled like the raw sewage that occasionally gushes from broken pipes at O.co Coliseum.

Ten losses in 11 games were followed by a three-game sweep of the best team in the American League, the Royals. Then the Yankees pulled into the East Bay and lost two to the Athletics, easily the worst team in the league.

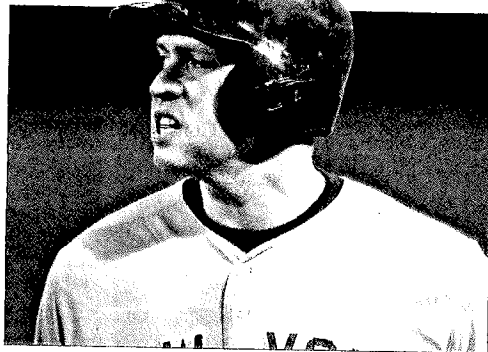
"It's hard to figure out," manager Joe Girardi said Thursday. "Baseball doesn't make sense on a daily basis."

ATHLETICS	6	Box score Page 32
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When you turn potential double play balls into run-scoring errors, as third baseman Chase Headley did Friday night, when the bats get dominated by Cy Young candidate Sonny Gray and when Chris Capuano surrenders four runs (three earned) in the third inning to put his club in an early ditch, well, the game is very predictable.

Because of all of the above and neophyte reliever Jacob Lindgren giving up a two-run homer to Brett Lawrie in the eighth inning, the A's dropped a 6-2 loss on the Yankees in front of 23,540. The defeat lowered the Yankees' AL East-leading ledger to 25-24, but they are one game in front of the Rays and Orioles, who are in a virtual tie for second.

"It was a chopper, I thought it would come up but it stayed down," Headley said of Ben Zobrist's grounder that skidded through the third baseman's legs for his 11th error of the season. He made nine all of last



year. "It really hurt us."

Coming off the three-game sweep of the Royals in The Bronx, it appeared the Yankees had put the 10 losses in 11 games aside. But they have lost 12 of their past 16 games.

Capuano's next scheduled start was supposed to be Wednesday in Seattle, but that will go to Masahiro Tanaka coming off the disabled list. Capuano delivered the best start of the three he has made since coming off the shelf due to a strained right quadriceps suffered early in spring training.

The veteran lefty the Yankees gave \$5 million to return, allowed four runs (three) earned, six hits and walked two over 5 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings. Capuano worked a combined 7 $\frac{1}{3}$ innings in his first two outings. He is 0-3 and while Girardi didn't say Capuano is headed to the bullpen, there is no other option if everybody is healthy since the manager said a six-man rotation isn't being considered.

"I never worry too much about that," Capuano said of being dropped from the rotation. "That stuff usually works its self out."

Gray didn't give up a hit until

Brian McCann's leadoff homer in the fifth and didn't face a Yankees batter with a runner in scoring position until the sixth.

In eight innings the 25-year-old right-hander allowed two runs on four hits. He is 6-2 and has a 1.82 ERA.

"He's got four pitches, sits at 95 (mph). He has everything," said McCann, who has homered in four straight games. "He is a No. 1 and he showed it tonight."

Pitching in his second big league game, Lindgren walked Stephen Vogt starting the eighth, then surrendered Lawrie's second homer in as many games and fourth of the season.

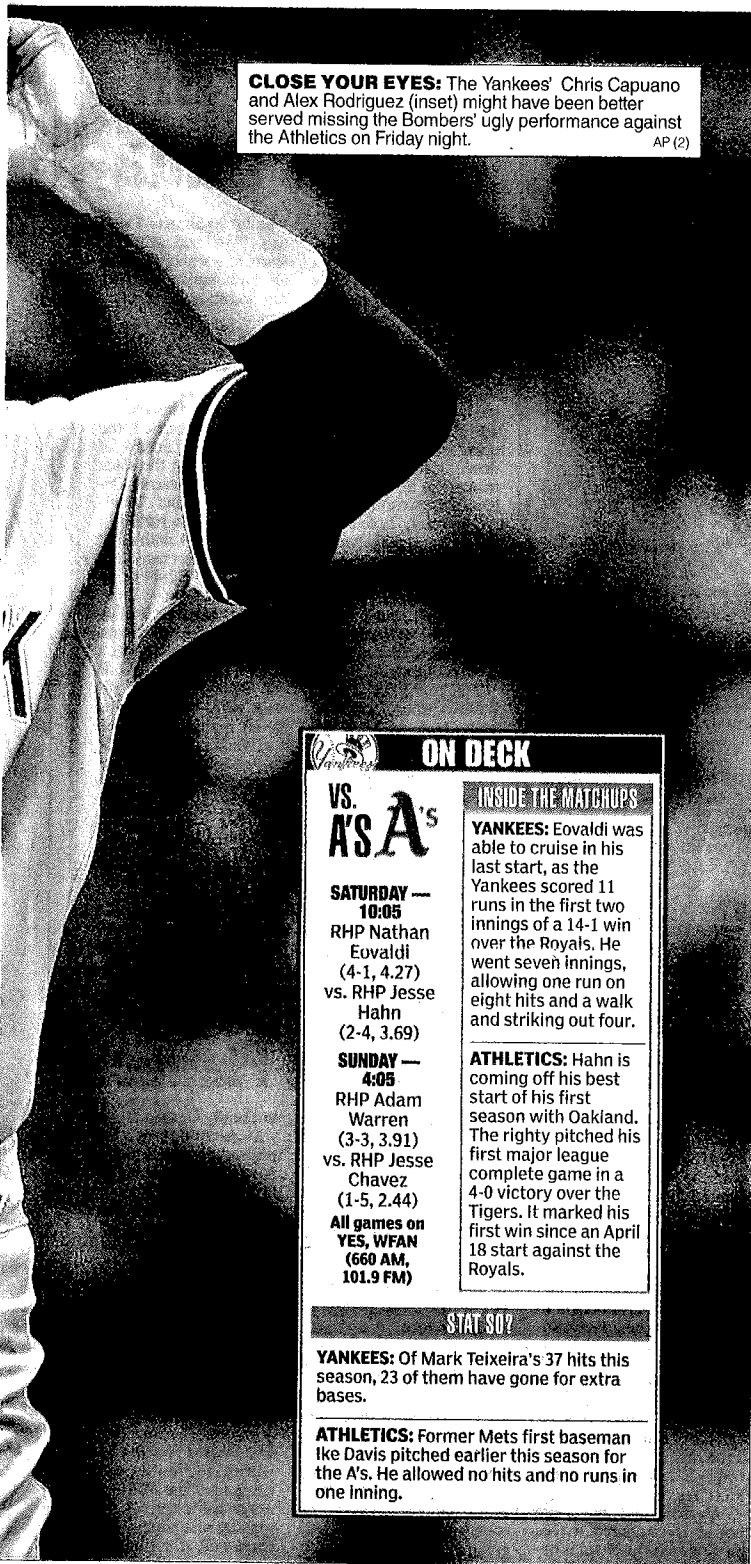
The Yankees didn't get a runner into scoring position until the sixth inning, when they cut the A's lead to 4-2.

Didi Gregorius, who had six hits in his last 29 at-bats (.207), doubled to right-center with one out, moved to third on a wild pitch by Gray and scored on Brett Gardner's ground out to short.

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Tanaka to start
Wednesday / P. 36





CLOSE YOUR EYES: The Yankees' Chris Capuano and Alex Rodriguez (inset) might have been better served missing the Bombers' ugly performance against the Athletics on Friday night. AP (2)

Rotation rubbing off on stellar 'pen

OAKLAND, Calif. — The Yankees can't continue like this even if it is the Four-A AL East.

They are on the road to ruin if they don't clean up their starting pitching. The starters are taxing the brilliant back end of a bullpen and are continuously putting the team in a hole.

Friday night, it was Chris Capuano on the mound and a quick 4-0 deficit against the Athletics. The Yankees went on to lose, 6-2 at O.co Coliseum.

Chase Headley made a costly error in the four-run third, but the Oakland hitters produced solid exit velocity all night.

Yankees starters are 18-19 this season. The 25-24 Yankees are the only team in the majors that has a winning record with a rotation that has a losing record.

Manager Joe Girardi knows the starting pitching must improve dramatically. "We had a tough

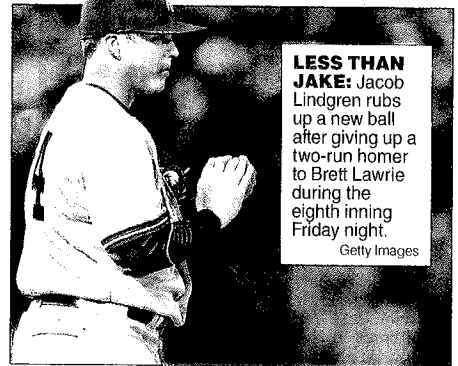
road trip, came home, lost the first three at home and then we beat Kansas City three days in a row and we pitched well," Girardi said.

"These two games, CC (Sabathia) had a lead and wasn't able to hold it and then we give them an extra out tonight which leads to a big inning for them. Our division right now is up for grabs and we need to take advantage of that."

Yes, they do. Oakland starter Sonny Gray was magnificent Friday night as he pitched eight innings to up his record to 6-2 with a 1.82 ERA.

Someone other than Michael Pineda has to step up on the mound for the Yankees. The Yankees starting rotation ranks 20th in the majors with a 4.29 ERA and is tied with the Twins for 28th in opponents' batting average at .275.

Only the Rockies are worse, but at least they



LESS THAN JAKE: Jacob Lindgren rubs up a new ball after giving up a two-run homer to Brett Lawrie during the eighth inning Friday night. Getty Images

have the excuse of pitching at Coors Field where the baseball flies.

Yankees starters are averaging 5 $\frac{2}{3}$ innings per start, taxing a bullpen that has two terrific closers in Dellin Betances and Andrew Miller, a luxury that, among other MLB teams, only the Cardinals and Royals possess.

Betances has appeared in 23 games, posting a 4-0 record with a 0.00 ERA, while Miller has pitched in 21 games, with 14 saves and an 0.84 ERA.

Too many appearances and that advantage will disappear or there will be more nights like Thursday, when Girardi stayed away from his best relievers in a 5-4 loss to give them a much-needed rest and others did not respond.

The Mets have the best starting pitching in New York. They have won that war.

The Yankees are trying to hold on with the hope that their \$155 million ace, Masahiro Tanaka, can find a way to overcome his arm issues when he returns to the rotation Wednesday in Seattle.

The right-hander will try to succeed with what one scout told me is "Tanaka Lite" stuff.

The Yankees have time to fix their problems. They

sit atop the AL East, where no other team is .500.

If young starter Luis Severino continues to impress, now that he has been promoted to Triple-A, he could be a huge help.

Maybe general manager Brian Cashman can find a decent starter on the trade front. But if things don't improve, sooner or later, the poor starting pitching will catch up to the Yankees.

The Yankees have lost 11 of their past 12 at the O(No).co Coliseum.

The only win over the past 12 games here was a 7-0 victory last season. The winner was David Phelps, who is now with the Marlins.

Capuano, who dropped to 0-3, posts a 6.39 ERA. Nathan Eovaldi is sitting at 4.27. Sabathia is 5.67. Adam Warren has offered hope at 3.91 and Pineda is at 3.36.

Tanaka returns, bringing a 3.22 ERA with him.

The Yankees are trying to squeeze every last ounce of success out of Tanaka to bolster this troubled rotation.

As for his own expectations, Tanaka offered through a translator: "I don't have much expectations. I just want to go out there and pitch the best that I can so I can give the team a chance to win the game."

For a Yankees starting pitcher, that would be a nice changeup.

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ON DECK

VS. A'S

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: Eovaldi was able to cruise in his last start, as the Yankees scored 11 runs in the first two innings of a 14-1 win over the Royals. He went seven innings, allowing one run on eight hits and a walk and striking out four.

ATHLETICS: Hahn is coming off his best start of his first season with Oakland. The righty pitched his first major league complete game in a 4-0 victory over the Tigers. It marked his first win since an April 18 start against the Royals.

STAT SO?

YANKEES: Of Mark Teixeira's 37 hits this season, 23 of them have gone for extra bases.

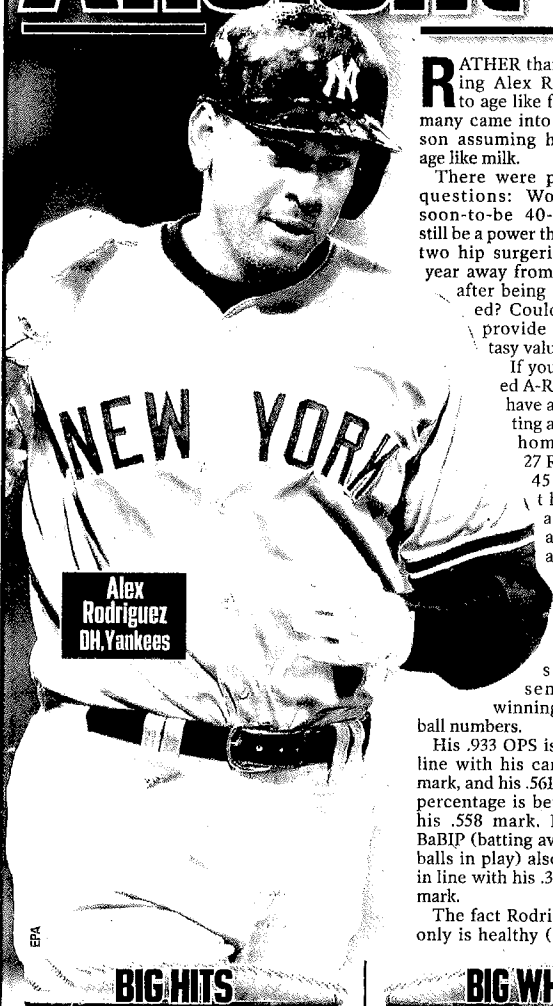
ATHLETICS: Former Mets first baseman Ike Davis pitched earlier this season for the A's. He allowed no hits and no runs in one inning.



Kevin Kernan

Ancient warriors

FANTASY SATURDAY



Alex Rodriguez
DH, Yankees

BIG HITS

Mike Bolsinger P, Dodgers

After his first four starts, the most added player in ESPN leagues (he was also among the top 10 at Yahoo) was 3-0 with a 0.71 ERA entering his start Friday night.

Shawn Tolleson RP, Rangers

He went 122 career relief appearances without picking up a save. He has since picked up five saves in five opportunities.

Yasmany Tomas 3B/OF, D'backs

The guy can hit. Before Friday, Tomas was 30-for-86 (.349) with a homer, 13 RBIs, seven runs scored and a stolen base this month.

Mike Napoli 1B, Red Sox

The most added position player in ESPN leagues was hitting .260 with seven homers and 18 RBIs from May 3 through Thursday.

RATHER than expecting Alex Rodriguez to age like fine wine, many came into this season assuming he would age like milk.

There were plenty of questions: Would the soon-to-be 40-year-old still be a power threat after two hip surgeries and a year away from baseball after being suspended? Could his bat provide any fantasy value?

If you predicted A-Rod would have a .270 batting average, 11 homers and 27 RBIs after 45 games, there's an email address at the bottom of this column where you should send your winning Powerball numbers.

His .933 OPS is right in line with his career .942 mark, and his .561 slugging percentage is better than his .558 mark. His .304 BaBIP (batting average on balls in play) also is right in line with his .318 career mark.

The fact Rodriguez not only is healthy (aided by

Veterans fending off Father Time



ROTO FILES
Jarrod Wilk

the fact he has been the designated hitter more often than not) but is producing at a high level makes everyone who took a shot on him late in the draft (he had an average draft position of 274.4) look like geniuses. And it makes those owners look even smarter because all the evidence points to him continuing this success.

Rodriguez isn't the only player 35 or older to find success this season. Here's a look at some other veterans trying to keep their AARP card in the envelope:

Before the season, Torii Hunter was a fantasy afterthought as he was returning to the Twins as the 69th ranked outfielder. But the joke's on us, as he continues to produce.

Going into Friday's action, the soon-to-be 40-year-old was hitting .280 (he's a career .279 hitter), with seven homers, 29 RBIs, a .791 OPS (career

.798), and a .307 BaBIP (career .310). Age is not a factor here, run with him.

Aaron Harang experienced a fantasy resurgence of sorts last season with the Braves, going 12-12 with a 3.57 ERA and 161 strikeouts. He is off to a solid start this season — 4-4 with a 1.93 ERA and 46 strikeouts in his first 10 starts. His FIP (ERA adjusted for fielding) is a respectable 2.85, well below his career 4.09. He's not the pitcher he was eight years ago, striking out just 6.6 per nine innings, but there is no reason you can't expect him to remain a 500 pitcher, or close to it.

After three straight injury-plagued seasons, expectations for Mark Teixeira weren't very high. But, before Friday, the 35-year-old ranked second in the AL in homers (14), and fourth in RBIs (35) and walks (28). With a BaBIP of .197, you can expect his batting average to rise, though likely not to his career .273 level. Assuming he stays healthy, he will remain a productive, above-average player with 30-plus homer potential, and that is worth owning.

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BIG WHIFFS

Mike Leake SP, Reds

Solid start to the season, going 2-1 with a 2.36 ERA in his first seven starts. It's been downhill since, as Leake is 0-3 with a 12.86 ERA, a .415 opponents batting average and six homers allowed over his past 14 innings.

Zack Cozart SS, Reds

Has hit .217 (13-for-60) since May 2, dropping his batting average from .308 to .260. His hot start was nice while it lasted, though.

Archie Bradley SP, D'backs

In three starts since taking a line drive to the face, Bradley is 0-2 with an 11.81 ERA and a .388 opponents batting average.

Ian Kennedy SP, Padres

He is 0-4 in his past four starts, allowing 20 runs over 19 1/3 innings en route to a 9.31 ERA. The most dropped pitcher in Yahoo leagues.

QUICK HITS

● Because his numbers have been ridiculous, an update on **Bryce Harper** this month through Thursday: 30-for-80 (.375), 13 HRs, 28 RBIs, 23 runs, 20 walks, 1.438 OPS and two stolen bases.

● **Eduardo Rodriguez** made his big league debut Thursday, allowing no runs on three hits and striking out seven. He is expected to remain in the Red Sox rotation, making him an interesting target for fantasy owners.

● Under-owned alert: **Nori Aoki**, available in about 40 percent of ESPN and Yahoo leagues, was 33-for-95 (.347) with two HRs, 11 RBIs, eight walks, just three Ks and five SBs before Friday.

● **CC Sabathia** (2-7, 5.67 ERA, 1.43 WHIP) was dropped in more than 1,000 Yahoo leagues this week and was added in eight. Those eight people must've been locked in a bunker since 2011, the last time the lefty was worth owning.

TEAM NAME OF THE WEEK

Syndergaard-en Cop

Submit your team name to @NYPPost_Roto

Old will become reliable

THERE are a host of players in their mid-to-late 30s who are struggling this season. CC Sabathia (35 in July) has a 5.67 ERA. Fernando Rodney (38) has a 6.98 ERA. Chase Utley (36) went into Friday with a .188 batting average.

By **NANDO DI FINO**
FNTSY
SPORTS NETWORK



But two aging sluggers with unsightly numbers have some historical and peripheral data that make them excellent targets for trade. Fantasy owners may inherit some risk, but the potential upside should justify it.

With a .216 average, .679 OPS, and just six HRs heading into Friday, 39-year-old David Ortiz is not living up to expectations. But a quick look into Ortiz's past may cheer up his owners. Over his career, Ortiz has some of his lowest offensive numbers in April (.270 average, .868 OPS) and May (.279 average and .874 OPS). Once June begins, Ortiz's bat comes alive, to the tune of a .290 average and .954 OPS in the month. He generally keeps the numbers up for the rest of the season.

Albert Pujols' .238 batting average heading into Friday was a career low, as was his .730 OPS. His nine HRs still have him on pace for about 30 this season, but the 35-year-old slugger has left fantasy owners hurting in most of the other categories. A little patience, however, may pay off.

An almost impossibly low .227 BaBIP suggests a significant batting average correction is coming (assuming he can find ways to beat the shift). An uncharacteristic 6.4 percent walk rate (Pujols' career percentage is nearly double that) should right itself, and his peripheral power and contact stats look the same as they have the last several years.

For more from Nando Di Fino and the Fantasy Sports Network team, tune into FNTSY on Cablevision Ch. 147. You can also hear Nando on SiriusXM Fantasy Sports Radio's "RotoExperts" show weekdays from 9-11 a.m.



Rapid Reaction: Athletics 6, Yankees 2

May 30, 2015

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Oh, those schizophrenic Yankees. Lose three of four to the Tampa Bay Rays and get swept by the Texas Rangers, then bounce back to sweep the Kansas City Royals, who at the time were the best team in the American League.

And now, lose the first two to the Oakland Athletics, who are only the worst team in the American League.

You know, Suzyn, you just can't predict baseball.

Then again, maybe you could have predicted this one. It didn't look promising from the start, not with Sonny Gray going for the A's and Chris Capuano for the Yankees, but with Capuano knowing he was probably pitching for his rotation spot, there was the chance of a big performance from him on Friday night.

Alas, not a good chance. Capuano got thoroughly outpitched, the Yankees' hitters were generally outclassed, and the Athletics went up 2-0 in this four-game series with a 6-2 victory at O.co Coliseum.

Sonny day: The Yankees chipped away at, but couldn't crumble, A's right-hander Gray, who pitched out of an eighth-inning jam by getting Chase Headley to ground out to first, stranding runners at first and second and preserving Oakland's 4-2 lead. Gray allowed just four hits over eight innings, walked two and struck out five in running his record to 6-2. His ERA is a tidy 1.82.

Four jacks: Brian McCann's homer in the fifth inning was his fourth in the past four games, tying Mike Stanley's mark for a Yankees catcher set between July 20 and 25, 1993. The bad news? The solo shot only cut the A's lead to 4-1.

Capital punishment: The roof fell in on Capuano in the third as the A's scored four times on four hits, three of them doubles, and a costly error by Headley, his 11th of the season. Headley let a routine grounder by Ben Zobrist go through his legs, bringing home the first run. Capuano collected himself to strike out Brett Lawrie and get the two hitters after him to ground out, but not before Billy Butler and Stephen Vogt doubled, Vogt's driving in the final two runs of the inning. Capuano's final line: 5 1/3 IP, 6 hits, 4 runs (3 earned), 2 walks and 4 Ks. Not terrible, but not a good enough presentation for a pitcher trying to hold onto a job.

The Butler didn't: Capuano worked out of a second-inning bases-loaded jam caused by a pair of walks to Butler and Josh Reddick and an opposite-field single by Josh Phegley by getting Mark Canha to fly out to left. But Capuano was helped tremendously by the fact that the portly Butler was the runner at second when Phegley singled, and he was held, probably wisely, by A's

third-base coach Mike Gallego, much to the surprise of Reddick, who was barreling around second only to put the breaks on hard and turn back.

Roger that: Esmil Rogers pitched 1 2/3 scoreless innings in relief of Capuano, allowing only an infield hit to Phegley that easily could have been scored an error (see below).

Over and out: The A's put this one out of reach when Lawrie, whose two-run HR off CC Sabathia on Thursday tied the game, did the same to Jacob Lindgren in the eighth, belting an 0-2 sinker over the left-field fence with a runner aboard to give Oakland a 6-2 lead.

Best of Didi, worst of Didi: Didi Gregorius' double over CF Billy Burns' head in the sixth led to the Yankees' second run, when Brett Gardner drove him in from third. That was the good. The bad came in the bottom of the inning when he fumbled and misplayed Phegley's grounder, which was somehow scored an infield hit. No harm done, however; Rogers retired the next two A's to end the inning.

Tomorrow: The Yankees need to win Game 3 of this four-game series to avoid losing another series. Nathan Eovaldi (4-1, 4.27) faces RHP Jesse Hahn (2-4, 3.69), first pitch at 10:05 p.m. (YES/MLBN).

Yankees take 2nd straight loss, A's Sonny Gray dominates | Rapid reaction

Brendan Kutny | May 30, 2015 at 12:57 AM

OAKLAND, Calif. — Here's what you need to know about the **Yankees'** 6-2 loss to the Athletics at O.co Coliseum Friday night.

WHAT IT MEANS: Disappointment. It was the Yankees' (25-24) second straight loss to the lowly Athletics (19-32), who have the American League's worst record. But the Yankees kept their one-game lead over the second-place Rays in the AL East since Tampa Bay lost earlier in the day.

TURNING POINT: The A's four-run fourth, which saw three doubles clubbed off Yankees starting pitcher Chris Capuano. The inning put Oakland up, 4-0.

GOODBYE? Friday's start was likely the last for Capuano in a Yankees uniform, or at least for a long time. Before the game, manager Joe Girardi said Masahiro Tanaka will return from the disabled list Wednesday in Seattle. That was when Capuano was scheduled to make his next start. With Capuano back, there's no room left for Capuano, who will likely either head to the bullpen or get cut.

ROUGH NIGHT: Capuano's third-inning implosion did him in. But, to his credit, he did recover. When he was pulled in favor of righty long man Esmil Rogers in the sixth inning after 89 total pitches, Capuano had retired 10 of his last 11 hitters.

DOMINATED: Some nights the Yankees don't get the offense going and it's inexplicable. But they ran into Oakland's buzzsaw Friday night. Sonny Gray blew away the Yankees, allowing just two runs on four hits and two walks in eight innings.

MORE BAD DEFENSE: During the Yankees' disastrous stretch last week, defense was a problem. Their defensive woes showed up again Friday. Chase Headley was charged with his 11th error of the season when a grounder skipped through his legs in the third. (The most errors Headley has ever committed in a season? In 2010, he made 13.) And in the sixth inning, Didi Gregorius bobbled a grounder and let catcher Josh Phegley reach first with an infield hit. Gregorius may have been lucky to get away without an error.

MCCANN: Yankees catcher Brian McCann clubbed his fourth homer in as many games, a fifth-inning solo shot to right-center field that cut the Yankees' deficit to 4-1. McCann, who finished 1-for-4, has been on a tear, with 6 hits in his last 13 at-bats.

NEXT: Yankees righty Nathan Eovaldi (4-1, 4.27 ERA) will face Oakland righty Jesse Hahn (2-4, 3.69 ERA) at 10:05 p.m. Saturday.



Yankees Fall to Athletics 6-2 as Gray Goes 8 Innings

Alex Rodriguez singled in the ninth to extend his hitting streak to 13 games for New York.
Copyright Associated Press

Updated at 2:15 AM EDT on Saturday, May 30, 2015

The Athletics are finally starting to do the little things they failed to do early in the season, like stringing together timely hits with runners in scoring position and playing flawless defense.

Getting a crisp outing from right-hander Sonny Gray certainly helps, too.

Gray pitched eight innings for his sixth win of the season, Stephen Vogt drove in two runs and Oakland beat the New York Yankees 6-2 on Friday night.

"We're getting leads now, we're holding them, we're getting better at-bats, we're getting breakthrough hits, cleaner games defensively for the most part," A's manager Bob Melvin said. "A lot of things that have been our Achilles heel, we're starting to get better at."

Top Sports Photos 2015

Gray (6-2) retired 11 straight after walking Brett Gardner to lead off the game. Brian McCann ended the streak with a leadoff home run in the fifth — his fourth in four games — and the Yankees scored again the sixth but managed little else against Gray and two relievers.

It was a sharp bounce back for Gray, who struck out five, walked two and allowed four hits and two runs.

Oakland's young right-hander, who left his previous start after being hit in the right ankle by a line drive, also benefited from an unusually crisp defense behind him.

The A's went into the game leading the majors with 51 errors but made several stellar plays, including a diving stop and throw by third baseman Lawrie to rob Chris Young of a hit in the eighth.

"Even through the rough stretch we went through, we always were trying to be positive around here," Gray said. "We knew we were a lot better team than the way we've been playing."

Brett Lawrie added a two-run home run for the A's.

Oakland entered the night with the worst record in the American League but won for the fifth time in seven games.

Alex Rodriguez singled in the ninth to extend his hitting streak to 13 games for New York.

Vogt's two-run double in the third off Yankees starter Chris Capuano (0-3) capped a four-run inning and gave Gray all the run support he needed.

"Other than that inning, he was pretty good," New York manager Joe Girardi said of Capuano. "He battled out of a couple little jams that he had, and he was pretty good."

Tyler Clippard retired one batter for his sixth save.

New York has lost two straight after sweeping Kansas City on the road.

McCann led off the fifth with his eighth homer of the season to trim Oakland's lead to 4-1. He joins Mike Stanley (1993) as the only players in franchise history to hit a home run in four consecutive games.

Brett Gardner's RBI grounder in the sixth made it 4-2.

Lawrie homered off Esmil Rogers in the eighth.

Published at 2:13 AM EDT on May 30, 2015

Error Proves Costly as Oakland Athletics Beat New York Yankees

A's win 6-2 after another mistake by Yankee third baseman Chase Headley

By Daniel Barbarisi

May 30, 2015 3:06 a.m. ET

OAKLAND, Calif.—As the errors mount for Yankee third baseman Chase Headley, the former Gold Glover has just begun to hope his mistakes don't come at times when they hurt his team.

On Friday night, when Headley let a third-inning ground ball roll between his legs for his 11th error of the season, it was the worst possible time. There were two men on base against the Oakland Athletics. There were no outs, and neither side had scored.

When Headley couldn't get his glove down in time to field a skittering grounder, suddenly the A's scored their first run. That one would quickly snowball into four, laying the foundation for an easy 6-2 Oakland victory.

"Just a chopper that I thought was going to come up, and it stayed down," Headley said. "Unfortunately it was a bad time, and it really hurt us. Wish I could have snagged that."

Headley's 11 errors are the worst in baseball among third basemen this season, and that many errors after only two months is wholly out of character for a player once considered an elite defender.

Eleven errors would usually be Headley's total for an entire six-month season—he twice finished a year with that many. Only once did he make more than 11 in a year, when he made 13 errors in 2010. Eleven in two months has him perplexed.

"It's not what I've done in my career, it's not what I'm going to do going forward, but that's where we are right now. There's nothing I can do to fix that, I've just got to keep going forward, working hard, and make the play the next time."

Headley has had more than one issue: He dealt with some mechanical problems when throwing early in the season, but lately it has been catching the ball. Manager Joe Girardi is putting his trust in Headley—a nine-year veteran—to work his way out of whatever ails him.

“You hope they can overcome that when they have the experience,” Girardi said. “To me, it just looks like he didn’t see the ball because of the way his glove was. He just didn’t read it correctly. I don’t know if he lost it or what happened, but obviously it opened up an opportunity for them.”

The Yankees needed to play flawless baseball, because they weren’t going to get many runs against Oakland starter Sonny Gray. Gray, the American League ERA leader, went eight innings and gave up only two runs, one on Yankee catcher Brian McCann’s fourth home run in four games.

“He’s really, really good,” McCann said. “He’s got four pitches and he sits at 95 miles per hour, he sinks it, he four-seams it, he’s got a really good curveball, so he’s got everything you want. He’s a number one and he showed it tonight.”

The Yankees have now dropped two straight to the A’s—the worst team in the American League—on the heels of sweeping the Kansas City Royals, the best team in the AL. They remain in first place, barely, despite losing 12 of their past 16 games.



Rough third inning dooms Yankees in Oakland

Posted by: [Chad Jennings](#) - Posted in [Misc](#) on May 30, 2015

For the Yankees, this was a bad pitching matchup from the very beginning, and when Chris Capuano had a brutal third inning, the Yankees were well on their way to a 6-2 loss to Sonny Gray and the Athletics. Capuano got out of a bases-loaded jam in the second inning, and he retired 10 of the last 11 batters he faced. In between, though, he had a brutal stretch of five straight batters to start the third. A double, single, error, and two more doubles gave the A's a 4-0 lead. The error was a ball under Chase Headley's glove. Looked like it might have caught the edge of the grass for a bad hop. Whatever the reason, it was Headley's 11th error of the season, and it hurt. The A's added two insurance runs off Jacob Lindgren in the eighth. Gray, meanwhile, had a no-hitter until Brian McCann homered to start the fifth inning. This was McCann's fourth straight game with a home run, the first Yankees catcher since Mike Stanley in 1993 to have such a streak (Jorge Posada never did it). The Yankees added another run in the sixth, but Gray was dominant through eight innings with four hits allowed.

McCann homers again, but Yanks fall to A's

By Bryan Hoch and Jane Lee / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | May 30, 2015 2:00 AM ET

OAKLAND -- A four-run third inning backed A's ace [Sonny Gray](#), who did his part by completing eight solid innings in a 6-2 victory over the Yankees at the Coliseum on Friday night, securing Oakland its second straight win.

Gray fired four no-hit innings, before Yankees catcher [Brian McCann](#) hit his fourth home run in as many games to lead off the fifth. Shortstop [Didi Gregorius](#) doubled off Gray and scored in the sixth, but that's all the right-hander would allow, while maintaining the American League's best ERA, at 1.82.

"Sonny's just so special, and what he did tonight was very impressive and exactly what we needed to continue on this path," said first baseman [Stephen Vogt](#). "We've been playing such good baseball, and to have a start like that from your ace is huge."

Yankees lefty [Chris Capuano](#) was on the hook for four runs (three earned) on six hits and two walks with four strikeouts in 5 1/3 innings. Vogt collected two of those hits, including a two-run double to highlight the pivotal four-run fourth. Third baseman [Brett Lawrie](#) -- who in the top of the eighth made a **sensational defensive play** -- notched his second home run of the series, a two-run shot in the eighth off lefty [Jacob Lindgren](#).

"With Sonny on the other side, you knew runs were going to be at a premium," Capuano said. "He pitched great."

MOMENTS THAT MATTERED

Sonny side up: Gray continued his early-season dominance with eight superb innings, limiting the Yankees to just four hits with two walks and five strikeouts to earn his sixth win. The right-hander has allowed two earned runs or fewer in nine of his 11 starts and figures to be a slam dunk as an All-Star this year. [More >](#)

"In a season that's been kind of tough to get wins, he gives you a chance every time he's on the mound," said catcher [Josh Phegley](#).

Eleven is enough: [Chase Headley](#)'s defensive struggles at third base continued as he allowed a [Ben Zobrist](#) grounder to shoot through his legs for a run-scoring error, helping to open the door for Oakland's four-run third. Headley has 11 errors and has acknowledged that he needs to "clean it up" in the field; his season high for errors is 13, set in 2010 with the Padres. [More >](#)

"It's just a play that I feel like I have to make, regardless of whether it takes a hop or not," Headley said. "You've got to make a play. Cap made a big pitch right there, I catch that and turn

a double play, we may be out of there with one run. Obviously disappointing and another play that I probably should have made."

Double trouble: An A's offense that has typically struggled against left-handed pitching this season broke out for four runs against Capuano in the third inning, notching three doubles from Billy Burns, Billy Butler and Vogt along the way. With the win, Oakland improved to 3-10 when the opponent starts a left-hander.

Going deep: McCann became the first Yankees catcher to homer in four consecutive games since Mike Stanley in 1993, and the first Yankees catcher to post RBIs in seven straight games (solely as a catcher) since Yogi Berra in 1956, according to the Elias Sports Bureau. Of McCann's eight homers, just two have come on the road.

"I'm making small adjustments here and there," McCann said. "Honestly, I feel like I've been swinging the bat well all year. Now I'm kind of getting more lift in my swing and the balls are leaving the ballpark."

QUOTABLE

"I mean, he's really, really good. He's got four pitches and he sits at 95 mph, he sinks it, he four-seams it, he's got a really good curveball, so he's got everything you want. He's a No. 1 and he showed it tonight. He's really good. We watched him in the playoffs coming out of college and you knew he was going to be really good." -- *McCann, on Gray*

WHAT'S NEXT

Yankees: Nathan Eovaldi has the ball on Saturday as the Yankees play the third game of a four-game set with the Athletics at 10:05 p.m. ET. Spotted an 11-run lead through the first two frames, Eovaldi picked up his fourth win in New York's 14-1 win over the Royals on Monday.

Athletics: Right-hander Jesse Hahn, who tossed his first career complete game Monday, starts against the Yankees for the first time Saturday at 7:05 p.m. PT. Hahn is 2-4 with a 3.69 ERA and has held opponents to a .195 batting average at home.



Girardi: “You just try to decipher exactly what’s going on”

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

Aside from a few three-word conversations — “Hi Masahiro.” “Hello.” — every time I’ve spoken to Masahiro Tanaka, it’s been through a translator. And while I think those conversations have been about as smooth and easy as could be expected, there’s always some sense that something might be lost in translation.

Not because the translation itself would be wrong, but because it’s hard to get a full sense of what anyone is saying when it’s passing through a filter. Even an accurate filter can miss some of the nuances. It’s just harder to get a perfect gauge of what Tanaka’s saying when he’s saying it to someone else in a language I don’t understand.

The Yankees face the same obstacle, except they’re not just asking questions for a story in a newspaper. They’re asking questions to determine exactly how they should proceed with their young ace.

“The one thing that you don’t always hear is tone because it’s just different,” manager Joe Girardi said. “But I think it’s as good as it can get. There’s an open line of communication. We talk all the time. You just try to decipher exactly what’s going on.”

At some point today, Girardi will have a conversation with Tanaka to get a real sense of how his arm is feeling. How’s the forearm? How’s the wrist? How’s the elbow? Is Tanaka really confident that he’s physically ready to pitch in a major league game again?

That conversation could determine whether the Yankees officially list Tanaka as their starting pitcher for one of those upcoming games against the Mariners.

“We’ll have a heart-to-heart talk with him (about) how he feels about where he’s at,” Girardi said. “Hopefully he can make a start in Seattle.”

The language barrier is one obstacle in that conversation. Competitive nature is another. It's not unusual for a player to say he's healthy enough — and often truly believe he's healthy enough — despite a lingering health issue. Derek Jeter notoriously played through injuries in his career. I once had a Triple-A pitcher tell me he believed his rotator cuff was torn, but he didn't want anyone to know because he was pitching well. Just a few weeks ago, Chase Whitley came out of a game with an elbow injury and only then told the training staff that he'd been pitching through the injury for a while, including some good big league starts.

As the Yankees lock themselves into a Tanaka decision going forward, they're going to have to hear what he has to say, and they're going to have to figure out for themselves what he's really feeling.

“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.”

FIRST SLADE KIT

Injury-prone Heathcott on DL with quad injury

By GEORGE A. KING III
and KEVIN KERNAN

OAKLAND, Calif. — Slade Heathcott was hounded by injuries coming up in the Yankees' system and that hasn't changed as a big leaguer.

Before the Yankees' 6-2 loss to the Athletics at O.co Coliseum Friday night, manager Joe Girardi said the rookie right fielder would be placed on the 15-day disabled list Saturday with a right quadriceps injury that an MRI exam revealed was more serious than initially believed Thursday night when he was scratched from the starting lineup.

The MRI exam, read by the Athletics' medical staff, was sent to Yankees team doctor Chris Ahmad. It was diagnosed as a Grade 2 strain.

"We want to see what Ahmad says," said Girardi, who guessed Heathcott would be out more than 15 days. "At least a month."

"I was kind of surprised when I heard it. It [stinks]," Heathcott said. "In the outfield, it just kind of tightened up on me. Didn't think much about it. It hasn't gotten any worse, but it hasn't gotten any better. It's another speed bump, I've been up and down and faced a lot of bigger challenges than a quad [injury]."

The Yankees will elevate 23-year-old outfielder Ramon Flores from Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre when he arrives in Oakland. The left-handed hitting Flores batted .294 with four homers and 15

YANKEES NOTES

RBI in 42 games at Triple-A.

Girardi kept Brett Gardner (1-for-3 with an RBI) in left field, but said he will play some center now that Jacoby Ellsbury and Heathcott have been injured.

Chris Young, who started in center field, went 0-for-3 Friday night and is in a 2-for-38 (.053) slump.

In six games since being promoted from Triple-A, Heathcott hit .353 (6-for-17) with a homer and three RBIs.

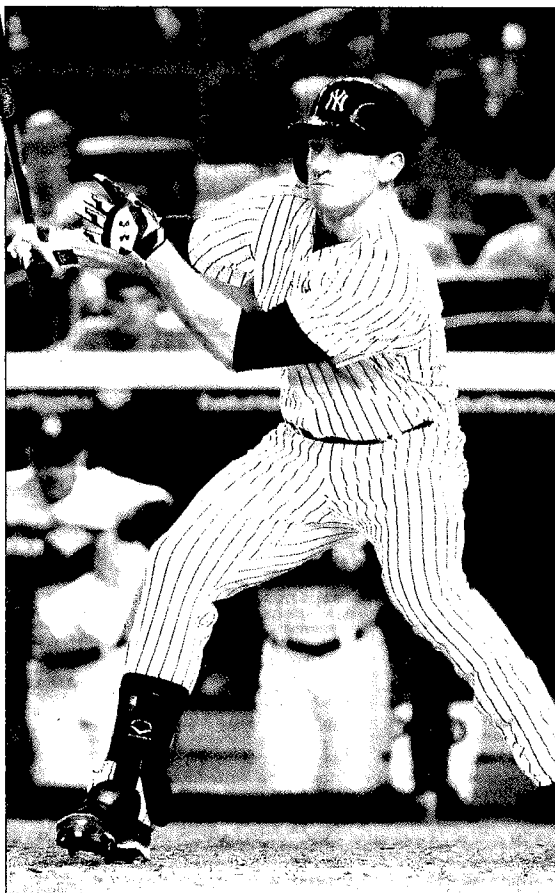
► **Brian McCann** hit a homer in his fourth consecutive game, the longest home run streak for a catcher this season.

The last Yankees catcher to hit a homer in four straight games was **Mike Stanley**, who performed the feat in 1993.

McCann ranks second among big league catchers with 32 RBIs this season. Oakland's **Stephen Vogt**, who had another two RBIs, leads with 35. In McCann's last seven games, he is 9-for-23 (.391).

► Girardi did not start **Mark Teixeira**, saying it was just a rest day.

► **Carlos Beltran**, who went 1-for-4 Friday night, had his 15-game hitting streak stopped on Thursday. It was the second longest streak of his career and one short of his career-high 16-gamer as a Met in 2009.



TOUGH BREAK: Slade Heathcott, who was hitting .353 since joining the Yankees, was placed on the DL with a quadriceps injury. *Ray Stubblebine*

Tanaka's imminent return has Capuano in flux

By GEORGE A. KING III

OAKLAND, Calif. — Masahiro Tanaka told the Yankees his right arm felt good enough to face big league hitters and the club immediately inserted the \$175 million investment back into the rotation.

Tanaka has been out since April 24 with tendinitis in his right wrist and a strained right forearm.

"Our plan is to start him Wednesday [in Seattle]," manager Joe Girardi said before the Yankees' 6-2 loss to the Athletics on Friday night at O.co Coliseum.

"They give me that day to pitch. I want to make the best out of it," Tanaka said through a translator.

"I'm ready to go."

Since that is Chris Capuano's next scheduled start after he worked Friday night's game, the veteran's status seems to be in flux. However, Girardi wasn't ready to say Capuano — who made his third start since coming off the disabled list and had pitched poorly in the first two — was being shuttled to the bullpen.

"That doesn't necessarily mean anything," Girardi said of using Tanaka on Capuano's day. "We will put him in Wednesday and then have to make some decisions."

While Girardi wasn't ready to announce what will become of Capuano, who is 0-3 with a 6.39 ERA in a combined 12 2/3 innings af-

ter allowing four runs (three earned) in 5 1/3 innings Friday night, he didn't want the pitcher's neck getting whiplash from looking back.

"Obviously, when you have the ball you have a chance to make a statement," Girardi said of the left-hander, who was signed to a one-year, \$5 million deal in the offseason. "There are other things that go into it. A lot can happen between now and Wednesday."

Girardi said he didn't think the 26-year-old Tanaka's re-entry into the rotation after two rehab starts for Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre shocked anybody in the clubhouse.

"Everyone knew he was coming back, it's no surprise," Girardi said.

"He will pitch and we will make a decision."

Tanaka, is 2-1 with a 3.22 ERA in four starts this season, missed two-plus months last year due to a small tear in his right ulnar collateral ligament. Instead of Tommy John surgery, Tanaka and the Yankees opted to rehab the injury.

Now, Tanaka has been shelved for more than a month. So, does Girardi feel there is a need to him differently?

"I thought we handled him pretty careful last year. It's not like we got him to 120 [pitches] all the time. We hardly got him over 110," Girardi said. "Saying that, I feel you have to handle him somewhat careful because he is coming back from an injury again."



Slade Heathcott put on DL with quad injury

May 29, 2015

Wallace Matthews, ESPNNewYork.com

OAKLAND -- Less than 24 hours ago, New York Yankees rookie outfielder Slade Heathcott said he thought his right quadriceps injury was so minor that he would be back out on the field within a day or so.

Now, however, it turns out he probably won't play for a month at the very least.

The Yankees placed Heathcott on the 15-day disabled list after an MRI revealed he has a Grade 2 strain of his quad, an injury that generally takes a minimum of a month to heal. The Yankees had called Heathcott up from Triple-A Scranton on May 20 to replace the injured Jacoby Ellsbury.

In his place, the Yankees will recall OF Ramon Flores, who is batting .294 with four home runs and 15 RBI for Scranton.

"I was kind of surprised when I heard the diagnosis," said Heathcott, who batted .353 with a home run and three RBI in six games with the Yankees. "I thought it was something that was manageable, just a little bit more sore. Obviously there's a reason why."

Heathcott said he believed he aggravated the injury, which has troubled him on and off since spring training, chasing a Prince Fielder home run against the Yankees in a game on May 22. Heathcott has an extensive injury history -- two shoulder surgeries and two knee surgeries -- and believes the injury may have resulted from the latest knee surgery, performed in the off-season.

"I think my body is still adjusting to the last surgery I had and it might just take a little more time," he said. "Obviously it's frustrating, but it's just another speed bump to me. I've been up and down, faced a lot bigger challenges than a quad."

In Heathcott's absence, Joe Girardi said Brett Gardner, who had been shuffled to left field with the acquisition of Ellsbury before the 2014 season, would return to centerfield when Flores, a corner outfielder, is in the lineup.

Injuries mount for Yankees as Slade Heathcott hits DL

Brendan Kutny | May 29, 2015 at 9:10 PM

OAKLAND, Calif. — Slade Heathcott almost didn't believe the doctor.

When the Yankees' rookie center fielder was told he had a relatively serious strain in his right quadriceps, which had been felt tight, he was shocked.

The strain, classified as a Grade 2, will land Heathcott on the 15-day disabled list starting Saturday, according to manager Joe Girardi. Triple-A left fielder Ramon Flores will take Heathcott's spot on the 25-man roster.

After he was pulled from his start in what would end up a 5-3 Yankees loss to the A's Thursday, Heathcott said he didn't believe his quad was in bad shape and that he thought he'd be back in the lineup in a few days.

Instead, Girardi said, Heathcott will likely miss about a month.

"There's no other words that it sucks but I've never doubted (God's) plan so I'm not going to start now," he said. "I'll get better physically and I'll get back as soon as I can."

Heathcott said he had felt the injury for the first early in spring training, but that the pain lasted just a day. When he felt it again over the weekend, Heathcott said, he thought it would just go away. It didn't.

Heathcott said he believes the injury could be related to the knee surgery that ended his 2014 season early. The injury was the latest in a line of health problems for the 24-year-old former first-round pick, whom the Yankees non-tendered at the end of last season.

Heathcott was brought up from Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre to replace starting center fielder Jacoby Ellsbury, who hit the DL with a left knee strain May 20. The Yankees still don't have a timetable for Ellsbury, who isn't yet performing baseball activities.

Heathcott and Ellsbury are just a pair of a long list of Yankees who will have missed significant time in 2014. The club has also seen Chris Capuano, Masahiro

Tanaka, Brendan Ryan, Gregorio Petit and Chase Whitley spend extended stays on the DL.

Flores is expected to play left field when he joins the Yankees Saturday. Brett Gardner will shift to center field when Flores is in the lineup. Gardner has extensive experience in center.

Flores has never made a major-league roster. He's hitting .294 with four homers and 14 RBI at Triple-A.



New York Yankees outfielder Slade Heathcott headed to DL

05/29/2015 8:06 PM ET

By Lou DiPietro

New York Yankees outfielder Slade Heathcott has a Grade 2 strain of his right quadriceps and will miss at least a month, manager Joe Girardi announced on Friday.

The Yankees will place Heathcott on the 15-day disabled list and outfielder Ramon Flores has been called up from Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre to replace him, but Flores will not be able to join the team until Saturday.

Heathcott was scheduled to start Thursday's series opener in Oakland but was held out with what was termed tightness in his right quad, and he didn't seem to think it was a long-term issue.

"I felt it a few days ago, it just kind of tightened up," Heathcott said following that game, "but I came in today and it was a little more tender, so we ultimately decided that giving it a day or two here would be better than a few weeks."

Girardi later reiterated that the tightness was an issue the outfielder had been dealing with for a while, but an MRI taken Friday determined a Grade 2 strain that will sideline Heathcott for a while.

The 24-year-old was called up on May 20 when Jacoby Ellsbury went on the disabled list with a knee injury; he made his major-league debut that night as a pinch-runner, and was 6-for-17 (.353) with one home run and three RBI in six games.

Flores, 23, was signed as an international free agent in 2008 and has spent his entire career in the organization. This year, he was hitting .294 with four homers, 15 RBI, and seven doubles in 42 games for the RailRiders.

He was originally in SWB's starting lineup for their game Thursday night against Norfolk, but was pulled from the game minutes before first pitch.

Heathcott to DL with strained right quad

Yankees rookie center fielder likely out close to month

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | May 29th, 2015

OAKLAND -- A week that started with Slade Heathcott celebrating his first career big league hit will conclude with the rookie outfielder heading to the disabled list, thanks to a Grade 2 strain of his right quadriceps.

Heathcott picked up six hits in his first 17 at-bats (.353) after being summoned from the Minors to fill in for the injured Jacoby Ellsbury, and will be replaced on the active roster by outfielder Ramon Flores, who should be in Oakland on Saturday.

"I was surprised by the diagnosis," Heathcott said. "I thought it was something that was manageable, just a little bit more sore. Obviously there's a reason why."

Yankees manager Joe Girardi said that Heathcott is expected to miss more than the minimum 15 days, and will likely be out closer to a month.

"It's still up in the air. It's going to be however I feel," Heathcott said. "I'll do everything I possibly can to be back as fast as possible, but also be back 100 percent."

Girardi said that he plans to use Brett Gardner in center field when Flores, mostly a left fielder, is in the lineup. Chris Young will also see reps in center.

"It will be kind of like what I did with Slade," Girardi said. "We'll see how the kid does. It could be a platoon situation. There's a lot of different things we could do. We'll see how the kid does."

Heathcott made his first big league appearance May 20 as a pinch-runner in the Yankees' 3-2 loss to the Nationals, and notched his first hit -- a double -- off the Rangers' Colby Lewis on May 22.

He said that he aggravated the quad while pursuing Prince Fielder's second home run on May 23, but was able to stay in the lineup long enough to hit his first homer off the Royals' Greg Holland on Monday.

"Hey, it's been awesome," Heathcott said. "Obviously it's frustrating, but it's just another speed bump to me. I've been up and down, faced a lot bigger challenges than a quad. I'm just going to rehab it, get it back and figure out what I can do to make sure it doesn't come back."

Headley puzzled by defensive woes

Yanks third baseman leads Majors with 11 errors

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | 2:36 AM ET

OAKLAND -- The theory of a defensive slump is one that [Chase Headley](#) subscribes to, though the Yankees third baseman can't explain why there is one dogging him at the hot corner.

Headley allowed a [Ben Zobrist](#) chopper to go through his legs Friday, opening the door for a four-run Athletics third inning in the **Yanks' 6-2 loss** at the Coliseum. It marked Headley's 11th error, just two shy of his single-season career high.

"I know what type of player I am defensively; my entire career, I've been a good player," Headley said. "It's obviously been tough for me so far this year. But I'm going to keep working at it, grinding at it, and it'll get better. It has to."

When Headley was acquired from the Padres late last July, general manager Brian Cashman said that the team's scouts internally evaluated Headley as just an "average" defensive third baseman. That became an oft-repeated punchline among observers as Headley made numerous excellent plays down the stretch.

The way the first two months of this season have gone, Headley would settle for average right about now. His 11 errors lead all big league third basemen, having come mostly on the throwing side.

"It's hard to say [why]," manager Joe Girardi said. "We saw him play great defense for us last year, and he's struggled some."

Headley said that his back -- which was problematic late in his San Diego tenure -- has not been an issue. He believes he has cleaned up the throwing, which gave [Mark Teixeira](#) plenty of work at first base, but now the glove has become a problem.

"I really don't have any explanation for any of it," Headley said. "It's never happened to me before and I know I'll get through it. It's frustrating that it's causing us to lose games, but it's not for a lack of effort or lack of attention to detail, I can tell you that."

In the case of Zobrist's chopper, Headley said that he saw it fine off the bat and was thinking about turning a double play, but he had his glove up expecting a bigger hop that never came. [Billy Burns](#) scored on the play, [Billy Butler](#) followed with a run-scoring double and [Stephen Vogt](#) slugged a two-run double off Yanks lefty [Chris Capuano](#).

"It's not what I've done in my career, it's not what I'm going to do going forward, but that's where we are right now," Headley said. "There's nothing I can do to fix that, I've just got to keep going forward, working hard, and make the play the next time."



Postgame notes: “Another play that I probably should have made”

Posted by: [Chad Jennings](#) - Posted in [Misc](#) on May 30, 2015

Chase Headley said he saw the ball just fine off the bat. He simply misjudged it, thought it was going to bounce much higher than it did. With his glove turned upward, Headley wasn't in position to adjust, and his 11th error of the season was perhaps the key play in tonight's loss.

“Whether it hit the lip or not, it definitely stayed down,” Headley said. “But I could have been in better position. I'm expecting the ball to come up, so I had my glove up. If I had my glove down you have a better chance to react to a different hop. It's unfortunate because it's a big time in the game and it cost us a bunch of runs. Just a play that I feel like I have to make, regardless of whether it takes a hop or not. You've got to make a play. Cap made a big pitch right there, I catch that and turn a double play, we may be out of there with one run. Obviously disappointing, and another play that I probably should have made.”

Clearly the Yankees had lots of problems tonight — starting with Sonny Gray, but also the insurance runs off Jacob Lindgren and the final at-bat by Stephen Drew — but the Headley error in the third inning set a lot of things in motion. Chris Capuano gave up two hits before and two more hits after the mistake, but that error might have been a double play ball to at least limit the damage.

“It possibly changes the way you use the bullpen; it changes a lot of different things,” Joe Girardi said. “The extra out hurt us.”

Without the error, that might have been a one-run inning, not a four-run inning. If it were a closer game, Girardi probably would have pinch hit Mark Teixeira earlier rather than waiting for him to come up as the tying run. If the Yankees had a lead, Girardi might not have gone to Lindgren when he did.

But the error happened. And errors like that have been happening a lot with Headley. He has a strong defensive reputation, played strong defense last year, and

has only once had more than 11 errors in a season. But he already has 11 errors this year.

Tonight's was costly.

"Early on it was throwing the ball," Headley said. "That was something I've worked on and will continue to work on. Lately, it's been balls I haven't caught. Maybe not the best hops that I could have gotten, but by the same token, if I'm doing things a little bit cleaner, maybe I'm able to adjust to the tough hops and make the play. I know what type of player I am defensively, my entire career I've been a good player. It's obviously been tough for me so far this year. But I'm going to keep working at it, grinding at it, and it'll get better. It has to."

—

- Not a lot of good choices to hit in that ninth inning. Obviously Drew's not remotely the best choice to have at the plate, but Girardi was saving Teixeira to come up as the tying run (Teixeira was on deck). Essentially, Girardi had to choose between letting Drew or Chris Young face Tyler Clippard, and neither one has been very good. Could have pinch hit John Ryan Murphy or Jose Pirela, but they haven't been good either. Predictably, Drew popped out to end the game.
- Girardi on Drew, who's now hitting .158: "It's different from night to night. We've seen him barrel balls up, but he doesn't get hits. Then he might be out in front of one a little bit. Tonight's a hard night to judge anyone when you're facing Sonny Gray. But it just doesn't seem that he gets the rewards that he should when he hits the ball hard. And that's frustrating."
- Esmil Rogers pitched very well for 1.2 innings, but Girardi pulled him in favor of Lindgren in the eighth. Why? Because the A's had a lefty, a righty, and another lefty coming to the plate that inning. "Their struggles have come against left-handers this year," Girardi said.
- Lindgren got ahead 1-2 against the first lefty, but walked him. He was ahead 0-2 against Brett Lawrie, but gave up a two-run homer on the next pitch. Without that home run, it would have made sense to hit Teixeira for either Drew or Jones in the ninth. Those insurance runs mattered. "We probably should have went back to the curveball with Lawrie," Brian McCann said. "He pulled his hands in nice and hit a cutter, a tough pitch, out. That pitch, I felt like if I could do it over again I would have called a curveball. And the walk, tip your hat to Vogt. He battled on it. He fouled off some tough pitches."

- McCann has now homered in four straight games. He's the first Yankees player to do that while playing catcher since Mike Stanley in 1993. McCann has at least one RBI in seven straight games. "Making small adjustments here and there," he said. "I mean honestly, I feel like I've been swinging the bat well all year. Now I'm kinda getting more lift in my swing and the balls are leaving the ballpark."
- Aside from that bad stretch to start the fifth inning, Capuano really wasn't awful tonight. He retired 10 of the last 11 batters he faced. "The stuff isn't real sharp, I'm still missing too many spots," Capuano said. "But I'm fighting every pitch, trying to get outs out there."
- Capuano on the Headley error: "You know, stuff like that happens. You've just got to keep making pitches. I missed some locations and gave up some hits after that that came back to hurt. With Sonny on the other side, you knew runs were going to be at a premium. He pitched great."
- Capuano has lasted less than six innings in each of his three starts. His next turn is the day Masahiro Tanaka is coming back, so he might not make another start for a while.
- No one likes tipping caps, but Sonny Gray really is quite good. "I mean, he's really really good," McCann said. "He's got four pitches and he sits at 95 miles per hour, he sinks it, he four-seams it, he's got a really good curveball, so he's got everything you want. He's a number one and he showed it tonight. He's really good. We watched him in the playoffs coming out of college and you knew he was going to be really good."
- Carlos Beltran had another hit and has hit safely in 16 of his past 17 games after having his 15-game hitting streak come to an end yesterday. He's hitting .299 in the month of May.
- Final word to Girardi on whether the Yankees are lucky to be still in first place: "I think so. Especially the way we've struggled the last two weeks. We had a tough road trip. Came home and lost the first three at home. Then we beat Kansas City three days in a row and we pitched well. Then, these two games, CC had a lead and wasn't able to hold it, and then we give them an extra out tonight that leads to a big inning for them. But our division right now is up for grabs. We need to take advantage of that."

BY ERIK BOLAND
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OAKLAND, Calif. — The date of Masahiro Tanaka's return to the rotation has been set.

Before last night's game against the A's, Joe Girardi said Tanaka, rehabbing a right forearm strain and right wrist tendinitis since being put on the disabled list April 29, will start Wednesday afternoon in Seattle.

"I talked to him today and wanted to make sure he felt good and he felt he was ready to go," Girardi said. "He felt good about it."

Tanaka, speaking through his translator, echoed his manager.

"My body's feeling good being healthy," he said. "I'm feeling good right now."

Tanaka made his second and final rehab start Wednesday in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, for Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre. He traveled to the West Coast on Thursday, rejoining the club later that night.

"I want to make the best out of it," Tanaka said. "Just ready to go out there and do my best."

He had a good slider but not much else against the Red Sox Triple-A club Wednesday, throwing 62 pitches and allowing three runs, four hits and two walks with four strikeouts.

"Not hitting my spots when I needed to," said Tanaka, who will be on a pitch count of 80 to 85 against the Mariners. "That part, I think, was a little bit off on that day."

But neither he nor the Yankees cared much about the results. Tanaka has felt healthy each step of the way in his rehab, and Girardi said Thursday that reports from those at Wednesday's game reflected a pitcher whose arm is getting stronger. Girardi said Tanaka's fastball averaged 91.0 mph in Pawtucket and that he peaked at 93.

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

Girardi said he will watch Tanaka carefully but added that it's not as if the Yankees played it fast and loose with him before last season's injury.

"I thought we handled him pretty careful last year," Girardi said. "It's not like we got him to 120 [pitches] all the time. We hardly ever got him over 110."

In 20 starts last season, Tanaka reached 110 pitches five times, topping out at 118.

"But in saying that," Girardi continued, "you do have to handle him somewhat careful because he's coming back from an injury and you have to build him up a little bit. You do have



AP / CHARLES KRUPA

Reports indicated that Masahiro Tanaka showed improved arm strength in rehab start vs. Pawtucket.

TANAKA TO FACE M'S WEDNESDAY

Says he feels healthy and ready to go, and Yankees will be careful with him

Tonight **Y A's**

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

LATE RESULT
Read about last night's Yankees-A's game at newsday.com/yankees

to watch him."

Girardi knows keeping any pitcher healthy is an inexact science. "It's extremely hard to figure out and it's across the board in baseball," he said. "It seems like in the game now, we do more to protect them than we ever have, and it seems like there's more injuries."

Chris Capuano, who started last night, is the one getting bumped Wednesday. Girardi would not say if the left-hander will be taken out of the rotation permanently with Tanaka's return, though that is the most likely outcome. "We'll put [Tanaka] in Wednesday," Girardi

said. "And then we'll make some decisions."

Notes & quotes: Slade Heathcott, who had a .353/.353/.588 slash line in six games, will be put on the 15-day disabled list with a Grade 2 strain of his right quadriceps and likely will be out for at least a month, Girardi said. Outfielder Ramon

Flores was called up from Scranton and was scheduled to arrive late last night. . . . Girardi said he's not paying any closer attention to top pitching prospect Luis Severino now that he's been promoted to Triple-A because he pays attention to all of the club's minor-leaguers. Still, "the way it usually happens is when somebody goes down, you talk about the guys in Triple-A before you talk about the guys in Double-A," Girardi said. "So he's that much closer now."

NEWSDAY SATURDAY MAY 30, 2015 newsday.com



Masahiro Tanaka set to rejoin Yankees starting rotation

By Ian Denomme 20 hours ago Big League Stew

New York Yankees pitcher Masahiro Tanaka, playing for the Triple A Scranton/Wilkes Barre RailRiders, delivers against the Durham Bulls during the second inning of a baseball game, Thursday, May 21, 2015, in Scranton, Pa. Tanaka threw 41 pitches and gave up two hits in his first rehab start after missing almost a month with wrist tendinitis and a mild forearm strain. (AP Photo/Julie Jacobson)

After missing a month with a forearm strain and wrist tendonitis, New York Yankees pitcher Masahiro Tanaka appears ready to rejoin the rotation. After just two rehab starts in Triple-A Tanaka flew with the Yankees to Oakland on Thursday for the start of seven-game West Coast road trip.

Tanaka will start in Seattle on Tuesday or Wednesday and will have an 80-pitch limit in his first start, Yankees manager Joe Girardi told USA Today.

“You want him to feel good, number one,” 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.

...

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.”

Tanaka, an All Star in 2014 in his rookie major-league season, made just four starts this season before going on the disabled list. Before the season even began he admitted he had lost some velocity and was trying to change his pitching style. It’s no surprise that the Yankees have been cautious with their ace, especially after seeing another young pitcher, Chase Whitley, go down with an injury and ultimately require Tommy John surgery.

Despite the preseason concerns, Tanaka looked no worse for wear before he hit the DL. He was 2-1 with a 3.22 ERA, 24 strikeouts in 22 innings, and a 0.940 WHIP. The Yankees could use him, too. They’re still in first place in the AL East but are 3-7 in their last 10.



Yankees banking on Masahiro Tanaka's honesty

Wallace Matthews, ESPNNewYork.com

OAKLAND -- The New York Yankees need Masahiro Tanaka not just to come back, but to come back strong, if they are to have any hope of playing more like the team that swept the Kansas City Royals last week and less like the team that had lost 10 of 11 heading into that series -- or like the team that lost, 5-4, to the Oakland Athletics Thursday night.

That means they also need Tanaka to be completely honest with Joe Girardi and his staff when they sit down to discuss his imminent return to the starting rotation, probably Tuesday or Wednesday in Seattle.

The truth is, the weakness of the AL East will probably keep the Yankees in the divisional race all season.

But the weakness of the Yankees' pitching staff, and the gradual tearing down of their bullpen, might also insure that they will finish just close enough to lose, the way they did in Thursday night's series-opening loss.

There's no doubt the Yankees are in a precarious position, on the one hand needing to be cautious with Tanaka knowing that he has the ticking time bomb of a partially torn UCL inside his \$155 million right elbow, and on the other hand needing him to come back and pitch for them as soon as he can, and every five days if possible.

Because Thursday night's loss demonstrated three things: That right now, Michael Pineda is the Yankees' only truly reliable starting pitcher; that when the bullpen is short of its three best arms (Andrew Miller, Dellin Betances and Justin Wilson) as it was Thursday, they need a complete game out of the starter to be truly safe, and that Girardi is not about to bend his rules -- even if it means losing a game -- as it did in the opener of his team's four-game series against the woeful A's.

Adhering to his rule of never using any of his relievers three days in a row, Girardi refused to go to Miller, Betances or Wilson when CC Sabathia began to falter in the seventh. In truth, he never should have been allowed out of the dugout to start the inning after surrendering a game-tying two-run home run to Brett Lawrie with two out in the sixth.

But by sending Sabathia out again, Girardi showed his reluctance to use the secondary pieces in his bullpen: David Carpenter, who has been ineffective all season, Chasen Shreve and Esmil Rogers. Instead, he stuck with Sabathia two hitters too long, and as a result was forced to use Carpenter in a situation that practically set him up to fail: two on, none out, tie game. Predictably enough, Carpenter allowed the two inherited runners to score, and that was the difference in the game.

You could pretty much see this one coming, considering Sabathia's history in recent years of rarely being able to hold it together for an entire outing, of nearly always managing to have that one inning where he comes apart just enough to insure his team, and often himself, a loss.

But it is not only Sabathia; as well as the Yankees starters have pitched at times this season, they have averaged just 5 2/3 innings per start. That means plenty of bullpen practically every night, and already, Miller (21 appearances), Betances and Wilson (23 appearances each) have been used in nearly half of the Yankees' 48 games. You can see where that is headed over the long haul.

That is why it is imperative that Tanaka -- who himself averaged 5 2/3 innings in his four starts before getting injured -- had better be ready not just to pitch, but to pitch deep into games. And that means being honest with Girardi when the manager looks him in the eye on Friday and asks how his right arm feels, from shoulder to fingertips.

"I think there's open communication, 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,'" Girardi said. "It's just part of what players do. I think a player doesn't really realize it until it really starts to affect their performance. Tanaka's probably no different than most players. It's just, us trying to decipher and look for signs."

Just last week, Chase Whitley admitted that he had been pitching with pain in his elbow for several starts before his UCL finally tore through and he wound up having Tommy John surgery. The odds are that Tanaka will insist everything is fine, and the Yankees will insert him back into their rotation next week, even though he has not pitched in a real game since April 23, and only made two rehab starts, the longer of which went just 62 pitches.

They don't really know if Tanaka is OK, but they desperately need him to be, and so will be more than willing to believe whatever the pitcher tells them. Still, he will not be allowed to throw more than 90 pitches, which means that once again, the bullpen, already overworked through the first quarter of the season, is probably in for a busy night once again.

"Guys have got to get it done," a frustrated Girardi said after Thursday night's loss. "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."

Unless the starters start giving the Yankees more length, there are going to be more nights like Thursday as the season grinds on. And unless Tanaka is truly ready to go -- not just to pitch, but to pitch the way he did up until July 8 of last year, when he suffered his UCL tear -- then he, too, will be a party to the injustice being perpetrated on the bullpen by the Yankees starters: Turning what had been this team's greatest strength ultimately into just one more liability.



Masahiro Tanaka: 'I'm feeling healthy'

May 30, 2015

Wallace Matthews, ESPNNewYork.com

OAKLAND, Calif. -- New York Yankees right-hander Masahiro Tanaka will start Wednesday at the Seattle Mariners after nearly six weeks on the disabled list with wrist and forearm injuries.

Yankees manager Joe Girardi made the announcement before Friday night's game against the Oakland Athletics at O.co Coliseum after speaking with Tanaka, who arrived here from New York on Thursday night.

Masahiro Tanaka last pitched for the Yankees on April 23. That is set to change come Wednesday in Seattle. *Leon Halip/Getty Images*)

"We just wanted to make sure he felt good, that he felt he was ready to go and he felt good about it," Girardi said.

Added Tanaka, through an interpreter, after playing catch briefly in the outfield: "Obviously, I'm feeling good right now, feeling healthy. I don't have much expectations. I just want to go out there and pitch the best way I can so that I can give a chance for the team to win that particular game."

Tanaka last pitched April 23, when he allowed one run in 6 1/3 innings against the Tigers in Detroit to earn his second win of the season. He reported pain in his wrist after a bullpen session a few days later, and a subsequent MRI revealed wrist tendinitis along with a forearm strain.

Tanaka made two rehab starts for Triple-A Scranton. In the most recent start on Wednesday, he allowed three earned runs on four hits, including a home run, in three innings against Pawtucket, the Boston Red Sox affiliate.

Tanaka attributed that performance to a lack of command and said his \$155 million right arm, already compromised by a slight tear in the ulnar collateral ligament, is pain free.

"I'm feeling good right now, but there are always going to be ups and downs when you go out on the mound," Tanaka said. "I think I was not hitting my spots [Wednesday] when I needed to, so that part, I was a little bit off on that day. All I'm thinking is just trying to go out there and trying to be my best."

In his only career appearance against the Mariners, Tanaka threw a complete game last June 11, allowing two runs on six hits and striking out 11 in a 4-2 win.

He is 2-1 this season with a 3.22 ERA.

Why Yankees' Masahiro Tanaka is likely to bounce Chris Capuano from rotation

Brendan Kuty | May 29, 2015 at 10:00 AM, updated May 29, 2015 at 10:23 AM

OAKLAND, Calif. — When Chris Capuano starts Friday, **Masahiro Tanaka** will likely be looking over his shoulder. Figuratively speaking, of course. Otherwise that would be creepy and against the rules.

But it seems all but a foregone conclusion that Tanaka will take Capuano's spot in the rotation **if he returns from the disabled list next week.**

Tanaka has been out for more than a month with a right forearm strain and right wrist tendinitis. But he's been healthy through **two rehab starts** for Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre recently and, manager Joe Girardi said, the 26-year-old righty would fly into Oakland Thursday night. On Friday, Tanaka is scheduled to talk with the Yankees, who will decide whether to take him off the DL.

Since Tanaka didn't report any problems in his Wednesday outing and told the Yankees he felt fine Thursday, it's hard to imagine that his next start won't happen in the majors. Girardi said if the team gives Tanaka a thumbs up, he'll start either Tuesday or Wednesday in Seattle.

CC Sabathia, who pitched Thursday, would be scheduled to pitch Tuesday. He didn't report any problems after his loss Thursday, so it's doubtful that the Yankees would push him back a day. That means Capuano probably wouldn't get the Wednesday start.

Capuano hasn't done much to stake claim to the spot, anyway. After a long stint on the DL with a right quad strain, Capuano has gone 0-2 with a 7.36 ERA in two starts. Adam Warren would be the only other candidate besides Capuano to get bounced from the rotation, but he's put up a 2.75 ERA in his last three starts.

And it sounded as if Warren had a backer in Girardi Thursday.

"Lately, he has been pitching as well as anybody we have in the rotation," the manager said.

So it will likely be up to Capuano to pitch himself back into the conversation Friday. But if he doesn't, there's still a chance he could stick with the Yankees. The team could send Capuano to the bullpen and either cut ties with righty long man Esmil Rogers or demote a lefty, such as Chasen Shreve or Jacob Lindgren.



It's official: Masahiro Tanaka will return to the Yankees ...

Brendan Kutny | May 29, 2015 at 7:34 PM

OAKLAND, Calif. -- Masahiro Tanaka's return date is set.

Tanaka will return to the Yankees' rotation Wednesday in Seattle.

The start will push Chris Capuano either out of the starting rotation or simply back a day, but manager Joe Girardi said it hadn't decided yet his fate.

Tanaka will be limited to between 80 and 85 pitches, Girardi said.

Tanaka told reporters he feels fine after two rehabilitation starts with Triple-A.

Tanaka will be coming off the 15-day disabled list. He was rehabbing a right forearm strain and right wrist tendinitis.

Yanks need Tanaka to resume ace status

Club leads AL East despite inconsistent rotation

By Tracy Ringolsby / MLB.com | @TracyRingolsby | May 30, 2015 2:52 AM ET

OAKLAND -- The New York Yankees are sitting atop the American League East.

The position, however, is precarious.

And they know it.

It is as apparent as the way they have welcomed Masahiro Tanaka back to the rotation, confirming Friday that the 26-year-old right-hander **will come off the disabled list** and start Wednesday in Seattle.

They know Tanaka is not the Tanaka who was 12-3 with a 2.27 ERA by July 3 a year ago, but made only three more starts in his first season outside of his native Japan because of a slight tear in his right ulnar collateral ligament, which Tanaka chose to rehab instead of undergoing surgery.

They aren't even sure he will be the same Tanaka who opened this season 2-1 with a 3.22 ERA in four starts before he was sidelined with tendinitis in his right wrist and a strained right forearm.

They do, however, know that Tanaka rejoined the team Friday after a Minor League rehab assignment, and said he was ready to go. And it is no secret they are looking for reinforcements for their rotation.

Manager Joe Girardi isn't trying to fool anybody.

"I hope he is back in midseason form, but I know he is not going to have a big pitch count right away," said Girardi. "I hope for 80 [pitches] Wednesday and see what happens."

And Tanaka gets it.

"I don't have much expectations," he said before Friday's **6-2 loss** in Oakland. "I just want to go out there and pitch the best I can so I can give the team a chance to win."

That's just what the Yankees want, too. They envision a healthy Tanaka being able to provide a jump start to what has been an inconsistent season. With back-to-back losses to open a four-game weekend series in Oakland, they have lost 12 of their past 16 games. They have gone from nine games over .500 to one victory over break-even.

They are a game ahead in the AL East, but the 25-24 record says more about the challenges the Yankees are facing than a simple glance at the standings.

And the biggest challenge is getting the rotation in order.

How big a challenge is it?

Well:

- Their starters are a combined 18-19, making them the only one of the 13 teams with an overall winning record that doesn't have a rotation on the plus side of .500.
- The starters are averaging 5 2/3 innings, which ranks 23rd among the 30 teams.
- The rotation has a 4.30 ERA, which ranks 20th.

Given all that, Girardi admits, the fact the Yankees are in first place is impressive, "especially" in light of the struggles of the last two weeks, which was hidden a bit by a three-game sweep of AL Central-leading Kansas City earlier this week.

"The division is up for grabs," said Girardi.

There is, after all, only a three-game spread between the division leading Yankees (25-24) and the last-place Boston Red Sox (22-27). Tampa Bay (24-25) and Baltimore (23-24) are both a game from the top, and Toronto (23-27) is 2 1/2 games back.

That's why the Yankees see Tanaka as a potential difference maker.

Tanaka most likely will step in for lefty Chris Capuano, who on Friday night made his third start since coming off the disabled list and is 0-3, having allowed nine earned runs in 12 1/3 innings. The other possibility would be Adam Warren, who spent the last two seasons in the bullpen, but is 3-3 with a 3.91 ERA in nine starts this year. Despite losing two of his last three starts, Warren has allowed only six earned runs in 19 2/3 innings.

It would seem safe to assume that veteran CC Sabathia, despite the Yankees having lost seven of his 10 starts, is set in the rotation, along with Michael Pineda, who is 6-2 and has seen the Yankees win seven of his 10 starts, and Nathan Eovaldi, who is 4-1.

Girardi, however, isn't making anything official.

"A lot can happen between now and Wednesday," he said. "I don't want any player looking over his shoulder."

Girardi and the Yankees want to look ahead.

They are looking for a rotation that can step up and provide some leadership in the next four months, and help the team get back into the playoffs after missing out each of the last two years, the second and third time they have been October observers in the past 20 years.

Tanaka to be activated for Wednesday's start

Yankees ace 'feeling good,' set to return from right wrist tendinitis, forearm strain

By Bryan Hoch / MLB.com | [@BryanHoch](#) | May 29th, 2015

OAKLAND -- Masahiro Tanaka will be activated from the disabled list and has been scheduled to start against the Mariners in Seattle on Wednesday, Yankees manager Joe Girardi said Friday.

Tanaka flew to join the club following his second Minor League rehabilitation start Wednesday at Pawtucket for Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre, and said that he feels healthy after spending the last month on the disabled list.

"Obviously my body is feeling good, being healthy," Tanaka said through an interpreter. "I'm feeling good right now, but there are always going to be ups and downs when you go out on the mound. All I'm thinking is just trying to go out there and trying to be my best."

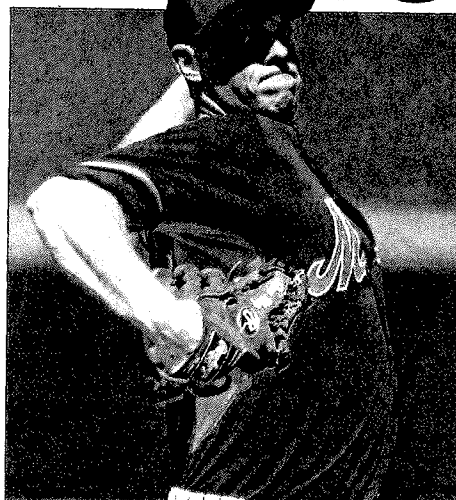
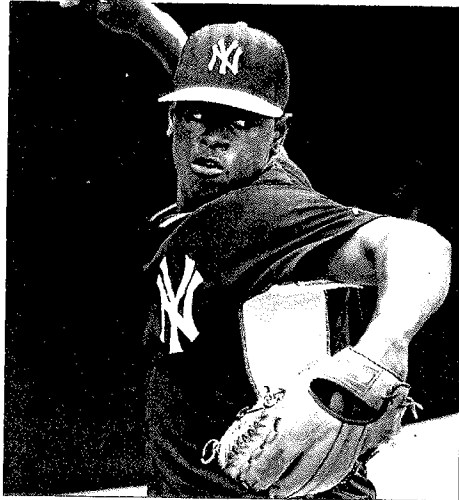
Tanaka, 26, has been on the disabled list since April 27 with tendinitis in his right wrist and a strained forearm. He threw 62 pitches in Wednesday's start, permitting three earned runs and four hits over three innings, and reported no physical issues.

"I think I was not hitting my spots when I needed to, so that part, I was a little bit off on that day," Tanaka said.

Girardi said that Tanaka is expected to throw about 80 pitches against the Mariners, and that slotting Tanaka into the rotation does not necessarily mean that left-hander [Chris Capuano](#) -- who started Friday against the Athletics -- will be the one to be bumped from the rotation.

"Obviously when you have the ball, you have a chance to make a statement, but there's other things that go into it," Girardi said. "A lot can happen between now and Wednesday, and I don't want any of our players ever looking over their shoulders about spots. Everyone knew he was coming back, so it's no surprise. He's here. Everyone knows he's here, too."

FUTURE BETS



BIG GUNS: Luis Severino (left) and Steven Matz are projected to be top-end starters. N.Y. Post: Charles Wenzelberg; Anthony J. Causi

THOUGH it's almost always about the here and now for the Yankees and Mets, an eye also must be kept on the future, and what's coming next.

Both teams always are looking for their farm systems to produce, and with that in mind, here is a look at five prospects to keep an eye out for from each team, with all stats entering Friday night:

Yankees

RHP Luis Severino

The Yankees' top pitching prospect, who drew a comparison to Pedro Martinez from a scout last summer, has been mowing down his competition, striking out 48 in 38 innings at Double-A Trenton. For his efforts, Severino was promoted to Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre.

2B Rob Refsnyder

With Stephen Drew continuing to flounder and Jose Pirela yet to produce, Refsnyder, who is hitting .277 at Triple-A, could get a look at second base. But he must improve his defense (.951 fielding percentage).

OF Aaron Judge

Many words were written in this space about Judge just a



few weeks ago, but the slugging outfielder continues to impress. He has a .295 batting average at Double-A to go along with seven homers and 27 RBIs.

OF Mason Williams

It has been a long road for Williams, who was taken in the fourth round of the 2010 draft, but struggled at Double-A in 2014 (.223). Nevertheless, he has bounced back nicely in 2015, with a .316 average in time split between Double-A and Triple-A — though he hasn't homered in 179 at-bats.

Mets

LHP Steven Matz

Pretty soon, Mets fans

could be singing "Meet the Matz," as the southpaw is carving up the competition at Las Vegas, with a 1.99 ERA in 63 1/3 innings, to go along with 68 strikeouts.

IF T.J. Rivera

Rivera, whose back story was covered earlier this month, hasn't missed a beat since being promoted to Triple-A. He has recorded a .341 average in 44 at-bats. He also has flashed a strong glove, checking in with a .992 fielding percentage at second base, his primary position.

OF Michael Conforto

The team's first-round draft pick from a season ago appears to be on a fast track to the Show. He hit .283 at High-A St. Lucie, displaying improved power (seven homers in 184 at-bats), and was just promoted to Double-A Binghamton.

OF Brandon Nimmo

Drafted 13th overall out of high school in 2011, it looked as if Nimmo had turned a corner in his fourth full pro season, as he was hitting .297 at Double-A. Unfortunately, he suffered a sprained ACL and is sidelined for at least the next two weeks.

jdemarzo@nypost.com

Meet Ramon Flores, the Yankees' newest face

Brendan Kutny | May 30, 2015 at 6:00 AM, updated May 30, 2015 at 6:01 AM

OAKLAND, Calif. — Here's what you need to know about Ramon Flores, whom the **Yankees** will call up from Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre Saturday when they put Slade Heathcott (quad strain) on the 15-day disabled list.

WELCOME TO THE SHOW: Flores, 23, has been in the Yankees' organization since signing as a 17-year-old. It will be his first trip to the big leagues.

KNOW YOUR ROLE: Flores will play left field, bumping Brett Gardner to center field.

WHAT HE DOES: He's got a career .272 minor-league batting average, but he draws plenty of walks and has a lifetime .360 on-base percentage. In fact, one of the knocks on Flores has been that maybe he's too selective at the plate. Flores hits for almost no power, however. He plays decent enough defense.

ROLLING: Flores has five hits in his last 16 at-bats, including two doubles.

WILL HE STICK? No. Once either Jacoby Ellsbury or Heathcott gets off the DL, Flores will head back to Triple-A. But he could see a September call-up.

Yankees minor league report: Mason Williams settling in at Triple-A

Maria Guardado | May 29, 2015 at 12:35 PM, updated May 29, 2015 at 1:14 PM

Here's a quick roundup of notable performances within the **Yankees'** farm system this week:

- **OF Mason Williams, Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre**

Williams, who **earned his first Triple-A promotion** on May 21, hasn't lost a beat in his first seven games with the RailRiders.

Since making the jump to Scranton, the 23-year-old outfielder is 10-for-32 (.313) with three doubles and one triple and has hit safely in five straight games.

Prior to his ascension, Williams was batting .317 with seven doubles and 11 RBI in 34 games at Double-A Trenton.

- **RHP Luis Severino, Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes-Barre**

The Yankees' top pitching prospect continued his fast climb through the farm system by **reportedly receiving his first Triple-A promotion** on Thursday.

Severino, 21, last pitched for Double-A Trenton on May 26, when he tossed five innings and allowed two earned runs on three hits while striking out nine and walking two in a 9-3 win over Akron.

- **3B Eric Jagielo, Double-A Trenton**

Jagielo, the Yankees' first-round pick in 2013, has paced Trenton's offense this season, batting .301 while racking up a team-leading nine home runs and 32 RBI over 43 games in 2015.

In the past seven days, Jagielo is 10-for-29 (.345) with two homers, two doubles and seven RBI. Jagielo smacked his ninth blast of the season on May 25 to help power the Thunder past Erie, 6-3.

- **OF Aaron Judge, Double-A Trenton**

Judge continues to be a consistent force at the plate for the Thunder, belting his seventh home run of the season in the Trenton's 7-2 loss at Akron on May 27.

The 23-year-old outfield prospect is currently hitting .295 with a .851 OPS and has collected 12 doubles and 27 RBI over 43 games with the Thunder.



For Alex Rodriguez, 2015 is a season for both redemption and recognition

05/29/2015 10:28 AM ET

By Lou DiPietro

BRONX, N.Y. - As much as 2015 will be about Alex Rodriguez's personal redemption from his year-long suspension stemming from MLB's investigation into Biogenesis, it will also go down as a season where he put an assault on the record books.

Earlier this year, A-Rod tied and then moved ahead of Willie Mays into fourth place on the all-time home run list, and on Wednesday, his three-run homer in the Yankees' 4-2 win over Kansas City gave him 1,995 career RBI - that one shot vaulting him past both Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig into third place all-time and first in American League history, according to MLB statisticians at Elias Sports Bureau.

"That's amazing," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said of the feat following Wednesday's game. "I've talked about longevity, but it's also being productive for an extremely long time, and when you see the guys he's passing, it's pretty amazing."

"It's definitely an honor to be mentioned in the same breath as Ruth and Gehrig. It's every player's dream, but it's doubly special to do it here at home and contribute to a win," A-Rod added later in the clubhouse.

Thursday night in Oakland, Rodriguez's fifth-inning sacrifice fly pushed him to 1,996, tying Barry Bonds for second place all-time. His next ribbie passes Bonds for sole possession of second and three more after that gets him to 2,000, a feat A-Rod himself never imagined accomplishing.

"Never in my wildest dreams," he said, to be exact. "I'm a kid who came out of Miami and learned baseball at the Boys & Girls Club when I was nine, and my dream was to be like Keith Hernandez. I never imagined I would play in the big leagues, and certainly not passing Babe Ruth - for all of us who love baseball, he's our superhero."

Just those power numbers are a huge feat, but as we head into June, Rodriguez is also staring down the barrel of another baseball plateau: 3,000 hits. Thursday's fourth-inning single was his 2,982nd career knock, and he now needs just 18 to become just the 29th player ever to reach 3K.

"That's a lot of hits, you have to play a long time and be fortunate to be very healthy to get there," Girardi said Wednesday. "It seems like the other day we were just talking he was 40 away, and he's more than halfway there."

Girardi also admitted that "I don't know how you don't think about" reaching plateaus like that as a player, and Rodriguez himself agreed, saying "of course you see it and think about it."

A-Rod deflected any further thought on that subject and said he was focused on winning, but as history tells us that he tends to have long strings between the doorstep of a feat and bursting through it, his skipper hopes 3K comes in a more Jeter-esque way.

"You hope he gets to 2,999 and he does it in the next at-bat, so it doesn't carry over and he keeps getting asked about it," Girardi said. "I don't care if it's a bloop or a blast, just get it out of the way."

History is one thing, but given that this is a new Alex Rodriguez, neither slugger nor skipper seem to be worried.

"I think the mental part is important, and he got by a lot of things he needed to get by," Girardi said, "but the one place Alex has always felt comfortable is on the field and in the clubhouse."

Added A-Rod: "It's been a long time since I've felt this confident. I haven't played a lot of baseball in the last two years, but I feel like I'm in a good place. I'm happy, I'm having fun, and it's good to be back on the winning track."

Back indeed, as through Thursday, Rodriguez was hitting .277 with 11 home runs, 27 RBI, and 22 walks. He said during the spring that he didn't want to be judged until after 100 or 150 at-bats, and while he laughed "maybe wait another 150!" when asked whether he could be judged following his 152nd on Wednesday, he also admitted that when first asked in March, he thought there was "no chance" he thought he'd be having as strong a season as he is through the first 155 at-bats.

"I knew that I wanted to come in and contribute, and I wanted to make sure I was healthy enough to help this team win, but no, not a chance," he said.

So why is this explosion coming, and why is A-Rod joining (or on the precipice of joining) all these pantheons of elite? In a way, it's part a physical change similar to what has gotten teammate Mark Teixeira off to a similar strong start, but in a way, A-Rod admitted that what is past - recent past, mostly - is indeed prologue to this.

"I feel pretty good; I've said all along that I've been pleasantly surprised how my body has reacted to the daily grind, and so far, so good," he said. "I think for me, the time off was a blessing in disguise; I was able to get some rest and change my workout regimen a bit - a lot like Tex - and I feel like I'm in a better place and more explosive than I have been for a while."

All that has gotten Rodriguez a ton of fan support and, as of Tuesday's update, a third-place total of 351,567 votes in the balloting for the AL's DH spot in the 2015 All-Star Game- but in the vein of a new A-Rod, the slugger even made that sound like an accomplishment he's humbled by.

"I'm so grateful for the way the fans have treated me, especially here in New York," he said, "but (current leading DH vote-getter) Nelson Cruz is a great hitter, and that's a very smart choice by the fans."

Yankees' Soft Underbelly Plagues the Middle Innings

Even with Betances and Miller striking out nearly everyone they face, the Yankees' bullpen has a 4.54 ERA in May, the seventh-worst mark in baseball

By Daniel Barbarisi

May 29, 2015 8:48 p.m. ET

The two towers of the Yankees' bullpen, Dellin Betances and Andrew Miller, have been so impressive this season that they have made it appear as if the team's relief corps is an elite group, one of the club's strengths.

It isn't.

As the Yankees have scuffled and sputtered through much of May, it has become clear that the soft underbelly of this team is its middle relief, the pitchers expected to bridge the gap between the starters, who have generally done their jobs well, and the fearsome duo of Betances and Miller.

Even with Betances and Miller striking out nearly everyone they face—they had combined for an 0.38 ERA and 75 strikeouts in 47.1 innings entering Friday night's game in Oakland—the Yankees' bullpen has a 4.54 ERA in May, the seventh-worst mark in baseball.

The pitchers behind the starters and in front of Miller and Betances have lost the Yankees several games in the middle innings this season. In fact, the team has allowed more runs in the sixth and seventh innings than in any other innings.

The trio of David Carpenter (5.00 ERA), Justin Wilson (5.40) and Esmil Rogers (4.97) is responsible for most of the pain, with young lefties Chasen Shreve and Jacob Lindgren impressing in more limited work. But manager Joe Girardi has been unable to find a mix that works.

"Sometimes you're forced into action," Girardi said. "It was good to get [Lindgren] in the other day, but to have a really successful bullpen, you need everyone to contribute."

Carpenter has shouldered most of the blame. Acquired to fill the secondary setup role that Shawn Kelley manned last season, Carpenter struggled almost from the first day, quickly losing Girardi's trust.

'Right now, the way things are going, I'm frustrated.' —David Carpenter

In big situations—like Thursday night, when he walked in the go-ahead run to send the Yankees to a loss against the league-worst Oakland A's—Carpenter has done just enough to lose. It's

baffling for his team, and for Carpenter himself, who posted a 1.78 ERA for the Atlanta Braves just two seasons ago.

“Right now, the way things are going, I’m frustrated,” said Carpenter, who was acquired along with Shreve in a trade for prospect Manny Banuelos over the winter. “I’m not happy about how I’m performing right now. I don’t like letting guys down.”

The problem is not easily fixed. The Yankees have already brought up their best relief prospect, Lindgren, and have little else waiting in the wings. They do have righthander Chris Martin set to return from the disabled list within a week, but Martin has a brief track record of success, and can’t be counted on to turn the entire group around right away.

What the Yankees need is a proven right-handed reliever with a history of getting big outs in a setup role. The problem is, the perfect man for that job is currently on another assignment.

Adam Warren was a key component of Girardi’s bullpen in the past two seasons, pitching in the seventh-inning righty role. But he was converted into a starter before this season, and after struggling early on has turned in three straight banner performances, including a shutdown outing against the league-best Kansas City Royals on Monday.

Warren’s recent success in the starting role makes it difficult for Girardi to stomach pulling him out of the rotation in order to pitch a few relief innings.

“He’s pitching as well as anyone in our rotation right now,” Girardi said.

Another wild card in play is Masahiro Tanaka, the injured ace who is set to return to the rotation next week with a Wednesday start in place of Chris Capuano. Capuano will likely move to the bullpen. But other changes are likely coming as well. The Yankees decided to place outfielder Slade Heathcott on the disabled list Friday and bring up prospect Ramon Flores in his place. Infielder Brendan Ryan is also slated to return from the disabled list soon, and starter Ivan Nova’s return from Tommy John surgery is looming. In a week, this could be a very different Yankees team. But in one of its weakest spots, in the middle innings, different doesn’t seem to mean better.



Yankees' bullpen becoming an issue this season

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

Early in the season, when the Yankees were on a roll and gaining steam, their bullpen was yet again an obvious strength. It had been overhauled in the offseason, but it had depth and power. Andrew Miller had moved into the ninth inning, Dellin Betances had gotten past those early struggles, and even a guy like Esmil Rogers — who'd struggled in the past — had found a real groove as a potent long man.

Now we're almost two months into the season, and the bullpen seems to be only two-to-three arms deep. Miller and Betances are a potent one-two punch at the end, and Justin Wilson has been good against lefties, but the rest of the pen is a combination of inexperienced rookies and underperforming veterans.

That much was on display last night when the top three guys were unavailable, and David Carpenter let a winnable game slip away.

"Right now, trying to find the silver lining in all of this has been tough," Carpenter said.

After pitching well as a setup man in Atlanta the past two years, Carpenter's strikeouts are down and his walks are up. He's also allowed three home runs, two away from matching his career-high for a season. Last night he gave up a groundball single that loaded the bases, then he walked in a run, then he allowed a sacrifice fly. He has a 1.44 WHIP.

Rogers hasn't been any better. His good month of April faded into a bad month of May. The other two middle-inning arms are Chasen Shreve and Jacob Lindgren, a pair of rookie left-handers who haven't really carved out roles. Lindgren's pitched only once. Shreve has been mostly a mopup and long man.

"Shreve's done a pretty good job," Joe Girardi said. "Esmil is kind of a long guy. Lindgren's young and you kind of want to bring him along slow, in a sense. Sometimes you're forced into action. It was good to get him in the other day, but to have a really successful bullpen, you need everyone to contribute."

The Yankees have built strong bullpens in recent years, and the risk of replacing Dave Robertson with Miller has largely paid off this season. It's those middle relievers that have been tough to figure out. Eventually, Lindgren might develop into a force, but he's new at this level.

Really, it's Carpenter that's been the most surprising. He's been a dependable late-inning guy in the past, but he never really carved out a role early this season, and he's done nothing to suggest he can handle key innings lately. He seemed to be a key part of the Yankees plan — kind of this year's Shawn Kelley — but he just hasn't pitched well.

“Just trying to get out there and get used to your surroundings,” Carpenter said. “It's a new team, a new way of being used. Other than that, it's just trying to go out and execute. That's been part of the problem. I haven't exactly been executing.”

The Yankees need that to change, or they need to find someone else who can do the job. Chris Martin is about to begin a rehab assignment. Branden Pinder has pitched well in limited opportunities. Guys like Nick Rumbelow, Diego Moreno and Danny Burawa are waiting in Triple-A.

“Guys have got to get it done,” Girardi said. “That's what we're asking them to do.”



With players getting healthy, Yankees face roster decisions

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

When Masahiro Tanaka comes off the disabled list next week, the Yankees will have a choice to make: Should Adam Warren or Chris Capuano come out of the rotation? And after they make that decision, they'll have to decide how to adjust the bullpen.

Getting a player healthy always requires some sort of decision, and that decision often sets off a few dominoes. Within the next few weeks, the Yankees could face some health-related decisions in their rotation, bullpen, lineup and bench. The decisions should start with their ace.

Masahiro Tanaka

There is no question Tanaka has spot waiting for him. Barring some unexpected cause for concern, the Yankees will have him start either Tuesday or Wednesday in Seattle. Joe Girardi has already said the team will not use a six-man rotation, so someone is going to have to fall out of the mix. Warren could fill a right-handed void in the bullpen, or Capuano could become a new go-to long man (I guess he could be a DFA candidate as well, but that doesn't seem especially likely).

For a while, Warren seemed to be pitching his way back into the pen, but that's not necessarily the case at this point. Warren's gotten better the longer he's worked as a starter. He's delivered both quantity and quality, and while Warren could surely help the bullpen — he could be that right-handed seventh-inning guy they Yankees lack — but he's making a case that he has more value as a starter for the time being. He could stick in that role after Tanaka returns, then force the Yankees to make a tougher choice when Ivan Nova's ready.

Putting Capuano into the bullpen would spark another decision about who to take off the roster. Capuano's role would basically be the same as Chasen Shreve's, so he could be the odd man out despite the fact he's pitched well. It's just hard to believe the Yankees would cut Esmil Rogers and carry five lefties in the bullpen. Could Jacob Lindgren be at risk? I would think the Yankees want him to stick

around and have a chance to do kind of what Dellin Betances did last season, but that's not a sure thing.

Chris Martin

An early surprise out of the bullpen, Martin was becoming a Girardi favorite before landing on the disabled list early this month. If Warren isn't pushed into the bullpen next week, Martin could be ready around the same time and step ahead of Rogers and David Carpenter to become Girardi's most trusted right-handed reliever not named Betances? If that's at least a possibility, who should he replace? Carpenter? Rogers? Shreve? Lindgren?

If both Tanaka and Martin get back quickly, there's a chance two relievers might have to go before the end of this road trip.

Of the demotion candidates, Lindgren is certainly the most interesting. His potential well beyond that of a lefty specialist, and there's certainly a chance he could pitch well enough to emerge as the go-to option in the seventh inning. Justin Wilson has kind of handled that role, but he's needed a right-handed partner, and Carpenter hasn't been nearly as good as expected. If Lindgren could handle the seventh — righties and lefties — Wilson could become a go-to matchup guy earlier in the game, and perhaps Shreve could carve out a spot as a long man. Remember, last year it took Betances quite a while to win Girardi's trust in high-leverage situations. How long might it take Lindgren?

Jacoby Ellsbury

Lose one speedy, left-handed center fielder and replace him with another. Since Ellsbury landed on the disabled list last week, Slade Heathcott has played well as the regular replacement. In essentially a platoon with Chris Young, Heathcott's been a nice spark for the offense. But would there be enough at-bats for him to stick around after Ellsbury's healthy?

The decision could come down to playing time. Carlos Beltran is starting to hit, and if he's playing regularly alongside Ellsbury and Brett Gardner, where would Heathcott find at-bats? Certainly Heathcott could replace Garrett Jones and provide a different sort of dynamic off the bench, but look at how little Jones has actually played this season. Would the Yankees really want one of their top young players in such a limited role? Maybe they could re-visit the idea of Alex Rodriguez getting some time at the infield corners, which could open some DH opportunities for Beltran and open some right field playing time for Heathcott.

Or, the decision could come down to bad luck. Decisions like this often take care of themselves, and if Heathcott's quad injury proves more serious than expected, he might not be a factor by the time Ellsbury is healthy again.

Brendan Ryan/Gregorio Petit

Two light-hitting, right-handed middle infielders. The Yankees acquired Petit after Ryan was hurt at the end of spring training, but now they're both on the disabled list, and there really hasn't been a lot of talk about either one. If they get healthy, they'll be minor role players at best — far more glove than bat.

When one of them is healthy enough to be activated, the Yankees could make a bold choice to replace Stephen Drew, but that doesn't seem likely. Instead, it could be little-used Jose Pirela who goes to Triple-A to finally get at-bats.

In spring training, I really thought Girardi was beginning to trust Pirela. Using him in center field this spring, I thought, was a sign that Girardi wanted to explore all possible avenues for Pirela playing some sort of utility role. But now that Pirela is on the roster, he's hardly played. Despite the brutal seasons from both Drew and Didi Gregorius, Girardi hasn't even toyed with the idea of giving Pirela regular at-bats. It's not even a given he'll start against lefties. In such a minor role, Pirela hasn't hit much at all. In fact, his slash line is worse than either Drew or Gregorius. If Girardi's not going to use Pirela, there's really no sense in having him around.



5 Yankees things to know today: Chris Martin rehab, Brian McCann hot

Brendan Kutty | May 30, 2015 at 5:00 AM, updated May 30, 2015 at 5:01 AM

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

1. BROADCAST INFO: The Yankees (25-24) will face the Athletics (19-32) at 10:05 p.m. See it on YES Network. Hear it on WFAN 660 AM/101.9 FM. Follow @brendankutynj for updates.

2. STARTING PITCHERS: Yankees righty Nathan Eovaldi (4-1, 4.27 ERA) vs. Oakland's Jesse Hahn (2-4, 3.69 ERA). Hahn is a groundball pitcher who stays in the strike zone and kills righties. Naturally, expect the Yankees to throw a lefty-laden lineup at him.

3. NEW GUY: The Yankees will call up Triple-A left fielder Ramon Flores, a rookie, Saturday. Flores will take the place of Slade Heathcott, who will go on the 15-day disabled list with a Grade II right quadriceps strain. Flores is already on the 40-man roster, so the Yankees won't have to clear room.

4. COLDPLAY: Yankees reliever Chris Martin will make an appearance at Triple-A Saturday. Martin has been on the DL with elbow tendinitis since early May. With the Yankees' bullpen shaky past its back end of Dellin Betances and Andrew Miller, it's likely manager Joe Girardi is looking forward to Martin's return.

5. HOT & NOT: Brian McCann has four homers in his last four games and is hitting .364 with 11 RBI in his last seven games. Meanwhile, Stephen Drew has just two hits in his last 35 at-bats. And he's hitless in his last 19 ABs.

Coming off shutout, A's Hahn faces Yanks

By Trevor Hass / MLB.com | May 30, 2015 1:26 AM ET

The A's and Yankees will meet Saturday in the third game of a four-game set at the Coliseum.

Right-hander Jesse Hahn will start for the A's, looking to turn in another strong outing after his four-hit shutout of the Tigers on Monday. Hahn has pitched at least five innings in every start this season.

Yankees starter Nathan Eovaldi, who's 4-1 with a 4.27 ERA, allowed one run in seven innings in a 14-1 win over the Royals on Monday. Opponents are hitting .308 against him.

Three things to know about this game:

- The A's have won back-to-back home games for the first time this season.
- Yankees reliever Dellin Betances' 23 consecutive appearances without an earned run to begin the season are a club record.
- Eovaldi is 0-1 with a 5.54 ERA (13.0 IP, 8 ER) in two career starts against the A's. Hahn has never faced the Yankees.

NYCFC seeking elusive 'W'

By BRIAN LEWIS

The fewest victories in MLS and the least points; the longest winless skid and the worst record. When expansion New York City FC planned to make history in the league, this wasn't the kind they were thinking of.

Now, NYCFC will host Houston on Saturday at Yankee Stadium [7 p.m., YES, WNYM (970 AM)] — where they have MLS' third-highest attendance — hoping to snap a 10-game winless slump, and pick up just the second victory of a debut season that has gone far worse than they could have anticipated.

"When things aren't going well, what kind of men do we have and what kind of a team do we have to continue battling, fighting and representing our city and club the best way we can?" center-back Jason Hernandez said.

"I think that's when people show their true colors and we have a lot of fighters here who give it their all. We're going to come to a tipping point where some good things are going to start to happen. Hopefully that starts this weekend."

It was always ambitious to think this team could win an MLS Cup, as captain and Designated Player David Villa said was possible at the start of the season. That's because nine of the 11 expansion teams that had entered MLS suffered through losing inaugural seasons.

But these struggles are worse than expected, with NYCFC just 1-7-4 for seven points. Montreal has eight points, but has five games in hand, having only played eight; and NYCFC's 0.58 points/game is far worse than the Union's 0.92, the next-lowest. The worst winless skid by an expansion team is 14 games by Vancouver four years ago.

"We need to finally put a full, solid 90 minutes together," assistant coach C.J. Brown said.

► NYCFC has former U.S. international centerback Oguchi Onyewu on trial for two weeks. The 33-year-old, who last played for English club Charlton, could be acquired via discovery and wouldn't go through the allocation process.

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NYCFC Looking To Get On Track Against Houston Dynamo At Yankee Stadium

May 29, 2015 2:43 PM

Provided by TiqIQ

The inaugural season for New York City FC carries on with the club's game this weekend against the Houston Dynamo. The two teams have a similar defensive style, both having given up 16 goals this season (NYCFC has played one less match), but the Dynamo have exhibited a far more dynamic offense that NYCFC will have to try and corral. Houston has 16 goals scored this season compared to NYCFC's nine.

Supporters of New York City's new soccer club can expect around 27,000 fans to attend Yankee Stadium this Saturday. In their six home games this season, over 160,000 fans have entered through the gates at the historic ballpark to watch soccer. Their largest attendance was for the team's inaugural home game on March 15 that drew over 43,500 fans.

The most passionate of those fans are the Supporters section. Sections 235-238 are meant for NYCFC's most raucous diehard fans, and tickets start from \$25 for those four sections. NYCFC also has groups such as City Voice and Cityzens for fans that want to be more engaged with the club, aside from just attending games.

The Third Rail is the club's recognized independent supporters group that attends games at home and on the road. Paying homage to the city's transit system, The Third Rail is 100 percent backed by management of the club. Chants heard throughout the stadium during home games include "City Said I," "A Call to Arms," "Hey Baby (I Wanna Know)," "We're Blue, We're White" and more that were uniquely created by the group. Sections 236 and 237 are the group's exclusive sections at Yankee Stadium.

An NYCFC season ticket package in one of The Third Rail's supporters sections includes 17 games for \$306, coming out to under \$20 per game. According to The Third Rail's website, over 16,000 season tickets already have been sold for the inaugural season. On the secondary market, NYCFC tickets have an average ticket price of \$40, with a get-in price of \$15 for Saturday's game.

City Voice is the team's online community that impacts how NYCFC can deliver "an authentic New York soccer experience," according to the team's website. Things like pre-game music, fan participation rituals and match-day experiences can be molded through the club's outgoing online community.

Cityzens is a membership program for the most feverish of fans (all season ticket holders are included). Unique experiences such as being part of the starting 11 team photo, participating in "pre-game Chalk-Talk" and even participating in some club decisions can be earned through a Cityzens membership.

Clearly, NYFC's strong, dedicated fanbase has been growing with each passing game.



Inside Baseball: Eight possible spots for Ryan Howard, and more notes

Jon Heyman - Baseball Insider
May 29, 2015 10:55 am ET

Ryan Howard is healthy and he is hitting, and this is may be the best chance for the Phillies to finally get serious about trading him.

Howard could help a contender, and it's high time for the Phillies to stop "playing hard to get," in trade talks involving Howard, which is how one rival described their winter approach regarding Howard.

Phillies GM Ruben Amaro would undoubtedly see things differently, but it's undeniable that the Phillies' sale is going slowly on several fronts, whether that be on Amaro or on all of the others. (Amaro didn't return a message.)

Wherever things went wrong in winter, Howard is raising the trade issue again without saying a thing. He's doing it by being himself again. His 10 homers and .817 OPS have made him a threat on the field, and a threat to be traded, too.

"Who would have thought Ryan Howard would have more trade value than Chase Utley?" one scout from a rival team asked rhetorically.

Only a few months ago, no one would have believed it. But that is indeed the case.

Howard's value was low enough over the winter that word among rivals was that the Phillies may have been willing to pay down about \$35 million of the then-\$60 million remaining on Howard's much-maligned \$125-million deal. And if that's the close to the case, it's still easy to see why no one bit off Howard's sub-par 2014 campaign. But if Philly is still willing to pay similarly, well, there's only \$55 million to go now. And at \$10 mil per, Howard – dare we say it – might even be a bargain.

What's more, Howard looks like a force again. If he's not the old MVP Howard, he is at least a viable middle-of-the-order bat, and those should have value.

Howard should be much more marketable now than in the winter, when Howard all but invited a trade by re-writing his no-trade list to exclude nine American League teams, basically the nine teams he saw as most likely to have interest in him. That's how much he wanted to go then. Those nine teams included the Royals, the Rays and the Orioles. They all held some special allure for Howard -- he has a son in school in Overland Park, Kans., he built an estate in Clearwater, Fla., and Baltimore is only an hour from his beloved Philly -- and they also all had some interest in him.

It's believed there were talks with at least all three of those teams before all three found someone else for what they believed was a better price and moved on. But even if those teams seem less likely now, there may still be other teams who could use Howard now.

Howard's fine May, when he's raised his average from .194 to .256, and showed some semblance of his old power stroke, is making it all a conversation again. But some of the teams that talked over the winter filled their holes, and others exhausted their budgets. So while he's more attractive, it's still somewhat uncertain to this point how much more coveted he is.

Some around the Phillies still surmise that he may need to post back-to-back months of productivity before things really heat up. But maybe, the Phillies just have to get out there, and get aggressive. There must be some reason they are still holding a majority of their trade pieces. It's hard to believe everyone else is trying to take advantage of them on all fronts.

But while things are improving in the box score, things also have gotten complicated. As of May 2, Howard holds 10-and-5 veto rights over trades anywhere. And word going around is, he's much happier now in Philly. We are many months removed from when the Phillies were talking aloud about platooning him, or even releasing him (that report was quickly denied). He is the Phils' first baseman, without question, and he is moving up alltime Phillies lists.

Back in the winter, when Phillies higherups got him to agree to alter his trade list, they were telling him they were likely trading off all the old gang – yes, all the other long-time Phillies, including his infield buddies (i.e. Jimmy Rollins, who they did trade, and Chase Utley, who they did not). They told him that they were tearing it all down. Well, to this point they've only torn part of it down, the Phillies – as bad as they are – have had their moments, and there's been no talk (real or rumor) lately about Howard being replaced by Darin Ruf or anyone else.

So while someone in Philly is whispering to writers that they shouldn't have any trouble getting Howard to waive his veto rights, there's no guarantee of that. He loves Philly. He lives in Philly. And his wife and his wife's family are from Philly.

Like almost anyone else in this position, word is he will take it case by case. And at this point, after going through the near-platooning, the rumored releasing and then this year, the demoting to No. 7 in the order for a bit, he can't feel he owes his employer anything.

Actually, Howard's already held up his end of the bargain. He's slimmed down to the 240 range, lifted his batting average above that and kept quiet about any displeasure about the negativity of last summer and the inactivity of the winter. He hasn't said anything about any inducements to move, but if a utilityman like Alberto Callaspo, with only temporary no-trade power, can wrangle an extra 100 grand, who's to say Howard wouldn't ask? Nobody especially wants Jonathan Papelbon's contract, either, and Papelbon has suggested he'd want his option picked up if he were to be traded. What's to prevent Howard from doing the same?

Anyway, there are some interesting old and new possibilities, so let's go over them, case by case ...

1. Cardinals: They are the hot speculation following the severe quad injury that will keep their first baseman Matt Adams out three to four months. St. Louis has dealt amazingly well with the

loss of ace Adam Wainwright, and there's likely no need or inclination to panic over a solid hitter who was toting a .656 OPS. St. Louis is Howard's hometown so that may or may not appeal to him (there was a documented family dispute over finances last year). Now that he is playing first base without a hitch, NL teams should be firmly in play.

2. Rays: He has built quite a home in nearby Clearwater, where the Phillies train, and he'd fit on a number of levels. They could use a veteran hitter, especially one with power, and were looking into Howard before landing John Jaso this winter. They're not getting much production out of first base (.694 OPS), and starter James Loney is currently sidelined. They are also more attractive as a team in the AL East race, despite several defections and a puny payroll. Howard's contract, though, is quite a bit high for Tampa Bay, even presuming Philly is willing to pay down much of it.

3. Orioles: They really haven't replaced the lost power of Nelson Cruz, though with Chris Davis, Steve Pearce and others, it's not like there's a gaping hole there. Owner Peter Angelos also isn't exactly a big spender, either.

4. Angels: While there's no evidence his name has come up in talks with the Angels, it would be interesting to see him and counterpart Albert Pujols in the same clubhouse. However, an Angels person said they are being patient and looking at players with more versatility and an ability to play left field and that Howard doesn't really fit them. The Angels have struggled offensively, and their DHs (.568 OPS) have been extremely unproductive to this point. While there's no known talk with the Angels, one Angels person said, "We could do worse than him."

5. Tigers: They will of course give the brilliant Victor Martinez every chance to make it back first, but he's currently on the D.L. trying to improve his leg strength. So far Tigers DHs have a collective .296 slugging percentage, which is a problem.

6. Astros: Chris Carter's even more drastic all-or-nothing approach hasn't been working this season, but he's likely to get more chances. And if he doesn't show more, they still have Jonathan Singleton in the minors.

7. Mariners: Seattle was expected to contend, but its offense has been a disappointment beyond the torrid Nelson Cruz. The 15 RBI for Mariners first baseman is a league low.

8. Royals: The AL champion was talking to the Phillies before deciding to go with Kendrys Morales for \$17 million over two years, less than Howard would have cost them, according to sources familiar with their talks. The switching-hitting Morales has been a find, too, so they are probably out.

More Inside Baseball...



The No. 1 pick remains a mystery. But word is, the D-Backs may actually prefer a pitcher, which would make Dillon Tate from UC Santa Barbara the likely favorite, despite a slight decrease in velocity. Other options include Vanderbilt shortstop Dansby Swanson, Lake Mary (Fla.) shortstop Brendan Rodgers, Niskayuna, N.Y., outfielder Garrett Whitley and Kennesaw, Ga., catcher Tyler Stephenson. GM Dave Stewart and D-Backs exec Joe Carter were recently near Schenectady to see Whitley, which would be a gutsy pick ... Cody Ross is getting interest for minor-league deals, but at his stage he can afford to wait for the right team. As was recounted here, Ross turned a \$1 trade into a \$50-plus-million career, to his credit ... Still hearing some speculation the Diamondbacks may trade Mark Trumbo.



GM John Hart has proved to be an adept trader in his third go-round as GM, and no one should complain that he landed Juan Uribe and Chris Withrow for Alberto Callaspo and what amounts to three spare parts (veteran pitcher Eric Stults, plus pitching prospects Ian Thomas and Juan Jaime). Uribe, a much better player than Callaspo, will start as a power bat off the bench, but it isn't out of the question he'll outplay starter Chris Johnson, who just returned from the DL. Uribe could also be flipped to a team in need of a third baseman, with the Mets, Padres, Indians and two former teams, the Giants and White Sox, seeming to be possibilities. Withrow, meanwhile, threw 98 mph and toted a 2.73 MLB ERA and should be recovered from Tommy John surgery next year. Indeed, these Braves, who pulled of the Shelby Miller deal that looks at the moment like the best one of the winter, are earning quite a rep for making good trades ... Callaspo, according to sources, received \$100,000 to approve the trade after initially declining it since he liked the Braves and didn't want to go to the West Coast. That's pretty good pay for a fellow who isn't exactly underpaid, at \$3M, and who had a .137 slugging percentage for Atlanta in May, in 51 at-bats no less. In any case, the Braves enjoyed him making the last out of Atlanta's 3-2 victory over the Dodgers Wednesday night, and it's doubtful he'd be welcomed back by the Braves. Before the deal was resurrected, as one tweep pointed out, the deal had "Callapso-ed" ... Manager Fredi Gonzalez has been rumored to be on the hot seat, but his new boss is believed to like what he's doing so far. All agree he had a rough year in 2014, and Frank Wren was ready to move on before he himself was jettisoned.



They are aiming for a June 5 return for Matt Wieters, who's been missed, but it could take a bit longer ... There's said to be a bit of a market for Alejandro De Aza, though his poor start has limited it some. The Angels, who'd seem like a fit, apparently aren't interested ... There's no belief the Orioles came close to a long-term deal with Chris Tillman in spring talks, and the discussion is closed for now ... Cuban lefty Ariel Miranda got about \$700,000 in his minor-league deal.



Boston is having surprising offensive issues. One competing scout suggested they may need to move Mookie Betts out of the leadoff spot: "He doesn't look like the same guy as in spring training." ... Even better than Rick Porcello's pitching has been his timing/negotiating. He received an amazing \$7-million bonus as a late first-round pick, and he signed for \$82.5-million late this spring, off his best year ever in 2014 ... If healthy, Rusney Castillo looks like an impact player ... A scout says Eduardo Rodriguez should be a successful major-league starter, and he was indeed impressive in his debut at Texas Thursday night.



Miguel Montero is off to a decent start on the North Side. Cubs people were willing to take a chance because they stressed his good first half in 2014, and believed a lack of rapport with some in the Arizona hierarchy led to his rough overall year ... If not for the incomparable Bryce Harper, Anthony Rizzo and Kris Bryant would be in the early MVP conversation.



David Robertson had a bigger offer than the \$46-million deal he signed with the White Sox ... Minor-league first baseman Dan Black ("Black Bear" as he is sometimes called; he's rather large), 27, has left to play for KT Wiz in Korea. Black was hitting .324 at Triple-A but apparently wasn't seen as a prospect.



Manager Bryan Price doesn't appear to be in immediate jeopardy. Injuries to Homer Bailey and Mesoraco, underperformance (the outfield was hitting below .200 heading into the week, though Jay Bruce, Marlon Byrd and Billy Hamilton are showing positive signs now) and a leaky pen are the main culprits ... Also of importance, owner Bob Castellini and GM Walt Jocketty are said to like Price, who should be safe through the All-Star Game in Cincy ... Other teams are salivating over the possibility Aroldis Chapman possibly being available at the deadline. "Most days he's unhittable," says an AL scout ... Mesoraco will decide soon whether to undergo surgery to correct his left hip impingement, which would effectively end his season. Mesoraco (who hit 25 homers in 384 at-bats last year but had none in 45 at-bats this year) tried to play through it for a while but was recently placed on the DL. The rehab is four months, so he technically has a bit of time to decide and still be ready for 2016.



Great job by Indians shaving their heads to support Mike Aviles' daughter Adriana, 4, who is battling leukemia. Best wishes to Adriana and family.



No chance Yoenis Cespedes gives up free agency to sign early, say people who know him. Says an exec from one of his previous teams, "He's a businessman." He's also a Renaissance man, as he loves to fish, golf and ride horses. The Tigers do like him very much and have every intention to try to keep him ... Justin Verlander has his first ever rehab start Sunday for the Toledo Mud Hens. He'll get 80-85 pitches. He may need one or two such starts ... Speaking of free agents to be, Detroit is 9-1 when David Price starts, but while the Tigers would love to sign him, word is they aren't overwhelmingly confident they'll be able to keep him long-term. Not much has come out about their late-spring talks, but Tigers people seem to be under the (probably correct) belief he hopes to top Max Scherzer, who signed for \$210 million after turning down Detroit's \$144-million offer. Scherzer seemed especially concerned about receiving market value so as not to let down fellow players. Price has been seen as someone who cares about comfort more than the contract, so in that regard he is doing much better in Detroit after a rough start. Price has been an exemplary teammate, too, as he rooted on Verlander during his simulated game, which is above and beyond ... Joakim Soria has been brilliant after a rough 2014, turning their pen around. The suspicion is that he wasn't fully healthy last year.



Aaron Harang, who could emerge as a trade target for many teams, has at least been discussed by the Astros, who will need to lengthen their rotation ... While Cole Hamels is probably out of their reach financially (\$24M per), Johnny Cueto is at least on their radar. But one executive says it'd be interesting to see Astros GM Jeff Luhnow and Cardinals GM Walt Jocketty do a deal (they weren't especially close when they worked together in the Cardinals front office), "It might have to be (Jim) Crane and Castellini doing the talking," that executive suggested of the owners ... How great a kid is Carlos Correa? While rehabbing in Kissimmee late last summer, he took a late-night flight to meet his old Class-A Lancaster team for their championship game and, after flying all night, met the team. "We gotta get this game," he told them. And then they did. He's already earning comparisons to Derek Jeter. Expect him up sometime in early June ... Meanwhile, Jed Lowrie, who was off to a big start, is out through July.



No chance Alex Gordon picks up his option, unless he's into charity. Great, great player ... Lorenzo Cain should not have been omitted here from the great center field discussion a few weeks ago. He's right up there, with the previously mentioned Jake Marisnick, Peter Bourjos and Mike Trout.



Los Angeles (Anaheim) is said to seek any way to upgrade an offense that has disappointed thus far. The trouble spots in particular seem to be left field and DH, where they are getting among the worst production in baseball. Ben Revere has been discussed, as Jeff Fletcher (@JeffFletcherOCR) of the Orange County Register

reported. The Angels have particular interest in lefty batters, so as a switch hitter at least Revere works there. However, he wouldn't provide much punch (two home runs in 2,200 career at-bats doesn't exactly make him a power threat) ... Matt Joyce has been a disappointment to this point, but another option is that the Angels could continue to be patient with him. His lack of production is especially noticeable in Josh Hamilton's absence. Kirk Nieuwenhuis will get chances now. He's been good in the past against righty pitchers.

Dodgers

The Dodgers remain the heavy favorite to sign Cuban righthander Yadier Alvarez, who's 19 and throws 98 mph. MLB denied Alvarez's request to sign before July 2, eliminating a few possible suitors, as Jesse Sanchez of MLB.com first reported. L.A. loves the athletic flamethrower ... Scouts who've seen him believe Hector Olivera, the Dodgers' new \$62.5-million third baseman, is going to be a big star. "He's a terrific hitter," one scout said ... Yasiel Puig is off soon to Camelback Ranch to work out and hopes to rejoin the team when it returns from its coming road trip – though the team doesn't seem quite as optimistic and isn't putting a timetable on it. Andre Ethier (.317) has been stellar in the absence of both Puig and Carl Crawford ... The Dodgers did the right thing trading Uribe rather than younger, hotter Alex Guererro or Justin Turner, who have been huge contributors to the Dodgers' early-season successes ... L.A. added to its pitching depth in the Atlanta deal, with Thomas and also Stults, who is expected to remain in the organization even after the Dodgers DFA'ed him ... Hats off to Dodgers decisionmakers who came up with a surprise gem in Mike Bolsinger, who offsets his high 80s fastball with deception and a plus curve ... The Dodgers didn't explain why Erisbel Arruebarrena, who signed for \$25 million, was suspended for the entire year but other Dodgers say he acted like he was better than everyone (he must not read the stat sheets) ... Clayton Kershaw appears to have straightened himself out, hasn't he?



One unanticipated result of the Dan Jennings transfer to become manager is other teams seem to be getting up to beat the Marlins, expressly to prove not just any smart guy can manage. "It's like they have a target on their backs," one rival said ... While Ozzie Guillen's name did come up in talks about potential replacements, as Bob Nightengale (@BNightengale) of *USA Today* reported, Marlins people are said to believe Guillen couldn't return in light of his ill-advised Fidel Castro comment ... The Marlins scouted Rafael Soriano and weren't quite sure he looked ready. Soriano is one of those players that may just not be a practice player. The more important the situation, the better he's performed ... Matt Kinzer is the team's new advance scout, replacing Mike Goff, who was promoted to bench coach.



One competing GM said he thought Brewers GM Doug Melvin was ready to sell two weeks ago but would probably wait until after the draft, as owner Mark Attanasio hasn't been through a sale and probably doesn't want to rush it considering the immense fan support in Milwaukee (the Brewers are the hot ticket in town, displacing the Bucks years ago) ... Carlos Gomez looks like a potential "key piece" in this trade market, as he's not a free agent until after next year and should have substantial value. Rivals still see Jonathan Lucroy and Jean Segura as untouchable, or close.



Neil Allen, the Twins' new pitching coach, deserves plaudits. One scout observed that Ricky Nolasco and Mike Pelfrey look like new pitchers, and no one can believe Blaine Boyer is back in baseball much less "the set-up man for a first place team," as one rival exec put it. Allen, famous as the man once traded for Keith Hernandez, has admirers throughout the Rays organization, where he helped develop ace Chris Archer and others most recently as pitching coach for the Durham Bulls. He espouses use of the changeup. Paul Molitor and Terry Ryan identified and interviewed Allen. Good job.



Dillon Gee could still be had, but a continuing injury history limits his value. Rivals prefer Bartolo Colon. "He takes the ball every fifth day and throws strikes," says an admiring rival executive ... Top prospect Steven Matz continues to impress at Las Vegas. "He's really good," says an AL scout. "He has a slower curveball that works in the minors, so he may need to complement that with a slider. But he has deception with his fastball." ... While Mets people are suggesting optimism regarding David Wright's diagnosis of spinal stenosis, in a fit of honesty, one admitted that it's "scary stuff." ... The way he's going Lucas Duda made the right call not signing the Mets' offer of three years for a bit under \$30 million.



Andrew Miller, at \$36 million over four years, which seemed like a lot for a non-closing reliever, may turn out to be one of the biggest bargains going. Houston offered \$40 million by the way ... Hal Steinbrenner must not have made Stephen Drew feel very secure when he told Yankees writers: "Stephen Drew is what he is." ... Alex Rodriguez, All-Star? To this point he deserves it even if the Yankees may want to limit the attention. Shhhh, he's passing milestones every week it seems. Willie Mays, Lou Gehrig, Babe Ruth. Hard to keep that quiet.



Ex A's coach Ron Washington was a good add to work on team defense, which was sorely needed. But while this season isn't going the way they planned, one person close to the A's situation said he'd be "shocked" if Washington was a managerial candidate there. Manager Bob Melvin is extremely well respected ... Can't blame

Coco Crisp for deciding not to undergo neck surgery, as he has a chance -- but not guarantee -- to make it back either way.



The Phillies are said to still be scouting the Red Sox and Rangers teams, at least, but in Texas' case, there's said to have been little progress in talks since January. Philly sought catcher Jorge Alfaro and outfielder Nomar Mazara from Texas. Not happening ... The Phillies do have a few pieces. One scout predicts stardom for third base prospect Maikel Franco, who's hit a couple opposite-field homers and shown an aptitude at third. Aaron Nola, the No. 1 pick last year, is putting him zeroes in the minors. The LSU product's name is the initialed version of New Orleans, Louisiana. Coincidence, we think. They also have Jonathan Crawford as a shortstop prospect (though one scout said he questions the range), which could eventually enable Philly to move Freddy Galvis to second base.



Pittsburgh, winners of seven straight, looks downright dangerous. Recent adjustments have helped. Jung-Ho Kang has been a big plus, and his recent play probably helps next year's top Korean free agent, Byung-ho Park, his teammate with the Heroes who hits 50 home runs last year ... A.J. Burnett, four months from retirement, lead the NL with a 1.37 ERA going into play Thursday. And for the first time in his career, he is a bargain.



Bud Black is a very good manager and a great personality, but no matter what they say now, at least one Padres higherup seriously considered firing Black last summer, and if the team isn't winning with its record (for them) \$107 million payroll, it's hard to imagine Black will make it back for next year. One name who's beloved by the Padres organization and fits the mold of recent hires would be Mark Kotsay ... If the Padres don't stay in the race, they might be almost as interesting at the deadline as they were in the winter. Joaquin Benoit and Ian Kennedy are obvious ones to go on the trade block if the team isn't in it. But it would be interesting to see what they do with Andrew Cashner and Tyson Ross, too ... Trying Will Middlebrooks at shortstop is interesting. His power may play there better, but some wonder whether "he'll ever be more than a .220 hitter," as one scout said.



Nori Aoki may turn out to be one of the better free-agent signings in recent years, for \$4.7 million and one guaranteed year. Even better, the Giants have an option. Aoki talked early to the incumbent Royals, but asked for much more from them, as he possibly didn't relish a return to K.C. for family reasons. (Maybe he wanted to upgrade by 90 feet.) ... Is there a more under-rated great player than Brandon Crawford?



The Cardinals aren't ones to panic over the loss of Matt Adams. One suggestion that could make sense may be Mark Trumbo, as John Smoltz said on MLB Network. D-Backs president Tony La Russa obviously has Cardinals ties ... Randal Grichuk, the player picked in tandem with Mike Trout by the Angels, looks like a pretty fair hitter, too ... Lance Lynn may be the most under-rated really good pitcher.



It's hard to say which one of the Seager brothers is hotter. Kyle, the Mariners third baseman and a notorious slow starter, recently homered to send a game into extra innings before winning it in extras with another homer. Corey Seager, the Dodgers' shortstop who is baseball's best prospect not named Correa, recently had a 9-for-14 series with three homers ... King Felix is off to a special start. Oddly enough, his only two less-than-brilliant outings came against the last-place A's and Red Sox.



Credit to rookie manager Kevin Cash for keeping the Rays competitive, despite all their cutbacks and setbacks. As one rival scout said, "I thought Tampa was going to lose 152 games."



There's been no progress since January in talks regarding Hamels. Meanwhile, Texas may be more inclined to make a play for a reliever at the deadline ... Prince Fielder is raking (leading the AL with a .361 batting average), and people around him say he's never been in a better place one year after his lone injury season and two years removed from his rough final season in Detroit, when he suggested after the Tigers were eliminated that there were worse things. Those comments didn't necessarily sit well with some Tigers people, who had seen an outgoing Fielder in 2012 become "moody" at times in '13, when he was dealing with a marital issue and concerned about his beloved sons. He and his wife are still together, and Fielder seems like a reborn man in Texas. Fielder early on told new Rangers manager Jeff Banister not to think twice about putting him at first base if he'd rather that he DH. Fielder told Bannister, "Don't worry about my feelings." Fielder has been "tremendous between the lines and even better inside the clubhouse," Rangers GM Jon Daniels said ... Wandy Rodriguez has been a revelation for the Rangers, who are doing a decent job hanging in there while waiting for returns from Derek Holland, Martin Perez and Matt Harrison. If they get back two of those pitchers, they may make some waves in a year that was written off by many others after the loss of ace Yu Darvish, a big star who had committed himself to the cause like never before and appeared primed for superstardom ... As for whether Adrian Beltre is a Hall of Famer, Daniels said in his mind "it's not even a question."



Anthony Rendon is believed to be seven to 10 days away. He is back playing now, and should make perhaps the best team even better ... For all those who questioned the Nats' pen, closer Drew Storen has been close to unhittable and leads the NL with 15 saves. He also has the best ERA among relievers since his brief 2013 demotion, at 1.13, as Mark Zuckerman (@ZuckermanCSN) pointed out. The idea that he doesn't perform in the postseason may not be fair, either, as he wasn't 100 percent vs. the Cardinals in 2012, and allowed one big hit to Pablo Sandoval (as have many) last year ... Ryan Zimmermann looks awfully good at first base ... It's early but the Nats may have a chance to sweep the MVP and Cy Young awards. Last time it happened? Why, last year, of course, when Kershaw got both awards.



New commissioner Rob Manfred said he has an open mind to consider hit king Pete Rose's reinstatement bid. But one person who knows the situation well said he'd still be "shocked" to see Manfred do what Bud Selig didn't do for all his 22 years. **More details on that here** ... Some more names who should have made our list of 20-plus minority manager candidates: Angels hitting coach Don Baylor, one of the great personalities in the game; Mike Gallego, the popular A's third base coach; Rick Renteria, who didn't really deserve to be fired from his Cubs job; Royals bench coach Don Wakamatsu, whose firing from the Mariners never really was explained, and former Jays manager Cito Gaston, who was close to being hired by the White Sox sometimes after winning two titles in Toronto (though Cito may be retired).



Commish Manfred might be willing to reinstate Pete Rose; hurdles remain

Jon Heyman - Baseball Insider

May 29, 2015 9:53 am ET

New Major League Baseball commissioner Rob Manfred is said to have an open mind to consider hit king Pete Rose's reinstatement bid, and it has become quite evident that he is indeed seriously weighing what to do about the 26-year-old ban.

All the parties have been talking for months about the process, and the eagerly awaited meeting between Manfred and Rose is expected to take part sometime after the July 14 All-Star Game that will coincidentally occur in Rose's hometown of Cincinnati.

While Manfred, who has been poring over documents for weeks, will seriously weigh the application and has allowed Rose to participate in the All-Star Game festivities (and also didn't nix Rose's new analyst job with Fox Sports), some close to the commissioner still believe Rose has an uphill battle. One reason a few folks suggested they would be "shocked" to see Manfred bring Rose back into the game is that to do so would be in opposition to how ex-commissioner Bud Selig handled the hot-button case. Selig was Manfred's mentor and biggest backer, and a decision to overturn the ban within months after replacing Selig would seem odd to people who know both men.

In any case, Rose by all accounts is eager to present his case.

"Pete's never shied away from an uphill task," his lawyer, Ray Genco, said. "I honestly do believe that he has reconfigured his life in an impressive way and look forward to commissioner Manfred getting to see that as this process plays out privately."

Genco added that MLB people "have given every indication that this application will be treated with a full and open mind, so I don't necessarily buy the premise that it will be an uphill battle."

Selig actually came close to bringing back Rose back into baseball about halfway through his 22-year tenure. However, Selig was said to have been turned off at that

time due to the perception that Rose upstaged the Hall of Famers in Cooperstown. Then when Rose wrote a book, turning his confession into a for-profit event after he and Selig had talked about specific stipulations to fulfill to return to the game, including the confession, that seemed to end Rose's chances with Selig.

If Rose isn't reinstated, to be enshrined in Cooperstown he would likely then need the Hall of Fame to rescind its rule prohibiting enshrinement for banned players, a rule that was instituted shortly after Rose's 1989 ban.

While the folks at the Hall seem reluctant to change the rule, after all these years, at the very least Rose deserves to have a chance to be in the Hall, and that means a vote by writers, not just the Veterans Committee, where they believe his chances would be close to nil.



Let's play two: Baseball would be better with a split season

Ken Rosenthal
May 29, 2015

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?

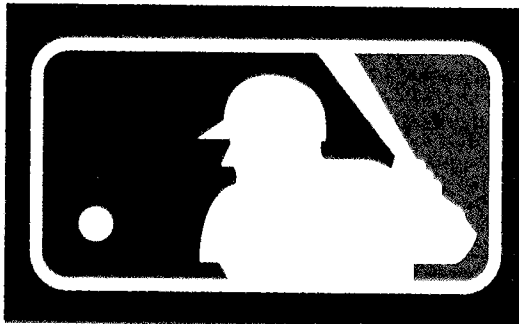
The split season is not foreign to baseball; it is employed by every minor league except the Triple-A International and Pacific Coast Leagues, Double-A Eastern League and Short-Season Class-A New York-Penn League. Most players were accustomed to it once; they could grow accustomed to it again.

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?



MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL



MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL

Jerry Dior designed the "silhouetted batter" logo for Major League Baseball in 1968 but received credit for it only in 2009.

Jerry Dior, 82, Nameless Creator of a Lasting Logo, Dies

By MARGALIT FOX

Jerry Dior, a graphic designer who created one of the most instantly recognizable logos in the history of American marketing — the silhouetted batter that has long symbolized Major League Baseball — but who received official credit for it only 40 years after the fact, died on May 10 at his home in Edison, N.J. He was 82.

The cause was cancer, his wife, Lita, said. His death was not made public until this week.

Adopted in 1969 to honor professional baseball's centennial, the red-white-and-blue logo depicts a stylized batter facing an oncoming ball. Now ubiquitous, it appears on the caps, jerseys and helmets of major league players; on umpires' uniforms; on television graphics; and on billions of dollars' worth of licensed memorabilia annually.

Mr. Dior designed the logo in 1968, while working for Sandgren & Murtha, a New York City marketing concern. At the time, it seemed a routine assignment — an afternoon's work, he later said — little different from his other projects there, which included package designs for Kellogg's and Nabisco.

As was customary with work-for-hire designs, Mr. Dior received no royalties for his baseball logo, and no public credit. He did not expect to (his is an inherently anonymous calling), nor did he expect his work to endure: Logos are ephemeral things, with

clients inclined to revamp them every few years.

But this particular logo did endure. By 2008, as ESPN.com wrote that year, it had become "a masterpiece of modern brand design" that was "more iconic and visible than ever."

Yet Mr. Dior, who had never thought to retain a documentary record of the assignment, remained unacknowledged. It was not money he longed for, he said,

The silhouetted batter appears on players' uniforms and licensed baseball merchandise.

but the simple act of recognition.

"Every now and then I tell someone the story about the logo, and their eyes go gaga, and I say to myself, 'Hmm, do they really believe me or not?'" he told ESPN.com. "I want some sort of foothold or something, so I can prove that I really did this."

Jerry Nicholas Dior was born in Brooklyn on May 14, 1932; his mother was a homemaker, his father a dressmaker. He graduated from Abraham Lincoln High School in Coney Island and studied on scholarship at the Art Students League of New York. During the Korean War, he served

stateside in the Army.

At Sandgren & Murtha, Mr. Dior was glad to land the M.L.B. assignment. A lifelong baseball fan, he adored the Dodgers until they traduced him by quitting Brooklyn in 1957, after which he threw his support to the Yankees.

Per his instructions, he drew a generic baseball player. (In interviews years later, Mr. Dior stressed that the figure was not modeled on Harmon Killebrew as many people, including Killebrew himself, believed.) He executed the design in Magic Marker, originally making it blue and green before switching to a patriotic palette.

"It just came to me," Mr. Dior told The Wall Street Journal in 2008. "I did the rough sketch and cleaned it up a bit, and that was that. I never thought anything about it until I turned on the television and saw it on the New York Mets' uniforms," where it was emblazoned for the 1969 World Series.

Mr. Dior left Sandgren & Murtha shortly after designing the logo, and in later years he was a freelance graphic artist. But over time, especially as a string of professional sports logos, the National Basketball Association's among them, were created as deliberate echoes of his design, the anonymity began to gnaw at him. He and his wife petitioned Major League Baseball for acknowledgment, to no avail.

Then, in 2008, The Journal profiled Mr. Dior, quoting former col-

leagues who attested to his authorship of the design. Other news organizations took up the story, creating a groundswell of support.

In 2009, after conducting its own inquiry, Major League Baseball officially recognized Mr. Dior as the logo's creator, holding pre-game ceremonies in his honor at Yankee Stadium and Citi Field.

"Jerry Dior created a symbol that has stood the test of time," Bud Selig, then the baseball commissioner, said in a statement that year. "Forty years after its introduction, the 'silhouetted batter' is instantly recognized worldwide as the official emblem of Major League Baseball."

Besides his wife, the former Lita Zweier, Mr. Dior's survivors include four children, Mitchell, Rick, Jed and Donna Dior, and four grandchildren.

"I don't think he ever thought he would be recognized and celebrated the way he was," Mrs. Dior said of her husband in an interview on Friday. In 2009, Mr. Dior himself described the day he was first acknowledged as "one of the most exciting days of my life."

In 2008, with recognition still eluding him, Mr. Dior was asked by ESPN.com how well he thought his logo had weathered the passing years.

"It holds up today as well as it did back then," he said. "I truly feel it's part of baseball. So I added a little something to the game, and I'm very proud of that."