

## **A's Daily News Clips; Sunday, March 14, 2010**

### **Oakland A's Gio Gonzalez is working on being fifth starting pitcher**

By Curtis Pashelka/ Oakland Tribune 3/13/2010

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — It's no secret that there's going to be some competition for the final spot in the A's starting rotation. But Gio Gonzalez simply wants to improve with each outing.

Consider Saturday a step forward. Effectively using three pitches, including an improved changeup, Gonzalez threw three shutout innings to even his Cactus League record to 1-1 as the A's held on to beat the Giants 8-7 at Scottsdale Stadium. Gonzalez allowed two earned runs in two innings against the Chicago Cubs on Monday.

"It's not trying to compete," said Gonzalez, who faced 12 batters and had three strikeouts. "It's just trying to work."

Gonzalez started to use his changeup with some effectiveness at the end of last season but has refined it by altering his grip. In the first inning, Giants catcher Buster Posey swung through the changeup and the bat wound up in the A's dugout.

"It helps out. It minimizes damage, minimizes pitches and gets you out of tough situations," Gonzalez said.

Presuming they are healthy, Ben Sheets, Dallas Braden, Brett Anderson and Justin Duchscherer are expected to occupy the first four spots in the rotation. It should be an interesting few weeks for the pitchers looking to be the fifth starter.

Trevor Cahill and Vin Mazzaro are expected to pitch today at Municipal Stadium against Kansas City, and Jason Jennings has thrown three shutout innings in two games.

Starting pitcher Clayton Mortensen allowed three earned runs in the third inning and Fautino De Los Santos was charged with five earned runs, but the A's rallied to beat San Diego 10-9 in the other split squad game at Municipal Stadium. Dallas McPherson hit a game-winning solo home run in the bottom of the ninth, Travis Buck homered in the fourth and Rajai Davis went 3-for-4.

A's manager Bob Geren said after Saturday's game in Scottsdale that Justin Duchscherer will pitch two more innings in an intrasquad game Wednesday at the A's Papago Park facility. Duchscherer was going to pitch Tuesday, but pitching coach Curt Young decided to keep him on regular four days' rest after Duchscherer threw Friday. Assuming things go well for Duchscherer, he'll pitch in his first Cactus league game four or five days later. "... Dallas Braden will throw Tuesday against minor league hitters at Papago Park. The A's have that day off, and it's Braden's turn in the rotation. "... Geren said outfielder Coco Crisp (left hamstring strain) will resume a throwing program today. There's no date set for him to start running.

### **Oakland A's Daric Barton is focused to stay 'in a zone' all season**

By Curtis Pashelka/ Oakland Tribune. 3/13/2010

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Daric Barton said he rediscovered who he really was as a baseball player when he began the 2009 season at Triple-A Sacramento. Now the A's are finally getting a look at the player they always thought Barton could be.

Projected to be Oakland's starting first baseman on Opening Night, Barton has set a torrid pace in his first seven games of Cactus League play with a .444 batting average (8-for-18) through Saturday and a .565 on-base percentage.

During Saturday's game against the Giants at Scottsdale Stadium, Barton reached base four times and drove in two runs. He's hit safely in each of his last six games and earned five walks.

"I feel like if I'm disciplined and I'm selective," Barton said after Saturday's 8-7 A's win, "I can be in a zone all year."

Barton's up-and-down career with the A's has been well-documented, particularly his travails in 2008 when he hit .226 in 140 games. And last year, when Oakland signed Jason Giambi and Nomar Garciaparra, Barton had little choice but to start the season in the minor leagues.

Barton was shuffled between Sacramento and Oakland once before he was called up for good in mid-July. After he was reinstated from the disabled list in mid-August, he hit .310 in September with 16 RBIs.

"Last year, starting off in Triple-A was probably the best thing that could have happened to me. Probably because I went back down and realized who I was again," Barton said. "I realized what it took for me to get to the big leagues in the first place."

Barton said he took his spot on the A's roster for granted two years ago. His actions suggest that's no longer the case, and perhaps it can no longer afford to be.

Barton showed up to the A's facility in Phoenix in early January and worked out four or five days a week until spring training began. And in what may be perceived as a make-or-break year, Barton has been in midseason form almost since Cactus League games began.

"I know he was ready to go since day one," A's hitting coach Jim Skaalen said of Barton. "You could see that he had been working and was prepared and ready."

The A's will have Eric Chavez also see time at first base, assuming he's healthy, and Chris Carter — the A's top prospect — could be a hard player to keep in the minor leagues if Oakland lacks for power through the first month or two of the season.

None of it has affected Barton's state of mind. He and Chavez have been discussing fielding and hitting on a near-daily basis, with Chavez saying he's learned a ton from Barton and Barton saying, "I pick his brain as much as he picks mine."

"He's just focused and it's made a real big difference," Chavez said of Barton. "His mind frame is where it needs to be, regardless of where it's been in the past. However it's going to work out, he's focused, and it's going to work out for him this year."

A's manager Bob Geren isn't surprised that Barton is having a productive spring. Maybe because this was the guy they knew they had all along.

"I guess you can call it a groove, or he's just a good hitter," Geren said. "Both."

## **Chin Music: Duchscherer to throw Tuesday, other tidbits**

By Curtis Pashelka/ Oakland Tribune. 3/13/2010

Pitcher Justin Duchscherer said his left hand, the one that caught a bit of the comebacker hit by Max Stassi during yesterday's 30-pitch session, is fine. No pain. Manager Bob Geren said Duchscherer and Dallas Braden will each throw Tuesday against minor league hitters at the A's Papago Park facility. The A's have that day off, but minor league camp has started and it's Braden's turn in the rotation. Assuming things go well for Duchscherer, he'll pitch in his first Cactus league game four or five days later.

Geren said outfielder Coco Crisp (left hamstring strain) won't do anything on the field today, but will resume a throwing program Sunday. There's no date for him to start running.

Eric Chavez said he's feeling good, and he'll start today's split squad game at first base at Municipal Stadium against San Diego.

The A's lineups –

Vs. San Francisco — Ellis 2B, Barton 1B, Sweeney DH, Kouzmanoff 3B, Gross RF, Taylor LF, Brown CF, Powell C, Pennington SS, G. Gonzalez P

Vs. San Diego — Davis CF, Patterson LF, Chavez 1B, Cust DH, Fox 3B, Buck RF, Rosales SS, Donaldson C, Petit 2B, Mortensen P.

## **Chavez doesn't just swing bats, he makes them**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer. 3/14/2010

**Phoenix** - -- Eric Chavez always takes a keen interest in bats. The A's infielder likes to design his own, choosing the wood, the handle, providing all the specifics. He enjoys watching the manufacturing process, too.

"I love it," he said. "It's the coolest thing."

Now, Chavez can head to his own bat company to see his bats produced. He is a primary investor in a venture called Diego Bats, after Chavez's oldest son, and it's the real deal: The company is churning out major-league certified bats used by Oakland's Mark Ellis and Kurt Suzuki, among others.

"It's good, because it's Eric's company, so I can always tell him what's going on - and I know since he's here, it's always going to be the best stuff," Suzuki said. "He sent me some this offseason, I tried them and I like them - the quality I'm looking for is there."

Chavez is working with a friend, Andy Goulder, who is managing the enterprise. Goulder is also involved with Diablo Bats, which is not major-league certified but produces lumber used in wood-bat leagues and by many junior college programs.

Jermaine Dye and Eric Munson - friends and former teammates of Chavez's - are also investors. They helped Diego Bats gain certification, an expensive process that includes \$10,000 in fees and \$10 million worth of liability insurance.

"It's not something I'm doing to make money," said Chavez, who is in the final year of a six-year, \$66 million contract. "It's not a real moneymaker. But it's fun to have my son's name on a bat, and we'll see how it goes."

Chavez has found that his new sidelight comes with challenges, some of them less than appealing. Just three days after the decision to call the company Diego Bats, someone purchased the domain name diegobats.com and has tried to get Chavez to pony up for the site.

Chavez, whose company can be found at diegobats.us, said he had no interest in buying the name, and the domain owner constructed what appears to be (but is not) a "Diego Bats" company site. The site features some scantily clad women and some comments that are in questionable taste.

"It's pretty bad," Chavez said. "But my lawyers have looked at it and said there's nothing we can do about it."

"I wish I knew who it was," Goulder said. "It's just not fair to Eric."

Otherwise, the project is a blast, and the company is looking to expand its client base; it might have one in Arizona pitcher Dan Haren, another former A's player, who said Friday in Tucson that he's planning to order some bats from Chavez.

Ellis is providing some good free advertising. He's 6-for-13 this spring, and he's pounding out those hits with Diego Bats.

"That's what I'm swinging," he said with a grin. "They're doing a good job."

Chavez would take a close interest in bat trends, anyway, but now that it's his business, he's paying even more attention. When there were renewed calls to look at banning or restricting the use of maple bats in the major leagues again this week, Chavez decided he'd move back toward using ash bats - and he suggested that Diego Bats follow suit. (They presently craft yellow birch, maple and ash bats.)

"I told Andy to make sure there is a good amount of ash, because I don't know what baseball is going to do," Chavez said. "Maple bats are breaking like crazy."

Chavez gets a kick out of designing his own bats "to a T," he said, but the personal connection is what's most important to him. His bat model is DDC - Diego, Dolce, Cruz, the names of his three children.

What does Diego, 4, think of having his name affixed to a bat company?

"He doesn't really know," Chavez said with a laugh. "He's so spoiled, he doesn't know the difference. But maybe one day he can look back and say, 'That's pretty cool.'"

## **Surgery helps Barton see ball better**

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. -- Daric Barton had laser eye surgery during the offseason, and his vision is better than when he wore contact lenses, he told The Chronicle on Saturday.

"It helps," he said. "It's been great."

The results reflect that: The first baseman is 8 for his past 15 with five walks. He had two hits, including a double, and he drove in two runs.

"I'm being really selective," Barton said. "That's the main thing. I'm seeing a lot of pitches and attacking the ones over the plate. I feel like I'm back to normal."

Barton is a little concerned about night games, because he has been told he might see halos around the lights, but he doesn't believe that will be a problem.

He is being pressed for playing time on two fronts: **Eric Chavez** could play as many as three or four days a week at first if he's healthy, and one of the A's top prospects, **Chris Carter**, is a first baseman who is expected to be called up this year.

**Duchscherer shift:** Manager **Bob Geren** said that **Justin Duchscherer** will throw in a simulated game Wednesday rather than Tuesday, in order to keep him on four days' rest. The shift is strictly a schedule decision; Duchscherer has had no setbacks in his return from a procedure to eliminate irritation around his sacroiliac joint.

Duchscherer came out of Friday's 30-pitch batting practice session well, though his right shoulder has a nice bruise from the **Max Stassi** line drive that glanced off Duchscherer's glove. Duchscherer said Saturday he feels "really, really good. I'm usually a lot more sore after my first time out."

**Briefly:** Outfielder **Coco Crisp** said his left hamstring is feeling much improved. He will resume his throwing program today and perhaps begin running in a couple of days. ... Reliever **Joey Devine** (tendinitis) hasn't been cleared to resume throwing yet; he's hopeful that he will be in a day or two.

## **The Drumbeat: Postgame A's stuff - Duchscherer outing moved**

Susan Slusser, Chronicle Staff Writer. 3/14/2010

Manager Bob Geren said that Justin Duchscherer's simulated/intrasquad game has been shifted from Tuesday to Wednesday, strictly to keep him on what will be his regular four days' rest during the season.

There's no need for alarm, despite Duchscherer's injury history. I spoke to Duchscherer this morning, and he told me this is the best he's ever felt the day after a first spring outing throwing to hitters. (He threw a 30-pitch batting practice yesterday.) Geren said he really could have gone either day, but pitching coach Curt Young had suggested keeping him on his normal rest.

If things stay that way, that means Duchscherer most likely could be in line to be the No. 3 or 4 starter, either the first week of the regular season or, if he needs one extra start in the minors to get ready (an idea he's not big on), the second week.

Opening Night starter Ben Sheets is working Monday, Dallas Braden is throwing a simulated/intrasquad game at Papago Park on Tuesday, and then Brett Anderson is scheduled for Wednesday against the Giants while Duchscherer has his intrasquad game that day.

It gets complicated from there because Anderson would be looking at a March 22 start after that and there's an off day the 23rd if the team wants to get Duchscherer more non-Cactus League action. (Though if he's to be ready the first week, you'd have to think game action would be preferable at that point.) There's an extra day built in for rest for most of the A's starters, so Duchscherer probably could be slotted there in front of Anderson, giving Anderson and then all the subsequent rotation guys a breather.

If they did that - and this is sheer speculation - then Duchscherer's first Cactus League start would be March 22. Again, it's nothing that has even been discussed with the media; the team is in outing-to-outing mode with Duchscherer because they need to make sure he comes out of everything fine.

I'm just doing the math, and assuming full health and taking into account that Geren said that Young wants Duchscherer to stay on four days' rest. Plus, that extra day off for starters had been built in at the start of the spring.

Really, it's just fun to guess. But it seems as if most years, things change so much the final three weeks of spring training, it's kind of silly to speculate.

Oh, well, too late.

The A's beat the Giants 8-7 here in Scottsdale; Gio Gonzalez's spiffed-up changeup looks good - good enough to send a couple of Giants' bats flying out of their hands. He allowed two hits and a walk in three innings and struck out three.

Mark Ellis had three hits, including a double, and drove in two runs, and Daric Barton had two more hits after a three-hit day yesterday.

In the A's other game, at Phoenix Muni vs. San Diego, Oakland won 10-9 in 10 innings. Rajai Davis had three hits, including a triple, and Travis Buck hit his second homer of the spring and Dallas McPherson his first.

## **Duchscherer gearing up for Cactus debut** ***Pitcher looking to bounce back after missing entire '09 season***

By Barry M. Bloom / MLB.com. 3/13/2010

PHOENIX -- The future is now for A's pitcher Justin Duchscherer with only a start in a Minor League scrimmage on Tuesday standing between him and his debut in the Cactus League five days later.

Duchscherer hasn't pitched in the Major Leagues since 2008 because of various injuries. Surgery on his right elbow cost him the entire '09 season and he never made an appearance in the Cactus League last spring because of the elbow injury.

Duchscherer, who survived a bullpen session against hitters on Friday, was advised about his schedule on Saturday by A's pitching coach Curt Young.

"He has me lined up for four or five starts down here," Duchscherer told MLB.com on Saturday. "As long as I'm ready when the season starts that's all I care about. I should be ready to go."

The A's open the season on April 5 at the Oakland Coliseum against the Mariners.

Whether Duchscherer is on the 25-man roster come Opening Day depends on his health as he works his way through the remainder of Spring Training.

"It's possible and we're hopeful," A's manager Bob Geren said on Saturday hours before the A's played a split-squad game against the Padres at Phoenix Municipal Stadium.

The A's were hopeful that Duchscherer would return to form when they signed him as a free agent this past offseason to a one-year contract at \$2 million guaranteed with performance bonuses based on number of starts and innings pitched that could grow the figure to \$3.5 million.

A converted reliever, Duchscherer missed 42 games with elbow tendinitis in 2006 and has dealt with similar issues at various times during the past four seasons.

He has been on the disabled list five times in the past four seasons, and he's also missed significant time with various injuries that didn't require a trip to the DL.

After making the American League All-Star team in 2008 by going 10-5 with a 1.82 ERA before the break, Duchscherer went winless in six starts after the break before suffering a right hip injury that required season-ending surgery for the second year in a row.

This spring, Duchscherer, 32, has already undergone one medical procedure to remove nerve endings from a joint that was causing him lower back pain. He recovered quickly from that and now says that he feels "better than I have in five years."

He threw about 30 pitches in two bullpen sessions on Friday and survived being hit by a line drive off the bat of Max Stassi. Duchscherer blocked the ball with his glove hand so it wouldn't hit him the face. Instead, it ricocheted off his right shoulder. The liner knocked Duchscherer to the ground causing a few nervous seconds. But he recovered to pitch against Ryan Sweeney.

In the Minor League game at the A's nearby Papago Park complex, Duchscherer said he's expecting to throw about 40 pitches with small increments following in his Cactus League starts.

"I feel like as long as I get to about 75 pitches, I'll be OK," Duchscherer said. "Then I can build beyond that when the season starts. The first progression -- getting to four or five innings -- is the toughest part. Once you get to five the rest is easier."

## **Davis sets tone for A's** *Outfielder has three hits, including lead-off triple*

By Barry M. Bloom / MLB.com. 3/13/2010

PADRES 9, A'S 10 (10 innings)  
at Phoenix  
Saturday, March 13

Padres at the plate: Tony Gwynn Jr. broke a 3-for-19 slump with a third-inning hit-and-run single, moving Everth Cabrera to third. Cabrera scored the Padres' first run on David Eckstein's infield grounder. Chase Headley's single drove in two more. Gwynn was 2-for-3 with two stolen bases. Headley added a double in the fifth and had three RBIs in the game.

A's at the plate: The A's put up a two spot in the first inning. Rajai Davis had a lead-off triple and scored on Eric Patterson's single. Patterson scored on Eric Chavez's grounder to second. Jack Cust also had a double in the inning. Doubles by Adam Rosales and Gregorio Petit accounted for another run in the second. Travis Buck hit his second spring homer to open the fourth. Davis added a seventh-inning double and was 3-for-4.

Padres on the mound: Right-hander Kevin Correia threw the first 3 2/3 innings, allowing five runs on six hits, while striking out three and hitting a batter. He retired the side in order in the third inning. Luke Gregerson came on in relief and allowed only one hit, while whiffing one in 1 1/3 innings.

A's on the mound: Right-hander Clayton Mortensen was on the mound for the first three innings, allowing three runs on five hits. He hit one batter. Non-roster right-hander Matt Wright pitched the next three innings, allowing one run on three hits and striking out one.

Worth noting: This was the only meeting of the spring between the A's and Padres. The Padres stole six bases in the first five innings, giving them 14 this spring. Padres first baseman Oscar Salazar was scratched from the starting lineup because of a sore right heel.

Cactus League records: Padres 2-8; A's 4-6-1.

Up next: The Royals meet the A's on Sunday at Phoenix Municipal Stadium. Right-hander Trevor Cahill goes for the A's against Kansas City right-hander Kyle Davis. Cahill is the front-runner for the fifth slot in the A's starting rotation. He's made two starts this spring, allowing and five runs in four innings. Cahill certainly will be in the starting rotation if Ben Sheets and Justin Duchscherer don't make the season-opening roster.

The Indians play the Padres on Sunday at Peoria Stadium. Starting pitcher Chris Young will make his third appearance this spring and is expected to throw four innings and/or 60 or so pitches. Young, coming back from right shoulder surgery, was especially effective in his previous start against the Angels, allowing one hit over three scoreless innings with two strikeouts and one walk. All-Star closer Heath Bell is scheduled to work one inning as well.

## **Gonzalez gets going in style** *Three shutout innings in first start; Ellis sparks offense*

By Chris Haft / MLB.com. 3/13/2010

A'S (ss) 8, GIANTS (ss) 7  
at Scottsdale, Ariz.  
Saturday, March 13

A's at the plate: After scoring a first-inning unearned run, the A's kept rolling offensively. Mark Ellis doubled home a second-inning run. Gabe Gross contributed a two-run double to a three-run third inning. Oakland scored three more runs in the fifth, fueled by Daric Barton's two-run double.

Giants at the plate: Buster Posey's two-out single and Aaron Rowand's bases-loaded walk drove in a pair of runs in the fourth inning. Bengie Molina added a fifth-inning RBI double and Conor Gillaspie stroked a two-run double in the sixth. Steve Holm's RBI single capped a two-run rally in the eighth.

's on the mound: Making his first start of the spring, left-hander Gio Gonzalez responded with three shutout innings. Right-hander Justin Souza fell behind Nate Schierholtz 3-0 with the bases loaded in the fourth, but ultimately struck out Schierholtz to end the inning.

Giants on the mound: Matt Cain, who worked three solid innings in each of his first two starts, lasted only 2 2/3 innings this time, surrendering five runs and eight hits. Reliever Santiago Casilla, absent due to visa problems, made his spring debut and struck out the only batter he faced to end the fifth inning.

Worth noting: The Giants' only hits off Gonzalez were tainted. Mark DeRosa's second-inning double was a fly ball that left fielder Michael Taylor caught up with but dropped on the warning track. Rowand followed with an odd-looking bloop infield hit in the third inning.

Cactus League records: A's 5-5-1; Giants 9-3

Up next: When the A's confront Kansas City on Sunday, the teams will be challenged to match the wildness of their split-squad meeting this past Tuesday. Oakland led 5-0 and 8-3 before the Royals rallied for eight runs in the last four innings. Trevor Cahill will start this one for the A's against fellow right-hander Kyle Davies.

The Giants end a stretch of eight home dates in their first 13 games Sunday as they face the Milwaukee Brewers. If Prince Fielder makes the trip to Scottsdale with Milwaukee, his at-bats against Jonathan Sanchez should be intriguing, since he thought the Giants left-hander threw at him intentionally last year. Jeff Suppan will oppose Sanchez.

## **Gonzalez makes strong case; A's defeat Giants**

Janie McCauley/Associated Press. 3/13/2010

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — Gio Gonzalez might ride his new-look changeup right into the Oakland Athletics' rotation.

He sure is making a strong case to be the A's fifth starter.

The left-hander, competing with Trevor Cahill and Vin Mazzaro to win the job, pitched three scoreless innings and struck out three in his first start of the spring as the A's defeated the Giants, 8-7, in a spring-training game Saturday.

Long defined by his looping curveball, Gonzalez is committed to mastering a change-up that he tweaked by adjusting his grip ever so slightly.

"It minimizes pitches. It minimizes damage," he said. "I've got three pitches I can work with."

Manager Bob Geren actually called a couple of changeups from the dugout to make sure Gonzalez worked it in.

"That was one of the best games he's thrown," Geren said. "I was real impressed with his outing."

Gonzalez felt so good Saturday, he insists he could have worked two or three more innings, but knows there's no need to rush things in mid-March.

He's doing his work and letting the rest take care of itself.

"Go about your business," Gonzalez said. "Every day you come out here and do your job. They want hardworking ballplayers and that's what I bring to the table."

He got a nice boost from the offense, too.

The A's jumped on Giants starter Matt Cain, who was pulled by manager Bruce Bochy with two out in the third after giving up five runs — four earned — and eight hits. Neither Cain nor two-time reigning NL Cy Young Award winner Tim Lincecum looks very good yet.

"I threw the ball all right," said Cain, a 14-game winner and All-Star last season. "Obviously I left a good bit of breaking balls up and they took advantage of that, so I'm going to go back and kind of check on what I did on that. I threw some good breaking balls today."

Mark Ellis had three hits with two RBIs, and Daric Barton and Ryan Sweeney had two hits apiece. Barton drove in two runs and Sweeney one. Cliff Pennington tripled and scored and Gabe Gross added two RBIs in the first of many matchups between the Bay Area rivals this year.

The A's took a 1-0 lead in the first with an unearned run following a throwing error to start the game by San Francisco shortstop Brandon Crawford.

Gonzalez, who came to the A's from the White Sox in the trade that sent popular outfielder Nick Swisher to Chicago on Jan. 3, 2008, had his first spring start delayed because of last Sunday's rainout that pushed Brett Anderson back to Gonzalez's scheduled day Monday. He came in as a reliever that day instead.

Pitching coach Curt Young said Gonzalez is using a four-seam grip on his changeup.

"He's just getting a better feel for his changeup. It's nothing drastic," Young said. "It's just him being more comfortable throwing it and more confident in it."

He has spent parts of the past two seasons in the majors.

Cahill, on the other hand, didn't miss a start as a rookie in 2009.

Gonzalez, 24, owns a 7-11 record and 6.24 ERA in the big leagues over 24 starts and 30 overall appearances in 132 innings.

He hopes good spring results will only continue to help his cause with Geren and the A's brass. And Gonzalez is enjoying the competition.

"It's fun," he said.

## NOTES

A's two-time All-Star RHP Justin Duchscherer will pitch two innings in an intrasquad game Wednesday, his next step following Friday's 30-pitch simulated game. Duchscherer, who didn't pitch last season following right elbow surgery and a bout with clinical depression, had initially been scheduled to throw Tuesday but was pushed back a day. He also needed a medical procedure to relieve discomfort in his lower back early in spring training.

The teams play twice more in Arizona, then in a three-game series in the Bay Area from April 1-3 leading up to opening day.

San Francisco dropped its second straight home game following a 5-0 start at Scottsdale Stadium.

Coming in, the Giants had committed only three errors this spring — tied with Detroit for the fewest in the majors.

The game drew 12,000 fans for the Giants' second sellout of the spring.

## **A's split squad edges Padres in 10 innings**

Associated Press. 3/13/2010

PHOENIX — Oakland right-hander Clayton Mortensen is on the fringe of the competition for the final spot in the Athletics' rotation. Finally getting a start gave him a chance to stretch things out.

San Diego right-hander Kevin Correia threw more than 60 pitches in his third start of the spring with mixed results.

Adrian Cardenas scored on Mitch Canham's throwing error with two outs in the ninth as an A's split squad beat the Padres 10-9 in 10 innings on Saturday.

The A's escaped a bases-loaded jam in the top of the 10th and the Padres, who lost their fourth straight, came close to getting out of their own bases-loaded jam.

Chris Denorfia had three hits and drove in a run for the Padres. Chase Headley had two hits and drove in two runs and Tony Gwynn, Jr. added a pair of hits. Mike Antonelli added a two-run single in the five-run ninth.

Rajai Davis went 3 for 4 with an RBI and both Travis Buck and Dallas McPherson hit a home run for the A's. Patterson, Eric Chavez, Gregorio Petit and Adrian Cardenas also drove in runs.

Mortensen went three innings, allowing three runs and five hits. Correia lasted 3 2-3 innings, giving up five runs and six hits with no walks and three strikeouts.

Mortensen, who came to the A's in a deadline trade with the St. Louis Cardinals for Matt Holliday in July, got close to his 50-pitch limit.

"It felt good to get a start and get back into my own routine," Mortensen said. "I've been a starter my whole career and there's a different mental focus to it. It was nice to get into a rhythm. I gave up a couple of runs but I also got a lot of ground balls and that's what I'm supposed to do."

Mortensen recorded seven of his nine outs on grounders and all but one of the five hits allowed were grounders through the infield.

Undrafted out of high school, Mortensen began attracting scouts as a senior at Gonzaga University, when he finished 9-2 with a 3.92 ERA and 122 strikeouts in 119 innings. He was the West Coast Conference Pitcher of the Year.

"That was a make-or-break year for me," Mortensen said. "I had to make up my mind to work harder if I wanted to play pro ball. I had to put it all on the line."

That meant focusing on drills and mechanics, and dedicating himself to the weight room.



"We're all still close friends from that year and we all came together," Mortensen said. "We made a run at it and actually won the conference title. I think we brought the program back to life."

Mortensen followed fellow Rexburg, Idaho, resident Matt Lindstrom, who pitches for the Houston Astros, into pro baseball by five years.

"He grew up with my older brother Damon, so he was always at the house," Mortensen said. "I didn't really know he was a good pitcher until I saw him in junior college and realized he had what it takes."

Lindstrom became a model for Mortensen, who made his major league debut with the Cardinals last year and pitched in September for the A's.

"It was nice to get that taste of it," Mortensen said. "What it's like, how the hitters make adjustments. You see that and it's motivation to work harder, to stay consistent with my delivery."

Correia, who caught on with the Padres last spring training, continues to work on getting better.

"I put a lot of pressure on myself," he said. "I want to improve on last year. I'm always working on something. Right now I'm using all my pitches and getting my command."

Notes: Padres OF Matt Stairs received a warm ovation from A's fans even though he has not been in the Oakland organization since 2000. ... A's RHP Justin Duchschere is scheduled to throw in a minor-league game on Tuesday and could pitch in a spring game the following Sunday. ... A's OF Coco Crisp (hamstring) had the day off and will resume training Sunday. ... Padres' 1B Oscar Salazar was scratched from the starting lineup with an ongoing foot problem. ... A's LHP Dallas Braden is also scheduled to pitch in a minor-league game Tuesday to keep him on schedule. ... Padres manager Bud Black used a fifth infielder in the 10th with Jemile Weeks at-bat. Ryan Webb struck him out.