

A's News Clips, Monday, October 18, 2010

Saturday's Arizona Fall League roundup

Pacheco delivers key hit in Scorpions' five-run seventh

MLB.com

Scorpions 6, Javelinas 4

Rockies catching prospect Jordan Pacheco hit a two-run single to cap a five-run seventh inning as Scottsdale rallied past Peoria. Derek Norris (Nationals) and California League All-Star Marc Krauss (D-backs) both contributed two hits, an RBI and a run scored for the Scorpions. Javelinas starter Marc Rzepczynski, who made 14 appearances for the Blue Jays during the season, allowed a run on four hits over four innings.

Solar Sox 10, Saguaros 1

Mets prospect Jordany Valdespin went 3-for-3 with two RBIs and two runs scored as Mesa kept Peoria winless. Texas League All-Star Jeremy Moore also had three hits and drove in two runs, while fellow Angels representative Brandon Wood added two RBIs for the first-place Solar Sox. Former first-round pick Ben Revere (Twins) had two hits for the Saguaros.

Rafters 10, Desert Dogs 4

Cardinals prospect Brian Broderick picked up where he left off in the regular season, tossing three scoreless innings as Surprise snapped a three-game losing streak. Davis Stoneburner was 3-for-4 with a triple and three runs scored and fellow Rangers farmhand Jose Felix doubled twice, singled and drove in a pair of runs for the Rafters. Michael Taylor (A's) had three hits, drove in two runs and is batting .471 with six RBIs in four games for Phoenix.

Friday's Arizona Fall League roundup

Kipnis breaks out of slump with homer, triple, five RBIs

MLB.com

Javelinas 13, Saguaros 5

Indians prospect Jason Kipnis broke out of an 0-for-11 funk with a homer, triple and five RBIs in a rematch of the Battle of Peoria. Eastern League RBI leader Eric Thames (Blue Jays) went 4-for-5 with a pair of doubles, two RBIs and two runs scored for the Javelinas, while former first-round pick Ben Revere (Twins) tripled, singled twice and drove in two runs for the Saguaros.

Solar Sox 8, Rafters 7 (11 innings)

Brandon Wood delivered a three-run double in the bottom of the 11th inning as Mesa walked off with its third win in four games. The Angels infielder is 7-for-15 with a homer and six RBIs in three games in his second stint in the AFL. Andrew Lambo (Pirates) slugged an early two-run homer for the Solar Sox, while Royals prospect Johnny Giavotella went 4-for-5 with a pair of doubles and an RBI for Surprise.

Scorpions 11, Desert Dogs 4

Giants prospect Brandon Belt had three hits, including a pair of doubles, and three RBIs to lead Scottsdale to its third win in four games. Leadoff man Xavier Avery went 4-for-5 with a walk and three runs scored for the Scorpions, while Eastern League MVP and Rookie of the Year Brandon Laird (Yankees) slugged a two-run homer and singled twice for Phoenix.

Thursday's Arizona Fall League roundup

Lavarnway working hard behind plate and at it for Javs

MLB.com

Javelinas 4, Saguaros 4

Red Sox catching prospect Ryan Lavarnway is in the Arizona Fall League to work more on his play behind the plate, but his three-run homer proved crucial for the Javelinas as the "Battle for Peoria" opener was deemed a tie after 11 innings. Ben Revere (Twins) went 4-for-5 and scored twice, including the game-tying run in the eighth on a fielding error by center fielder Jay Austin (Astros), and Chris Parmelee (Twins) added a triple and a single for the Saguaros.

Solar Sox 11, Rafters 6

Despite being sidelined for nearly four months, Pirates catching prospect Tony Sanchez is showing no signs of rust in the Arizona Fall League. Sanchez singled three times and drove in a run in the win. Two of his hits came in Mesa's nine-run fourth inning as the Sox brought 14 men to the plate. Fellow Pirates prospect Jordy Mercer went 3-for-5 with a double and four RBIs while third baseman Josh Vitters (Cubs) added three hits and an RBI.

Desert Dogs 5, Scorpions 1

Yankees catching prospect Austin Romine collected three hits, including a double, and two RBIs to lead Phoenix past Scottsdale. With two Arizona Fall League games under his belt this season, the 22-year-old is hitting .444. He only appeared in four AFL games last year due to a minor injury. Brandon Belt (Giants) and Greg Miclat (Orioles) both doubled and singled, the only players to get multiple hits for Scottsdale.

Wednesday's AFL roundup

A's prospect Taylor homers in second straight game

MLB.com

Desert Dogs 6, Solar Sox 3

A's prospect Michael Taylor, who slugged six homers in 127 regular-season games, went deep for the second time in as many AFL contests as part of a three-hit night in Phoenix's win. Tyler Pastornicky (Braves) also had three hits and two RBIs for the Desert Dogs, while Angels infielder Brandon Wood homered for Mesa.

Scorpions 9, Saguaros 1

D-backs prospect Josh Collmenter allowed two hits over three scoreless innings as Scottsdale rolled past Peoria. The 24-year-old right-hander picked up where he left off in the regular season, when he combined to go 14-6 with a 3.38 ERA across three Minor League levels. Orioles farmhand Ryan Adams collected four RBIs for the Scorpions, while former first-round pick Ben Revere (Twins) drove in the Saguaros' lone run.

Javelinas 7, Rafters 4

Cuban defector Juan Carlos Linares had three hits and scored twice to lead Peoria to its first win of the season. The 26-year-old outfielder, who played only 17 games after signing with the Red Sox in July, singled in the first, second and seventh innings. Eastern League RBI leader Eric Thames (Blue Jays) drove in two runs for the Javelinas, while Salvador Perez (Royals) contributed two hits and two RBIs for Surprise.

Tuesday's Arizona Fall League roundup

Mets prospect Holt tosses three shutout innings, wins opener

MLB.com

Solar Sox 8, Desert Dogs 3

Trying to rebound from a difficult Minor League season, Mets prospect Brad Holt allowed one hit over three shutout innings as Mesa rolled past Phoenix in the season opener for both teams. The former first-round pick struck out one and walked one after going 3-14 in 24 starts across two levels. The loss spoiled the managerial debut of Don Mattingly, who will succeed Joe Torre in the Dodgers' dugout next season.

Rafters 8, Javelinas 6

Francisco Martinez knocked in two runs and fellow Tigers prospect Ben Guez hit a solo homer to power Surprise past Peoria. Eric Farris (Brewers) contributed two hits and an RBI, while Engel Beltre (Rangers) scored twice for the Rafters. Former first-round pick Dustin Ackley (Mariners) began his second Fall League stint by blasting a solo shot in the first inning for the Javelinas.

Scorpions 4, Saguaros 3

Orioles prospect Ryan Adams singled home the go-ahead run in the bottom of the eighth inning to send Scottsdale to a season-opening win over Peoria. Derek Norris (Nationals) slugged a two-run homer and walked twice for the Scorpions. White Sox prospect Jared Mitchell, the 23rd overall pick in the 2009 Draft, was 3-for-4 and scored twice in his first game since tearing a tendon in his ankle during Spring Training.

Guest column: After 76 years, Athletics fan still loyal

By DICK COSTA , Observer-Dispatch 10/17/2010

Some years ago, my son and I joined a bus tour to Yankee Stadium to watch my heroes play the Bronx Bombers.

Phil, a Yankees fan, warned me half kiddingly: "Dad, if you must wear a baseball cap, don't you think it should be the home team's? You may be the only one here rooting for the A's?"

I'm easily intimidated, but I don't own a Yankees cap. I kept my green and gold one on.

In the eighth inning, Oakland's Nick Swisher, now a Yankee, hit a drive into the gap in center field. Swisher circled the bases. He barreled into catcher Jorge Posada who seemed disinclined to block home plate. Inside-the-park homers, like A's wins, are rare. This one decided the game.

I took off my cap and cheered. The next thing I did was shiver as ice-cold brew doused my head and neck. Turning around and looking toward the upper deck. I spotted them: two incorrigibles in Yankee stripes, holding their beer cups aloft in one hand, their forefingers vertically in the other.

I am 89. For 76 years I have been loyally — more often than not, hopelessly — an Athletics fan.

In 1934 — I was 13 — my Sunday school teacher took three of us to Shibe Park in Philadelphia for a game between the hometown A's and the Babe Ruth-Lou Gehrig Yanks. The A's lost 9-8, but I was numb. I would never see so much green in one place, not even in the Gardens at Versailles.

The flawless play dazzled me. Something clicked on that Sunday that upstaged even my reading of "The Time Machine." Launched forever within me were two special B's: books and baseball.

You get used to losing, especially to the Yankees, if you're an A's fan. In 2001, we had them down two games in the playoffs when poster boy Derek Jeter showed up out of nowhere to toss back-hand to Jorge Posada to cut down the tying run in the third game. You can't have missed it. They won: first team to come back from losing the first two at home. They lost the World Series in seven to the Arizona Diamondbacks.

But I'm getting ahead ...

From 1934 to 1955, when the team moved to Kansas City, the A's and the St. Louis Browns competed for last place. Owner Charles O. Finley introduced orange baseballs, ball girls and a mechanical rabbit that delivered baseballs to the umpire.

To my joy, he formed a dynasty — five straight division titles from 1971-75 and three consecutive World Series crowns (1972-74) in the city of which Gertrude Stein said, "There's no there there" — Oakland.

Born in Philadelphia and raised nearby, I never returned to stay after WW2. I've lived 50 years, wholly or part-time, in Oneida County. I had little choice but to view, listen to or occasionally attend Yankee games.

Except for some Red Sox and Mets caps, everyone in Upstate New York appears to squeeze for the perennial champs from the Bronx. The late Rufie Ventura used to raise or lower the flag over his restaurant to accord with his preferred team's fortunes.

Only once was I tempted to join the majority. That was in 1998 when the Bombers, after a slow start, rarely lost a game — 125-50, including playoffs and World Series.

Why don't I switch and wear a Yankee cap?

The memory of the heart, which is the longest of memories, made a prior commitment.

Baseball: Former Oakland A's star Carney Lansford named Colorado Rockies hitting coach

Associated Press 10/15/2010

Former Oakland A's star Carney Lansford has been named the new hitting coach for the Colorado Rockies, replacing Don Baylor.

Lansford, 53, is the only addition to the Rockies' major league coaching staff for next season. He was the hitting coach for the Rockies' Triple-A affiliate in Colorado Springs in 2007.

He spent 2008-09 as the Giants hitting coach and has also worked in Oakland and St. Louis following his 15-year major league career.

Last season he was a commentator on the A's pregame and postgame shows.

In his career the third baseman won the American League batting title with the Boston Red Sox in the strike-shortened 1981 season and, after being traded to Oakland, was a leader on the A's for the next decade, including the three teams that went to the World Series, winning in 1989.

He hit .290 for his career with 874 RBIs, 151 homers and 224 stolen bases.

Baylor has been offered a special assistant role in the organization, and the club said he is considering that offer. Baylor, 61, was the Rockies hitting coach for the past two seasons, his second stint in Denver after being the club's first manager from 1993-98.

Mariners: The Seattle Mariners have reportedly chosen former Cleveland Indians skipper Eric Wedge as their new manager.

[SI.com](#) first reported that the Mariners had selected Wedge to be their manager after their second 101-loss season in three years. Other media outlets had similar reports. Wedge becomes the team's sixth manager since the beginning of the 2007 season.

Asked to comment on media reports about Wedge, the Mariners said there would be no official announcement Friday.

Wedge had the Indians within one game of the World Series in 2007 before falling to the eventual champion Boston Red Sox in seven games. The Indians finished with 90-plus wins in two of the seven seasons Wedge managed the club. He earned manager of the year honors in 2007.

The Mariners relieved Hayward native Don Wakamatsu as manager, along with pitching coach Rick Adair, bench coach Ty Van Burkleo and performance coach Steve Hecht, on Aug. 9 amid one of the worst seasons in franchise history. The Mariners were just 42-70 in Wakamatsu's second season with the club when general manager Jack Zduriencik said he had lost faith in his coaching staff.

Daren Brown became the interim manager as the team continued its slide after being a preseason pick to contend for the AL West title.

Cardinals: A person with knowledge of the discussions said contract talks are going well between the St. Louis Cardinals and veteran manager Tony La Russa, 66.

The Cardinals finished a disappointing 86-76 last season following a late collapse. It was La Russa's 15th season with the team, and he had a one-year deal.

The person told the AP sticking points in the talks could include security for La Russa's coaching staff. La Russa has led St. Louis to the postseason eight times, but the Cardinals missed the playoffs for the third time in four years.

A's owner: Land issue not 'major barrier'

Silicon Valley / San Jose Business Journal - by David Goll 10/15/2010

Lew Wolff, owner and managing partner of the **Oakland Athletics**, said Friday he hasn't had any discussions with San Jose city officials over the possibility he might be asked to purchase the last two parcels to build a downtown baseball park for his team.

His comments came amid media reports the **San Jose Redevelopment Agency** may not be able to afford to buy two remaining parcels worth about \$20 million for proposed Cisco Field. The 32,000-seat stadium is estimated to cost \$489 million.

"I haven't spoken with them about this," Wolff said of San Jose officials. "But I don't view this as a major barrier to the project."

The biggest obstacle, he said, is whether **Major League Baseball** will approve moving the A's from Oakland to San Jose, which it has been studying for months. Officials of the **San Francisco Giants** oppose it, citing their territorial rights granted by Major League Baseball in 1993 to populous, affluent Santa Clara County.

The San Jose Redevelopment Agency had to fork over \$62 million during the 2009-10 budget year to the state of California when its officials decided to take more than \$2 billion from redevelopment agencies statewide to help balance its budget. So far, the agency has spent \$26 million on roughly 211,000 square feet of land near Diridon station, redevelopment officials said.

The total land costs will range from \$42 million to \$46 million for the 12-parcel project, said Harry Mavrogenes, executive director of the redevelopment agency.

City officials could not be reached for immediate comment.

A's stadium plans may have hit a snag

The Associated Press 10/15/2010

SAN JOSE, Calif.—Efforts to build a new stadium for the Oakland Athletics in San Jose may have hit a snag.

San Jose's redevelopment agency tells the San Jose Mercury News it is in such bad financial shape it might not be able to buy the last pieces of land for a downtown stadium.

The agency is now looking into selling some of its own real estate to buy the two outstanding parcels, which are estimated at \$20 million.

Officials say there is also a possibility that A's owner Lew Wolff could buy the land.

San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed says he is confident a deal for the land can be put together. He says what's most important right now is to see whether Major League Baseball gives the A's permission to move.

The team needs that approval because the San Francisco Giants hold territorial rights to the area.

San Jose: New wrinkle in A's stadium plan

By Tracy Seipel, San Jose Mercury News 10/14/2010

San Jose's redevelopment agency is in such rough financial shape that its leaders now say they may not be able to buy the last parcels for a downtown baseball stadium for the Oakland A's.

But team owner Lew Wolff may be stepping up to the plate to help by buying some or all of the land.

"There isn't a redevelopment agency or city or federal or state government that isn't in some form of disarray at this point," Wolff said Thursday of the agency's struggles.

While he and agency officials both said no details of a possible land purchase by Wolff had been discussed, the team owner pledged: "Whatever issues we run into, we will figure out how to get them done. We will not let anything stand in the way of getting the ballpark done."

News that the redevelopment agency -- one of California's largest before the collapse of local property values -- may lack enough money even to push ahead on its highest priority suggests the agency's plight is more troubling than previously thought.

With a new round of layoffs having recently pared its staff to just more than half the size of a year ago, the cash-strapped agency's budget -- and future -- are being reviewed by the mayor and City Council. Two council members are recommending that parts, if not all, of the agency be folded into other city departments to cut costs.

The informal talks with Wolff also suggest how fiercely both the team and city are working to stave off any suggestion that the funding plan could be in jeopardy while a Major League Baseball panel prepares a recommendation about the A's future.

"I think people have to be worried about what MLB is going to decide -- that's certainly a key factor in moving ahead," Mayor Chuck Reed said. "Once MLB says yes, I believe we will put together a transaction that will take care of the land issue."

Neither Wolff nor agency chief Harry Mavrogenes would say whether Wolff, a developer whose projects include downtown's Hilton and Fairmont hotels, might purchase the land outright or buy it for the city to repay him later. But Reed, a real estate attorney, noted: "There are half a dozen different ways to put together a deal."

Mavrogenes on Thursday emphasized that any land purchase by Wolff is only a possibility at this point, and that the agency's priority is to sell some of its own real estate assets to buy the two outstanding parcels.

Mavrogenes estimated the price tag for both privately owned parcels -- one of which is owned by AT&T, which sponsors the rival San Francisco Giants and has said its land is not for sale -- would total around \$20 million. That price tag has dropped a bit in recent months thanks to the economy.

He said \$7.5 million has been budgeted for stadium-related land purchases through 2012-13. Another \$3.7 million has been allocated for work on the Autumn Street roadway extension and infrastructure that will create a "thoroughfare" to both the planned ballpark and San Jose's existing arena, HP Pavilion.

From last September through July, the agency sold about \$37 million worth of assets, including two downtown parking lots and the land under two of Adobe Systems' downtown towers.

While some of that money will help pay for the last two parcels, much of it has been allocated for other projects.

City officials on Thursday stressed that the \$461 million stadium project, to be privately financed by the A's with help from investors and sponsors, is not in jeopardy. The agency already has spent about \$24.4 million for little more than half the 14 acres earmarked for the project.

"We're committed as a city to move forward with the stadium, because it's the most promising economic development project we've seen in the last decade," Councilman Sam Liccardo said.

"I don't expect the redevelopment agency's fiscal problems will prevent us from finding a creative solution."

Spokesmen for both Major League Baseball and the committee studying whether the A's can relocate to the South Bay declined to comment. San Jose has long been deemed the Giants' turf, and city leaders have expressed frustration that the process has dragged on for more than a year.

MLB Commissioner Bud Selig, a fraternity brother of Wolff's, is awaiting a final report from the committee, which will help baseball's 30 team owners decide whether the A's can move here.

Before any public money can be spent on a stadium, however, city voters have to approve it. At MLB's request, city leaders in July agreed to delay placing any measure on the ballot until spring.

The lack of money for the stadium land is only one of the many pressing financial challenges for the agency. Barring an economic recovery in the next few years, it expects to continue to cut staff and projects.

The agency's proposed budget, one of its worst ever, projects a total capital and operating budget of \$61.6 million for the coming fiscal year. By 2012-13, that figure is expected to drop to about \$17.6 million.

A set of recommendations for the shrinking agency will be explored today, when Reed releases his annual redevelopment agency budget message.

Among other things, Reed said Thursday that he will ask the city manager and Mavrogenes to analyze proposals Reed has received from council members about the agency's budget. Liccardo believes the city should merge the functions of agency employees in five specific "back office" departments such as human resources and finance with city departments, if it would save money.

Vice Mayor Judy Chirco goes even further, suggesting that the entire agency be completely integrated into the city's other departments. On the other hand, Councilman Pete Constant has proposed moving some functions of the city's housing department and the entire economic development department under the agency's purview to save money, since employee compensation for the agency's non-unionized workers is lower than for city employees.

The council is expected to vote on the budget on Oct. 26.

Braden among A's candidates for TYIB Awards

By Jane Lee / MLB.com 10/14/2010

OAKLAND -- The 2010 season featured more than a handful of feel-good stories in Oakland, many of which can now be honored by the fans who watched them unfold.

For the ninth straight year, fans will help decide the top hitters, pitchers, plays and moments from the Major League Baseball season. In 2009, more than 12 million votes were cast by fans around the world.

The 2010 This Year in Baseball Awards, presented by Toyota, feature nominees in 18 categories. Individual honors will go to the top Hitter, Starter, Rookie, Closer, Setup Man, Defensive Player, Manager, Executive, Breakout Player, X-Factor and Dependable Player.

Fans can also vote on the year's top Play, Moment, Performance, Oddity, Game, Fan Moment and Postseason Moment from MLB.com's Must C video highlight vault.

The A's boast six nominations, one third of which belong to Dallas Braden. The A's lefty, thanks to a memorable perfect game on Mother's Day, has been included in the Performance category for his historic feat. Furthermore, his emotional embrace with Grandma Peggy that day also has Braden's name under consideration in the Moment class.

A pair of Braden's pitching mates, righty Trevor Cahill and southpaw Gio Gonzalez, have been nominated for Breakout Player following remarkable seasons that saw both hurlers reach the 15-win mark.

The 22-year-old Cahill, who joined Andrew Bailey at the Midsummer Classic after starting the year on the disabled list and then being assigned to Triple-A, tied for fourth in the American League with 18 wins -- most by an A's starter since Mark Mulder tallied 17 in 2004. It was the first time a pitcher aged 22 years or younger won 18 games since Bret Saberhagen went 20-6 for Kansas City as a 21-year-old in 1985.

Gonzalez, meanwhile, quietly became one of the staff's most consistent starters right behind Cahill. He also represented the only A's starter to stay healthy all year, an achievement seen through his ability to reach the 200-inning mark.

While pitching highlighted the year's memory stock, A's fans likely won't soon forget Kevin the Ball Boy -- and his successful attempt at landing a date with a female fan by way of four foul balls -- or the overzealous fan who soared through the air for Coco Crisp's home run ball, only to come up empty on a hard fall. Both, deservedly, have landed on the ballot for Fan Moment.

Taylor muscles up in Desert Dogs' win

A's prospect hits second homer in as many AFL games

By Robert Emrich / Special to MLB.com 10/14/2010

Michael Taylor is quickly putting a frustrating regular season behind him.

The Athletics outfield prospect hit his second homer in as many Arizona Fall League games Wednesday, powering the Phoenix Desert Dogs to a 6-3 victory over the Mesa Solar Sox.

"I'm coming here for the first time with a little bit of something to prove," Taylor said. "I'm just trying to get back to the basics that let me have success through my career."

The 24-year-old Stanford product led off the second inning with a double, coming around to score on a double play by former first-round pick Kyle Skipworth (Marlins). In the eighth, he hit reliever Eric Niesen's first pitch the other way over the right-field fence to extend the Desert Dogs' lead to 4-2. Taylor added an RBI single in the ninth.

"Right now, early on, I'm just trying to see strikes, but sometimes you can make the game a lot harder than it is," he said. "I feel pretty good at the plate and I want to put a good swing on a ball that I can get full extension on it. I think that as a hitter you can have success if you swing at pitches you think you can handle."

Acquired last December in the three-team trade involving Roy Halladay, Taylor slumped to six homers in 127 games with Triple-A Sacramento this season after hitting 20 across two levels in 2009.

"It was a frustrating year," he said. "A lot of things go into why a player has a good year or a bad year. Sometimes it's luck, sometimes it's circumstances; obviously, I had some hopes for this season and it didn't quite work out the way I wanted to, but I learned more from this season than I did any other season because I learned how I had to grind in the face of disappointment.

"I'm as proud of it as any other season because of the amount of work I put in. It's tough to come in every day when you're searching for something that can help you make the leap."

Tyler Pastornicky (Braves) collected three hits and two RBIs, while former first-round pick Grant Green (Athletics) contributed an RBI groundout. Cory Harrilchak (Braves) was 3-for-5 and scored a run.

"I've been impressed with his polish," Taylor said of Pastornicky. "He looks like he takes good at-bats and he was squaring balls up and made some smart defensive plays and got some big hits. He should do pretty well here."

Another Braves prospect, Cody Gearrin (1-0), got the win in relief after yielding one hit over two scoreless innings. Starter Carlos Hernandez (A's) tossed three shutout frames and Dodgers farmhand Javy Guerra struck out one in a hitless ninth for the save.

Angels infielder Brandon Wood was 2-for-4 with a solo homer for the Solar Sox (1-1). Tim Kennelly (Phillies) had an RBI single and Mets prospect Jordany Valdespin plated a run and stole a base.

Chris Carpenter (0-1) absorbed the loss in relief, allowing one run on three hits over two innings. Fellow Cubs prospect Kyle Smit fanned three over two shutout frames.

Rapid City Little Leaguers Interview Mark Ellis: "Hey, What's up Mark?"

Written by Jake Nordbye, Inside Dakota Sports, 10/13/2010

Oakland A's second baseman and Rapid City native Mark Ellis answers questions from local Little Leaguers.

Mr. Ellis, my name is Hayden McGriff, I would like to know how hard did you work to get to the pro's and do you still love baseball as much as you did when you were 11 years old?

Hayden,

Thanks for the questions. To become a Major League baseball player it takes a tremendous amount of hard work, and it started when I was young kid. My parents instilled a strong work ethic in me. Not only in baseball, but life in general.

When you reach the Major Leagues, it is important to work harder than ever because they're is always someone trying to take your job.

My love for baseball is at an all time high right now. I really got excited for games when I was 11 and I admit it's different now because it's my job, and we play so many games, but I still really enjoy playing the game.

Hi - my name is Jack Oberg and I play for the Canyon Lake Athletics. Did you ever think growing up in Rapid City that you would play Major League Baseball? And if so, who did you hope to play for?

Jack,

Great question. To tell you the truth, I didn't think about Major League Baseball a whole lot as a little leaguer. I just wanted to go play ball with my friends and have a great time doing it. I was so fortunate to have really good coaches in little league. They taught us how to play the game, but they really stressed having fun and being committed to our teammates. It wasn't until I was a little older until I started thinking about the big leagues. I used to come home after school and watch the Cubs play because they didn't have lights at the time and they had to play day games. Ryne Sandberg was one of my favorite players.

The Minnesota Twins would have been my team of choice though.

Mr. Ellis, my name is Sam Haug, my question is how does a kid from a small state get noticed by big colleges?

Sam,

This is a question I get all the time, and it's a very good one. Rapid City has one of the best resources for a college education in the country and it's Post 22 baseball. Coach Ploof and his staff do a tremendous job of not only developing ballplayers, but also getting exposure for their ballplayers. We went to tournaments all over the region, and at every one of them their were college scouts.

It doesn't matter where you are from. If you are good enough, and work hard enough someone will find you.

My name is Walker Paz and I play at Timberline. What is your favorite thing about playing Major League Baseball?

Walker,

Excellent question. There are so many things I love about being in the big leagues. My favorite thing is that I get to play the sport I love against the best players in the world every day.

Another thing I love is playing in the great ballparks around the country. A couple of my favorite ballparks are Safeco Field in Seattle and the new Target Field in Minnesota.

Thanks for the great questions guys. We do a lot of interviews during the year, but none are as cool as this one.

Mark Ellis

Devine, Outman on schedule for Spring Training

By Jane Lee / MLB.com

OAKLAND -- Hurlers Joey Devine and Josh Outman are prepared to enter the offseason as normally as any other Major League pitchers would.

That doesn't sound like much, but considering what each has endured over the last year, the notion speaks volumes.

Devine and Outman, both of whom underwent Tommy John surgery last year followed by multiple setbacks that kept them off the field this season, are back on schedule and very much expected to enter Spring Training fully healthy in February.

The right-handed Devine, who in 2008 posted a 0.59 ERA in 42 appearances with Oakland, recently finished rehab work in the club's instructional league in Arizona, where he threw 20 pitches (one inning) in six games without any pain.

"I threw the ball well," Devine said via phone from his home in Atlanta on Tuesday. "I threw all my pitches. My location wasn't great, but that's to be expected when you're still trying to build arm strength. Everything else felt good."

The 27-year-old reliever, now free of rehab and therapy, plans to rest his arm for six weeks before picking up a ball again in early December. At that point, he'll take part in a typical offseason throwing routine -- likely with guidance from noted orthopedic surgeon Dr. James Andrews -- before reporting to camp and competing for a bullpen role.

"I definitely feel like I'm competing for a spot," he said. "Nothing's ever certain in this game. I want to earn a position in the bullpen, and in order to do that, I first have to prove I'm healthy. Right now I feel great, and it's absolutely a good feeling knowing I can have a normal offseason."

Outman, 26, is taking that same mindset into the offseason after he finishes work in the instructional league, where he'll make his fifth and final start -- four innings, if all goes well -- on Thursday. The lefty described his first outing as "discouraging" but noted that his last three have represented "a big step in the right direction."

"I'm starting to get to where I feel like I'm really pitching again," he said by phone on Tuesday, "rather than just waiting for something to hurt. I'm not quite back to where I was. There are still aches and pains, but I think that's just from getting my pitch count up again. The important thing is, I feel more relaxed -- and I haven't pitched relaxed in a long time. It will be good to kind of finish on a high note."

"He's throwing the ball great," Devine said of his teammate. "His velocity is almost identical, in the 88-93 mph range, which is good. He's throwing a lot of strikes and getting a lot of outs."

Like Devine, Outman will also be part of what should be an interesting competition in Spring Training. The southpaw will likely be pitted against Vin Mazzaro, Bobby Cramer and Tyson Ross in a battle for the fifth-starter spot, with the winner joining the expected foursome of Trevor Cahill, Brett Anderson, Gio Gonzalez and Dallas Braden.

"I'm going to go into [the competition] with the same mindset I did before '09," said Outman, who began 2009 as the A's fifth starter. "That fifth spot was up for grabs, and that's how it's going to be again. I want to compete for it, earn it. I don't know what they're going to do, but I plan on earning that fifth spot."

"It would be nice to be part something like that, with the pitching staff we already have. Those are four big names, and to be a part of it would be a great feeling."

In the meantime, Outman is ready to head home soon to Missouri, where he'll put baseball aside for a handful of weeks and instead focus on the pending arrival of his first child with wife Ashley, who is expecting a baby girl in January. Not too far behind is Erin, Devine's wife, who is also pregnant with the couple's first child.

"We talked them into it," Outman joked.



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Facts

- Over 1,800 former Fall Leaguers have reached the major leagues
- 159 MLB All-Stars including 45 in 2010
- 7 MLB MVPs
 - Jason Giambi
 - Ryan Howard
 - Joe Mauer
 - Justin Morneau
 - Dustin Pedroia
 - Albert Pujols
 - Jimmy Rollins
- 3 Cy Young Award winners
 - Chris Carpenter
 - Roy Halladay
 - Brandon Webb
- 20 MLB Rookies-of-the-Year
- 3 World Series MVPs
- 7 All-Star Game MVPs
- 48 MLB Silver Sluggers
- 41 MLB Gold Glove Awards
- 9 MLB batting champions
- 12 MLB season hits leaders
- 8 MLB season RBI leaders
- 7 MLB season homer leaders
- 11 MLB season stolen-base leaders
- 27 MLB managers
- 31 MLB umpires
- Over 75 administrators serving the baseball industry

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For Immediate Release

Monday, October 18, 2010

Ryan Adams, Brandon Wood Week One Co-POW

Phoenix, Arizona — Scottsdale Scorpion **Ryan Adams** (BAL) and Mesa Solar Sox **Brandon Wood** (LAA) are the Arizona Fall League's week one co-players-of-the-week. Both third basemen boasted at least one hit and RBI in every game last week.

Adams — The 6–0, 195–pound Adams hit .500 (6–12) with 2 runs, 1 home run, and 7 RBI.

A New Orleans native, Adams spent the 2010 season at Double-A Bowie where he hit .298 with 43 doubles, 15 home runs and 68 RBI with a .365 on-base percentage and .464 slugging percentage.

In five minor-league seasons, Adams owns a .287 batting average with 34 home runs and 184 RBI.

He was the Orioles' second-round (58th overall) selection in the 2006 draft.

Wood — The Phoenix-area native leads the Fall League with eight RBI. He hit .444 (8–18) with three runs and one double. He registered the first week's biggest hit, a two-out, bases-loaded, three-run, walk-off double in the bottom of the 11th inning with his team trailing by two runs.

The Angels' former first-round (23rd overall) selection in the 2003 draft out of Horizon High School in Phoenix, Wood has spent portions (167 games) of the past four seasons in the major leagues with the Angels. He has hit .284 in 764 minor-league games with 161 home runs and 542 RBI.

Other Nominees — Other players receiving player-of-the-week consideration were Peoria Javelinas' outfielder **Juan Carlos Linares** (BOS) and Phoenix Desert Dogs' outfielder **Michael Taylor** (OAK).

Arizona Fall League — The Arizona Fall League, known throughout professional baseball as a finishing school for Major League Baseball's elite prospects, is a six-team league owned and operated by Major League Baseball. It plays six days per week (Monday-Saturday) at five spring-training stadiums (Mesa HoHoKam Stadium, Peoria Sports Complex, Phoenix Municipal Stadium, Scottsdale Stadium and Surprise Stadium) in the Phoenix metropolitan area.

This year's schedule features the fifth annual Rising Stars Game on Saturday, November 6 at Surprise Stadium and the annual championship game on Saturday, November 20 at Scottsdale Stadium.

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